Anyone who hopes to pursue a career in politics – or just be a good citizen – should be familiar with some basics about the electorate and the mechanics of election campaigns. Also, although energy, hard work, creativity, and political instinct cannot be taught, there are specific technical skills that are crucial in modern campaigns. These include knowledge of the fundamental factors that drive elections and public opinion as well familiarity with survey research, statistical analysis, and media buying.

This class will teach you how to understand the fundamental factors that drive elections in America and to learn some of the skills employed by political professionals. Your assignments will require you to apply the lessons of this class to real time events. We will take special advantage of the fact that this class is taking place after the 2016 and 2018 elections. We will use recent results from 2016 and 2018 to illustrate major concepts and will look forward to the 2020 presidential primaries and general election. We are in a data and information rich environment.

The goal in this class is to go beyond the spin and hyperbole of many election commentators about a particular contest. The goal is to help you understand how voters decide and how strategists persuade and to give you some of the technical skills to get an interesting job with a campaign. This class will combine the insights of campaign professionals with insight from the study of previous campaigns and scholarly research. It will combine theory, practice, and exploration, taking the insights of political scientists and political practitioners and rolling them into one.

**READINGS**
The readings in this class will come from refereed academic journals as well as media and non-scholarly accounts of campaigns and elections. Most of the journal readings are available on JSTOR (jstor.org) and the other readings are widely available on the web. I will send along copies of additional readings by e-mail. Also, you should not take this class unless you are deeply interested in American politics and keep up with it on a daily basis. I typically read *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* every morning. I also check in with Real Clear Politics polling summaries to keep up to date on current polling information and subscribe to the Axios and Politico morning news digests.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**
The assignments represent the sort of work product that campaign strategists must do or must prove they can do to get a job in the first place. I will outline the assignments and expectations in more detail in class and in written instructions.

**Win Number Exercise** (10 points) due February 7.

**Survey Weighting Exercise** (10 points) due February 14.

**In-Class Mid-Term Exam** – Analytical “Job” Exam (30 Points) February 21.

**2018 Elections Analysis** (20 points) due March 21.

**Final Case Study** (30 points) Using a hypothetical case you will create a strategic media plan for a public policy issue in a special election. Although the focus of the assignment will be on the particulars of media buying, you will need to bring in information from many different topics from the class and use the analytical tools that have been outlined in lecture and readings. You will do this project in two phases. There will be many more details to follow. The first stage will be due April 3 and the second stage on April 18.

**TOPICS AND READINGS**

**Week 1**

2016 and 2018 Election Review

**Week 2**

Party Identification and the Nature of the Times

Week 3
Voter Turnout, Mobilization, and the Changing Face of the American Electorate

- Cohn, Nate. “There are More White Voters than People Think.” [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/10/upshot/there-are-more-white-voters-than-people-think-thats-good-news-for-trump.html?_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/10/upshot/there-are-more-white-voters-than-people-think-thats-good-news-for-trump.html?_r=0)

Week 4
Putting it Together – Share and Performance

- Chapters 2 and 3 of *Inside Campaigns*. To be provided.

Week 5
Survey Research Fundamentals

- Literary Digest Article from 1936 - [http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5168/](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5168/)

Week 6
Primaries
• Putnam, Josh. 2015. “Everything you need to know about how the presidential primary works” Monkey Cage https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/05/12/everything-you-need-to-know-about-how-the-presidential-primary-works


• Masket, Seth. 2014 (July 7). “How Can We Fix the Broken Primary Election System?” PS Magazine. JSTOR

Week 7 - MID-TERM EXAM

Week 8
Message Research, Message Development, and Message Testing

Week 9
Campaign Effects – Persuasion and Separation

Week 10
Media Strategy and Buying - Television

Week 11
Media Strategy and Buying - Digital
• Readings TBA
Week 12
Campaign Law
  ● Readings TBA

Spring Break

Week 13
Media Buying Case Review
Campaign Jobs Round Table

Week 14
Media Buying Case Presentations

COURSE POLICIES

Make-up, Late, and Incomplete Work. No make-up assignments will be permitted except in case of documented emergency and emergency health issues. Late assignments will be docked a letter grade per day late without prior approval or appropriate documentation. Incompletes will only be assigned for compelling reasons to those students who have completed at least two-thirds of the required course work at a passing level. Requests must be made in writing on the official request forms.

Academic Integrity
Do not claim someone else’s work as your own – this is plagiarism. Plagiarism and cheating are violations of academic integrity. Such violations will result automatically in course failure.