

## POSC 5130 – POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

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Office Hours: by appointment

Spring 2021  
Mondays, 6-7:50 PM, via Zoom

### Aim of the Course

The goal of this course is to connect the practical focus of campaign management with the scientific approach political scientists take towards measuring the effect of specific campaign activities and institutions. While it may be tempting to connect campaign activities or electoral rules to election outcomes and automatically assume that one caused the other. But in practice, showing such causal effects is very difficult. During the semester, we will be reading and discussing political science scholarship measuring the effect of (among others) candidate visits, campaign ads, and GOTV activities. Additionally, we will look at the kind of political institutions that shape the outcomes of elections, and the way gender, class, and race affects candidate participation or success in elections.

### Basic Procedures and Rules

*Covid-19 and Online Education:* Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, for the Spring 2021 semester this course will be taught entirely online. This means that, inevitably, the course will not work the way it would if we were able to all be together in the same room, twice a week, as normal. However, my goal is to replicate the different components of a 'normal' course as much as possible. This means this online course will include the elements that usually would be part of the course, including lectures on the topics, assessments of whether students are following those lectures and doing the readings, and regular opportunities for students to ask me questions and present their thoughts on the topics we are talking about.

The pandemic has thus far affected all of us in some way, though of course the extent to which it has is likely to be different for each of us. However, I imagine that at this point – nearly a full year into the pandemic disrupting life in New York – we are all, if nothing else, tired, frustrated, and facing all types of motivational issues. This is completely understandable. And of course some of us may be dealing with much more serious possible issues caused by Covid-19 – including its effect on our own physical and mental health, that of our family and other loved ones, as well as any economic struggles caused by the pandemic. We all hope that in the next few months things will get better, but as of now we are not out of the dark yet.

Designing a course in these circumstances is complicated. On the one hand, I want this course to be meaningful and to teach you roughly the same things I would teach if we were

meeting in person. I also hope that you participating in a course that is (hopefully!) interesting can serve as a helpful distraction from everything else going on. On the other hand, I am fully aware that the issues mentioned above can make participation in the course to the best of your ability difficult. Additionally, we cannot predict how the coming semester will play out for each of us in terms of the pandemic either.

My core concern above anything else is that each of you makes it through this semester physically and mentally healthy. I also understand that many of you are facing obstacles in your ability to study – including having limited access to the internet, having trouble finding a place to study or take online classes, changing work hours, and health scares. Participation in the weekly Zoom class at regular class hours is mandatory, but if at any point during the semester you are encountering things – big or small – that make it impossible for you to keep up with the pace of the course and/or to attend the Zoom meetings, **please reach out to me**. We can try to figure out ways to help you get through the course, but I can only do that if you talk to me and let me know what you need help with.

*Zoom Classes:* We will meet on Zoom at our regular class times (6:00-7:50 PM) to discuss the materials of that week. You are expected to have done the readings for each class before the Zoom class begins. I will send out a class-wide email each week with discussion questions you should start thinking about which we will talk about in class. Each class will include a lecture component of me providing some additional information about the readings of that week, and will include our conversations about what the research is teaching us, whether we are convinced by these studies, and what implications are for elections and campaign management.

To create an atmosphere in which all students feel comfortable participating and have the ability to achieve their full potential, civility during the discussions is vital. During our conversations we will inevitably come to talk about day to day politics, and it is very much possible that you will find yourself disagreeing strongly with points put forward by your fellow students (and, they with you!). While you should absolutely feel free to challenge other students, it is crucial that you should do so in a respectful way (and, of course, you can expect the same of your fellow students towards you).

If for some reason you cannot be present for understandable reasons (illness, personal circumstances clearly beyond your control, etc.) you should contact me as soon as you can (if at all possible, before the start of class). Note that in line with Fordham's attendance policy there is a maximum number of absences that would result in failing the course. Given that we find ourselves in a much more complex time than usual, I do not intend to follow this rule as it is listed, but there is a point where absences will negatively affect your final grade or could result in failing the course.

*Office Hours:* If you have any questions or want to chat about the course, you can schedule a Zoom meeting by sending me an e-mail at [bheersink@fordham.edu](mailto:bheersink@fordham.edu). You can also e-mail me with any questions or concerns – I try to respond to every e-mail within 24 hours. You

should not feel like you can only schedule a meeting if you have really specific questions: it's fine if you want to talk about the course (or anything else going on) more broadly.

### Grade Components and Procedures

*Components:* Your grade is based on three components: participation (worth 30% of your final grade), three short response papers (10% each), and a campaign memo (40%). The participation grade is based on your active participation in the Zoom calls – that is, you mostly will get credit not just for being present on the call but for actively engaging in the conversation and showing you have read and thought about the materials.

At three points in the semester you will have to write a one-page response paper (single-spaced) to that week's readings. In this paper, you will summarize the main findings in the readings (which will take up about one half of the page), and provide your assessment of it (the other half of the page). Your assessment should engage with a specific take on the material – for example, whether you find the results presented convincing, or how you could use these findings in a campaign setting. You will receive a letter grade for each response paper. The response papers are due on Blackboard *before* the start of that week's Zoom session, March 8, April 5, and May 3.

Finally, at the end of the semester you will write and submit a 8 page (double-spaced) campaign memo. For this assignment you will pick a campaign in the 2022 election cycle (that is, a House, Senate, or gubernatorial race in that election year), find out information specific to the race, and write a memo advising the candidate on two specific campaign activities their campaign should (or should *not*) do on the basis of the political science research we have read in this course. You will receive more specific information about this assignment later in the semester, but the assignment is due May 18.

*Grading Scale and Calculation of Final Course Grade:* For your response papers, participation, and campaign memo you will receive a single letter grade which follows the point value outlined below.

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Points toward Final Grade</b>
A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
C-	1.7
D	1.0
F	0.0

Your final grade is based on a weighted average of each of the points earned towards your final grade based on the percentages outlined above. For example, if you received a B+ for participation, that earns you  $3.3 * 0.30 = 0.99$  points towards your final grade. Similarly, an A- for your campaign memo earns you  $3.7 * 0.40 = 1.48$  points towards your final grade. Your final letter grade is based on the following scale:

Total Earned Final Grade Points	Final Letter Grade
4.0 – 3.84	A
3.83 – 3.50	A-
3.49 – 3.17	B+
3.16 – 2.84	B
2.83 – 2.50	B-
2.49 – 2.17	C+
2.16 – 1.84	C
1.83 – 1.34	C-
1.34 – 1.0	D
0.99 and below	F

*Grade Complaints:* I will grade your performance in this course in comparison to your fellow students as well as predetermined expectations. This means that the grade you earn should be a fair representation of how you have performed in comparison both to my general expectations of all participants as well as your fellow classmates' work in this course.

It is possible that you may be unhappy with a grade, and I am always willing to discuss your progress during the course to help you improve. If you believe the grade you received is an **incorrect** assessment of the quality of the work you produced, you can challenge your grade. If you want to do so, please email me to set up an appointment and send me a copy of your exam and a written description (approximately half a page) comparing your answers to those listed in the answer key that will be made available online after the exam, explaining why you believe your grade does not accurately represent the quality of the work you submitted. We will subsequently discuss your work and I will assess whether I believe your grade should be changed.

Before you contact me about your grade(s), consider the following things. First, the goal of a grade reassessment is to produce a grade that is a fair representation of your performance: this means that any errors that lowered your grade will be corrected, but any potential errors that *increased* it will also be adjusted. A regrading process can thus result in a higher grade, the exact same grade, or a lower grade than what you received through the original grading process.

Second, a grade challenge means you must make a **specific argument** about why you think the grading does not reflect the **quality** of your work. It is not enough to state that you are confused by your grade, or that you feel that it does not reflect the amount of time and effort you put into the course. While I understand that both of those feelings can be very frustrating, they are not arguments for why a grade is not correct and I will not entertain grading

challenges based solely on these arguments. As you are assessing your work in comparison to the answer keys or my comments, make sure you do not just look at the things you did right but also those things you missed. Meaning, if you got an A- for something, you probably did really well but you got some things wrong or did not include them at all. Those are the things that cost you points. Pointing out all the things you *did* include are not an argument for why the grade is incorrect.

Additionally, students sometimes try to ‘challenge’ their grade through a roundabout way – effectively asking the instructor to defend why they received the grade they received without providing arguments for why they disagree with the grade. Please do not do this: if you think the grade is incorrect, identify what it is you think I did wrong and engage with me on that basis. If you cannot articulate why you think the grade is wrong, then that might just mean it is in fact a correct assessment of your performance.

Finally, grades are not a negotiation: if you believe I made a mistake, you should feel free to challenge the grade. But the correct use of this process is not to look at your different grades at the end of the semester and to try to up one, or multiple, grade(s) with the sole goal of collecting enough points to increase your final letter grade. If you want to ensure you get the highest grade possible I would advise you to spend your time reaching out to me with questions *before* the exams and paper deadline, and not on trying to haggle about a grade afterwards.

*Plagiarism and Other Violations of Code of Conduct:* All assignments in this course fall under Fordham University’s code of conduct. Any violation (including, but not limited to, cheating on exams, and plagiarism) will result in the student being held accountable to the full extent of university guidelines. Note that this includes self-plagiarism – that is, taking (parts of) assignments you did for other courses and resubmitting them for this course. While self-plagiarism might seem like an innocent act, it means you did not do original work as required for this course. It too can lead to negative consequences, including failing this course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

### Notes

Fordham generally provides me with a class list that includes your legal name. If you prefer to be addressed by an alternate name and/or gender pronoun, please do not hesitate to let me know. You can do so in our Zoom meetings, by email, or during an office hour appointment, whichever you prefer. Also, please correct me if I mispronounce your name or use the incorrect gender pronoun!

As a faculty member, I am – by law – a mandatory reporter and I am required to contact and provide information to Public Safety, the Dean of Students, or Fordham’s Title IX Coordinator if I am provided with any information indicating that a Fordham student has been sexually harassed (verbally or physically), sexually assaulted, stalked, had domestic violence or dating violence occur in a relationship, or been a victim / survivor of any behavior that is prohibited by Fordham’s Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures. Once reported, Fordham

will seek to support any student and make efforts to stop the negative behavior, prevent it from recurring, and remedy its effects. It is important for you to be aware that there are three confidential places on campus where you can seek support or guidance from Fordham staff members who are **not** mandatory reporters: clinical counselors in Counseling & Psychological Services, pastoral counselors in Campus Ministry, and medical service providers in University Health Services. You can read more about this in the Student CARE brochure or visit [www.fordham.edu/care](http://www.fordham.edu/care) or [www.fordham.edu/sexualmisconduct](http://www.fordham.edu/sexualmisconduct) for more information.

If you or someone you know is struggling with emotional or mental health concerns, and/or gender, sexual, or domestic violence, Fordham's Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) can provide (free) assistance. The Rose Hill office of CPS is open Monday through Friday and can be reached by phone at 718-817-3725. CPS will be providing remote meetings as well as in-person services at Rose Hill. If you, or a student you know, is experiencing a mental health crisis or emergency that requires immediate attention contact Fordham's office of Public Safety at Rose Hill at 718-817-2222 (available 24/7).

### Schedule

February 1

Topic: Political science and campaign and election management

Readings:

No readings.

February 8

Topic: How do voters decide who to vote for?

Readings:

John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge University Press, 1992) Chapters 3 and 10.

February 15

Topic: No class

Readings:

No readings.

February 22

Topic: The fundamentals in American election campaigns

Readings:

John Sides and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013) Chapters 1, 5 and 7.

March 1

Topic: How campaigns matter

Readings:

Daron R. Shaw, *The Race to 270: The Electoral College and the Campaign Strategies of 2000 and 2004* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 5.

March 8

Topic: The (mixed) effects of campaign visits

**Response paper 1 due.**

Readings:

Boris Heersink and Brenton D. Peterson, "Truman Defeats Dewey: The Effect of Campaign Visits in Election Outcomes," *Electoral Studies*, vol. 49 (October 2017) 49-64.

Boris Heersink, Brenton D. Peterson, and Jordan Carr Peterson, "Mobilization and Counter-Mobilization: The Effect of Candidate Visits on Campaign Donations in the 2016 Presidential Election," *The Journal of Politics* (forthcoming).

March 15

Topic: The effects of campaign ads on TV

Readings:

Ted Brader, "Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions," *American Journal of Political Science* vol. 49, no. 2 (2005) 388-405.

Paul Freedman and Kenneth Goldstein, "Measuring Media Exposure and the Effects of Negative Campaign Ads," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 43, no. 4 (1999) 1189-1208.

March 22

Topic: Catch-up

Readings:  
No readings.

March 29

Topic: Get out the vote activities

Readings:

Alan Gerber and Donald Green, "The Effects of Personal Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment," *American Political Science Review* vol. 94 (2000) 653-663.

David Nickerson, "Do Voter Registration Drives Increase Participation? For Whom and When?" *The Journal of Politics* vol. 77 (2015) p. 88-101.

April 5

Topic: Race in American elections

**Response paper 2 due.**

Readings:

Antoine J. Banks, *Anger and Racial Politics: The Emotional Foundation of Racial Attitudes in America* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014) Chapter 1.

Tali Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001) Chapter 6.

Berinsky, Adam J., Vincent L Hutchings, Tali Mendelberg, Lee Shaker, and Nicholas A Valentino. 2011. "Sex and Race: Are Black Candidates More Likely to Be Disadvantaged by Sex Scandals?" *Political Behavior* 33 (2):179-202.

April 12

Topic: Follow the money: fundraising in American elections

Readings:

Robert E. Mutch, *Buying the Vote: A History of Campaign Finance Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) Chapter 9.

Joshua L. Kalla and David E. Broockman, "Campaign Contributions Facilitate Access to Congressional Officials: A Randomized Field Experiment," *American Journal of Political Science* vol. 60, no. 3 (2016) 545-558.

April 19

Topic: Candidate selection

Readings:

Larry M. Bartels, "Candidate Choice and the Dynamics of the Presidential Nominating Process," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 31, no. 1 (February 1987) p. 1-30.

Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) Chapter 7.

April 26

Topic: Who can run? Gender, Class, and Money

Readings:

Richard L. Fox and Jennifer L. Lawless, "Uncovering the Origins of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition," *American Political Science Review* vol. 108, no. 3 (2014) 499-519.

Nicholas Carnes, "Why Are There So Few Working-Class People in Political Office? Evidence from State Legislatures," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* vol. 4, no. 1 (2016) 84-109.

Danielle M. Thomsen and Michele S. Swers, "Which Women Can Run? Gender, Partisanship, and Candidate Donor Networks," *Political Research Quarterly* vol. 7, no. 2 (2017).

May 3

Topic: Non-Citizen voting

**Response paper 3 due.**

Readings:

Jesse T. Richman, Gulshan A. Chattha, and David C. Earnest, "Do Non-Citizens Vote in U.S. Elections?" *Electoral Studies* 36 (2014) 149-157.

Michael Tesler, "[Methodological challenges affect study of non-citizens' voting.](#)" *Washington Post – The Monkey Cage*, October 27, 2014.

May 10:

Topic: Campaign memo workshop

Readings:

No readings.

May 17:

Topic: Campaign memo Q&A

Readings:

No readings.