THE SCIENCE OF POLITICS: CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS
UCDC CONSORTIUM ELECTIVE

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

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. Many of 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 will take place while we are in the midst of the presidential primaries and will, perhaps, still be going when the general election launches. We will have a specific week where we examine the literature on presidential primaries, but will speak about it and compare it to our topic in all weeks.

That said, the goal in this class is to go beyond the spin and hyperbole of many election commentators and 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. There are a slew of cites available to follow politics and political news. I typically read *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and Politico every morning. I also check in with Pollster.com to keep up to date on current polling information. **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 expectations in more detail.

Mid-Term Exam – Analytical "Job" Exam (30 Points]

Class Participation[10 Points] From time to time, we will take a few minutes during each class to discuss questions I have sent around. You can and should certainly have a point of view, but evidence is crucial. Prepare yourself for the discussion, don't just be a pundit.

Analytical Column [20 Points] You will conduct and write up a quantitative (2-3 pages) analysis of the sort that you would be asked to do in real time if you were working for a campaign as a data analyst or, in the news media, as a data reporter.

Final Case Study (40 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 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 part of this project as individuals and part in a group. There will be many more details to follow. The individual component is due on November 18 and the group part on December 9.

TOPICS AND READINGS

Session 1

Class Overview – What Campaigns and Campaign Managers Do

Session 2

Party Identification, Voter Turnout, and The Nature of the Times

- Bartels, Larry M., and John Zaller. 2001. "Presidential Vote Models: A Recount." *PS: Political*

Science and Politics, 34: 8-20. **JSTOR**

- "Forecasting the 2012 American National Elections." PS: Political Science & Politics / Volume 45 / Issue 04 / October 2012 **JSTOR**
- "Symposium: The 2014 Midterm Election Forecasts." PS: Political Science & Politics / Volume 47 / Issue 04 / October 2014 **JSTOR**

Session 3

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

- McDonald, Michael P., and Samuel L. Popkin. 2001. "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter." *American Political Science Review*, 95: 963-974. **JSTOR**
- Gerber, Alan and Donald Green 2000. "The Effects of Personal Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout." *APSR Science Review*, 94: 653-663. **JSTOR**
- Trende, Sean. Do Demographics Really Work Against the GOP? http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2014/02/11/do_demographics_really_work_against_the_gop_121538.html

Session 4

Putting it Together – Share, Performance and Micro-Targeting

- Vavreck, Lynn. 2014. "The Myth of Swing Voters in Midterm Elections," NYT.com, The Upshot, April 22, 2014.
- Enten, Harry. 2014a. "Mid-Term Election Turnout Isn't So Different from Presidential Year Turnout," 538.com, May 7, 2014.
- Goldstein, Ken, Matt Dallek and Joel Rivlin. 2014. "Even the Geeks are Polarized: The Dispute over the Real Driver in American Elections." *The Forum*. Volume 12, Issue 2 (July 2014) - http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/for.2014.12.issue-2/for-2014-5006/for-2014-5006.xml
- Balz, Dan. 2013. "How the Obama Campaign Won the Race for Voter Data." http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/how-the-obama-campaign-won-the-race-for-voter-data/2013/07/28/ad32c7b4-ee4e-11e2-a1f9-ea873b7e0424_story.html

Session 5

Presidential Primaries

William Mayer, Forecasting Presidential Nominations, PS 2003, 153-58

Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, *The Party Decides*, Selections.

Session 6

Survey Research Fundamentals Part 1

- Literary Digest Article from 1936 - http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5168/
- Trochim, William M. "Probability Sampling" *The Research Methods Knowledge Base*, 2nd Edition. http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/sampprob.php
- Cliff Zukin, "What's the Matter with Polling?" http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/21/opinion/sunday/whats-the-matter-with-polling.html?_r=0

- http://www.politico.com/blogs/burns-haberman/2012/11/romney-pollsters-firm-explains-149372.html
- http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2340/likely-voters-registered-poll-samples
- http://www.npr.org/blogs/itsallpolitics/2012/08/22/159588275/are-independents-just-partisans-in-disguise

Session 7

Survey Research Fundamentals Part 2

- Literary Digest Article from 1936 - http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5168/
- Trochim, William M. "Probability Sampling" *The Research Methods Knowledge Base*, 2nd Edition. http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/sampprob.php
- http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2340/likely-voters-registered-poll-samples
- http://www.npr.org/blogs/itsallpolitics/2012/08/22/159588275/are-independents-just-partisans-in-disguise

Session 8

Mid-Term

Session 9

Persuasion - Message Development and Message Testing

- Zaller, John, and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science*, 36: 579-616. **JSTOR**
- Ryan Lizza, "How to Beat Hillary Clinton." http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/how-to-beat-hillary-clinton

Session 10

Media Buying - Television

- Seeyle, Katherine Q. 2004. "How to Sell a Candidate to a Porsche-Driving, Leno-Loving, Nascar

Fan." *The New York Times* December 6.

- Peters, Jeremy, "For GOP Ads, CSI but Not Letterman." NYT January 29, 2012.
- Ruttenberg, Jim, "Obama Data System Targeted TV Viewers." http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/13/us/politics/obama-data-system-targeted-tv-viewers-for-support.html?ref=politics
- http://adage.com/article/campaign-trail/hot-medium-election-cycle-local-cable/237482/

Session 11

Campaign Effects – Persuasion and Separation

- Zaller, John. 1996. "The Myth of a Massive Media Impact Revived: New Support for a Discredited Idea." In Mutz, Sniderman and Brody, *Political Persuasion and Attitude Change.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. **COPY OF TO BE PROVIDED**
- Wilner, Elizabeth and Ken Goldstein. 2012. "Network Anchors for Romney." *Columbia Journalism Review.* http://www.cjr.org/swing_states_project/romney_ads_brokaw_couric.php?page=all

Session 12

Research – Self and Opposition
- **http://www.npr.org/2012/05/14/152683320/the-job-dig-up-dirt-on-politicians?ps=cprs**
- **http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brett-c-di-resta/opposition-research_b_1395448.html**

Session 13

Panel Discussion with Campaign Managers and Consultants

Session 14

Final Presentations