

Modern Political Campaigns

Spring Quarter 2019, March 26 – June 4

Tuesday, 6:30p-9:30p, Room 301

Instructor: Michael D. Cohen, Ph.D.

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Course Instructor

For close to fifteen years, I have been CEO of [Cohen Research Group](#), a public opinion and market research firm based in Washington, DC. My firm publishes the leading mobile directory for Capitol Hill called [Congress in Your Pocket](#) (you get it *free*), featured by Apple eleven times. Over the past few years, I spent a few months embedded with [Microsoft](#) ahead of the launch of Windows 10 and then served as Interim Director of the [Political Management Master's Program](#) at George Washington University. Earlier in my career, I served as Vice President of Public Affairs at Fabrizio, McLaughlin & Associates and began my career at [The Gallup Organization](#), rising to Senior Research Director in the DC office. I earned my Ph.D. (1996), M.A. (1994), and B.S. (1992) degrees at the University of Florida, where I was inducted into the [Leadership Hall of Fame](#). More importantly, I met my future wife and best friends for life there.

Course Description

Political campaigns are as old as democracy itself, but the methods have changed quite dramatically over the past 25 years. This balances the theories of democratic participation and historical context of elections with an understanding of what it takes to design and execute a campaign in today's political environment. In addition to weekly readings, you will gain experience through course projects focused on candidate selection, campaign planning, traditional and digital media, analytics and polling, and mobilizing voters on Election Day. We will cover the shift in campaign financing, which has expanded the participation and influence of groups unaffiliated directly with candidates. We will host several guest speakers who will impart their professional campaign experience. This syllabus was due earlier than many could commit, so please understand there may be some movement in scheduling as well as content.

Learning Objectives

- Goal #1: Students will be able to relate their internship experience with the skills and substance learned in this course.
 - Objective #1: Students will discuss as part of their class participation how the weekly substance or skills learned applied to the work of their internship.
- Goal #2: Students will gain practical experience in writing and presenting campaign plans and analyses.

- Objective #2: Students will write professional-style memos on various subjects related to different components of political campaigns.
- Goal #3: Students will meet leaders in modern campaigns to understand what it takes to be successful in this business.
 - Objective #3: Students will prepare career-oriented questions for speakers.
- Goal #4: Students will focus their learning and experience on the component of political campaigns they are most interested in to make the case for a specific strategy.
 - Objective #4: Students will write a paper that compares an historical case against their strategy for a specific campaign scenario.

Course Materials and Accessibility

Among the materials for this course are a combination of book chapters, scholarly articles, news articles, historical documents, campaign memoranda, and other electronic media. All materials are available either as links within this syllabus or in a Dropbox folder I will offer you access to at the first class. Yes, this means that there is no textbook to buy. As you have experience or will learn in this class, campaigns change rapidly so if we have unique opportunity, we will modify the course schedule. Any changes to the syllabus content or class schedule will be communicated via email or text message.

Course Responsibilities and Assignments

Attendance: Like your internship supervisor, I require attendance to each session. If there are any conflicts or special opportunities, please let me know and I will do my best to be accommodating if you give me at least 48 hours' notice. If you go, you'll need to give us a short presentation in the next class about what you learned. Please be advised that in all cases you must provide some type of written documentation – or email exchange with me – about an extraordinary event such as the death of a family member, personal illness (don't come to class if you're sick, please), or a major religious holiday not recognized by the [UCDC calendar](#).

Participation: As in campaigns, you need to be in it to win it. Just showing up is unsatisfactory for the grade you want to achieve (an A) so you will be expected to contribute substantively to every class discussion. With advanced warning, you will be asked to help lead the discussion of the weekly readings, give us a short presentation on your strategy memo or an update on your case study, or summarize what you learned from our guest speaker. Get enough sleep and remember to silence your mobile devices. Repeated offenses will require you to leave the class and receive a zero for participation that session. Your full attention is mandatory.

Reading Assignments: All readings in this syllabus have been assigned with a great deal of care and understanding of your daily internship schedule. All of them are required to be completed before class as they will be useful background for your strategy memos and for your case studies. As we go through the course, I may suggest others, on an individual basis, that might

be helpful to round out your interest in a particular topic. These are not mandatory. As with the course schedule, I reserve the right to change the readings based on the ebb and flow of the campaign season this year.

Strategy Memos: These are (very) short, evidence-based writing assignments that are focused on a specific part of a political campaign. The length is meant to help you balance your time and focus your core arguments. More often than not, campaign managers do not have time to read lengthy dissertation-level memos advocating for one strategy over another. As you will find in your career, those who go on too long generally do not have a great argument. Like great comedy – and campaigns can be genuinely funny – the best arguments don’t go overboard. Here you will learn to think clearly and argue your point in the most efficient manner possible.

Case Studies: After a number of weeks squeezing your counsel into short memos, the final assignment will allow you to breathe more life into them and provide an historical context. The structure of the paper will be along the lines of, “We should do this” because of “What happened before here, here, and here.” A case study will typically be presented to the campaign team as the campaign plan is being written to give guidance to how it can be won. Your case study will focus in on one part of the campaign such as polling, media, fundraising, or voter mobilization. You will give a cogent rationale for why what worked before (or didn’t) gives you an opportunity to win this time.

Grading Standards and Measurement

Individual assignments in this course will be worth various points but converted to a 100-point scale such that an A=100-93%, A-92-90%, B+89-87, B=86-83, etc. As in campaigns, only excellence wins. If you get an A, you earned it. If it is good, you’ll get a B. Satisfactory work gets only a C. If you get a D or an F, the work presented is less than satisfactory or of poor quality. As you go through the course, you will have a good sense of where you are performing at all times and I will be available to talk with you about how to improve. Still, this is your grade and you are the one who must be committed to achieving your goals. If you do not complete your work on-time, you will get zero credit for it. Incompletes will be allowed only under the most exceptional of circumstance and in consultation with university advisors and administrators. Be smart about asking for extensions. In most cases, the answer is no.

Final course grades will be proportioned as follows:

Participation	10%
Five Campaign Memos <i>(six are assigned, you may drop one)</i>	50%
Case Study	40%
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Total Grade	100%

According to general university policies, final course grades earned in this class will be worth the following points: 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.

Course Communication Tools

I will be using email, text, and Dropbox to communicate with you during this course as I've found most students do not use Blackboard. You are responsible for checking your email and mobile phone regularly for messages and feedback. Please make sure I know if you have changed either of these so we can stay in touch throughout the quarter.

Policy on Attendance

Again, you need to attend every class unless you have an approved excuse from your instructor (me). For more, please see the first paragraph of the "Course Responsibilities and Assignments" (above).

Policy on Missed and Late Assignments

Assignment deadlines are firm, and makeup assignments are permitted only for excused absences (see above). You are encouraged to submit assignments early, and I will generally give you early feedback depending on when it is presented to me.

Missed assignments: You get a make-up only if the absence was excused. If there is a scheduled engagement that you know will impact your ability to deliver an assignment on-time, you need to let me know within the first two weeks of class to be considered for a make-up. Note that the make-up assignment may differ from the original assignment. If you do not turn in an assignment on-time without a pre-arranged make-up scheduled, your grade for that assignment will be a zero.

Late assignments: Assignments are due the day before class at 5pm so don't be tapping out your final paragraph during the first few minutes of a session (yes, that's happened). For every 24-hour period past the date and time the assignment is due (including weekends), the grade received for the assignment will be decreased by two (2) parts of a grade). If you turn in an A memo on Tuesday at 5:31pm, it gets a B+. Unlike campaigns, being late to the game (sorry, VP Joe Biden) can still get you credit. Still, it limits your upside (that's why Joe didn't run).

Policy on Academic Misconduct

UCDC has a zero-tolerance policy for cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of dishonesty. Students should refer to their home campus Student Code of Conduct for the regulations that apply to them. The burden is on each student to know what behaviors constitute cheating and plagiarism. Ignorance of these behaviors is not an adequate defense. In short, don't do it.

Policy on Classroom Conduct

While political discourse seems to have taken a dark turn in the presidential primaries, we will instead treat each other with the utmost respect in this class. Everyone will be able to make their opinions known without unkind or impolite reactions from others. You do not need to agree but you need to be respectful. Below are four specific policies I will enforce.

1. You will keep your mobile devices silent and only answer them in emergencies. If you need to take the call, you will leave until half time so you will not disturb the flow of the class. If it goes off more than once and it is not silent, your phone will sit with me for the remainder of the class and you will get a zero for class participation that session.
2. You need to be on-time to class unless you have advanced approval. If you are late, you will first get a warning. The second time you will get zero points for participation. Remember, campaigns (and politicians) that really care about you show up on-time. Those that care about themselves, show up late. Be smart: be on-time.
3. Do not do your assignments or other homework in this class. If you are bored, engage the conversation we are having, don't punch up Snapchat. If I find that you are doing something other than taking notes in this class on your device, you will be asked to leave, and you will be given a zero for class participation in that session.
4. While YouTube, Periscope, and Snapchat are fantastic campaign technologies, they are simply not allowed in our classroom for several reasons. First, we want everyone to feel they can be honest in class and not worry about becoming the next viral misadventure for the next news cycle. Second, we want our guest speakers to feel like they can say what is on their mind without committing news either. If you do this, you will lose a half-grade on your final grade for the quarter. A's will become A-'s. Respect everyone's privacy: don't do it.

Course Schedule

The subject and date of each class is in **bold** and you'll find the major discussion topics, readings, and assignments due in **red**. Each class will be divided into two main parts, one focusing on the readings and another on the practical application of campaign techniques. In addition, time will be allotted during several classes, as time allows, where you will construct a series of campaign memos directed from a scenario based on the day's' topic.

Session 1: March 26: Parties and Elections

How have political parties and elections changed over the course of American history? What is the role of political parties? What do modern political campaigns emphasize?

- Downs, Anthony. "[An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy.](#)" *The Journal of Political Economy*, (65)2, 135-150.
- Smidt, Corwin D. "[Dynamics in Partisanship During American Presidential Campaigns.](#)" *Public Opinion Quarterly*, (78)2014, 303-329.

Session 2: April 2: Independent Groups

Are independent campaign groups new? How have they changed over time? What are the current rules governing independent group activities? What are Super PACs? How can independent groups help or hurt a political campaign?

- Madison, James (as Publius). [Federalist No. 10](#): "The Utility of the Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection". *Daily Advertiser*, November 22, 1787.
- Garrett, R. Sam. [SuperPACs in Federal Elections: Overview and Issues for Congress.](#) *Congressional Research Service*. April 4, 2013.

Strategy Memo #1: Independent Groups Landscape

Session 3: April 9: Planning and Management

Do campaigns matter? What is the role of the campaign manager and how has it changed in the modern era? Which are the most important skills needed for planning and managing a campaign? How do campaigns react to unexpected events outside the plan?

- Tzu, Sun. [The Art of War](#). Translated from Chinese by Lionel Giles (1910). Allandale Online Publishing. 2000.
- Excerpts from the [2014 Michelle Nunn Campaign Memo](#).

- Recommended: Sample Campaign Plan Template (available in Dropbox).

Session 4: April 23: Fundraising

How important is money in politics? Does it determine the outcomes of elections? Who donates to political campaigns? What was the effect of the Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission Supreme Court ruling of January 2010?

- Bai, Matt. "[How Much has Citizens United Changed the Political Game?](#)" *New York Times*. July 17, 2012.
- MacColl, Spencer. "[Citizens United Decision Profoundly Affects Political Landscape.](#)" *Center for Responsive Politics*. May 5, 2011.
- Recommended: Garecht, Joe. "Political Fundraising the Smart Way." (Dropbox)
- Recommended: Israel, Steve. "Confessions of a Congressman." *New York Times*, January 18, 2016. Downloaded to Dropbox on January 13, 2016 at 12:05pm.

Strategy Memo #2: Primary Fundraising Targets

Session 5: April 30: Analytics and Big Data at Blue Labs

We will meet at Blue Labs at 6:30pm at 700 14th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005. There, we will learn about how President Obama's analytics and data team helped reinvent campaigns.

What are analytics and how have they changed campaigns? How did the 2012 President Obama re-election campaign leverage analytics to improve fundraising, organizing, and turnout? What are the limits of campaign analytics?

- Issenberg, Sasha. "[How President Obama's Campaign Used Big Data to Rally Individual Voters.](#)" *MIT Technology Review*. December 19, 2012.
- Green, Joshua. "[The Science Behind Those Obama Campaign E-Mails.](#)" *Bloomberg Business*. November 29, 2012.
- O'Connor, Patrick and Dante Chinni. "[Election 2014: Results Show Limits of Big Data.](#)" *Wall Street Journal*. November 9, 2014.

Strategy Memo #3: Targeting Likely Voters

Session 6: May 7: Campaign Research

What are the ethical dilemmas involving opposition research? Who should fund opposition research? What are the traditional and modern techniques? How should opposition research be disseminated? When does opposition research backfire? Should you conduct candidate research on your own client?

- The Economist. "[Digging Dirt, Digitally.](#)" July 12, 2014.
- Zilliox, Larry. 2012. "*Political Research*" and "*Online Research*". The Opposition Research Handbook. 2012. (Dropbox)

Strategy Memo #4: Candidate Vulnerabilities

Session 7: May 14: Political Polling

What is a political poll? How do polls attempt to represent voting populations? What are the problems with polling and how has the industry attempted to handle them? How do traditional methods like live interviewer telephone polling compare with modern alternatives?

- [Assessing the Representativeness of Public Opinion Surveys.](#) *Pew Research Center for The People and The Press.* May 15, 2012.
- Graefe, Andreas. 2014. [Accuracy of Vote Expectation Surveys in Forecasting Elections.](#) *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 78(Special Edition), 204-232.

Strategy Memo #5: Findings from Campaign Polling Benchmark Survey

Session 8: May 21: Paid and Earned Media

What is the difference between paid and earned media? How has broadcast and cable media buying changed? Why has the internet and social media influenced how campaigns are run? Is the news media as powerful as it used to be in campaigns?

- Tringali, Brian C. "Message Testing in the Twenty-First Century" in *Routledge Handbook of Political Management.* 2008. (Dropbox)
- Mutz, Diana C. "[The Great Divide: Campaign Media in the American Mind.](#)" *Daedalus: On Public Opinion.* Fall 2012.

Strategy Memo #6: Should My Candidate Do *The Colbert Report*?

Session 9: May 28: Volunteer Organizing and Turnout

Why do people volunteer to participate in political campaigns? What techniques are used to organize volunteers and focus their efforts? Which modern political science methods are driving voter mobilization? How have new technologies like mobile applications changed campaigns?

- Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. [Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment](#). *American Political Science Review*, 102(1), 33-48.
- Issenberg, Sasha. "The RNC Hopes This App Will Keep Campaigns From Going All In With the Koch Brothers." Bloomberg Politics. August 4, 2015. (Dropbox)
- Lee, Joilee. "Facebook 'I'm a Voter' App Nudges Voters to Polls." USA Today. November 4, 2014. (Dropbox)
- Skim the "Get Out the Vote Experiments" Recap from [Yale](#).
- Review turnout applications: [TinyCandidate](#), Facebook's "[I'm a Voter](#)" app, and this roundup from [US News](#).

Session 10: June 4: The Permanent Campaign

What drives the Permanent Campaign? Is the modern era of constant campaigning good or bad for democracy? Does the Permanent Campaign lead to more engagement by the public? What is the future of political campaigning?

- Heclo, Hugh. 2000. "Campaigning and Governing: A Conspectus." *The Permanent Campaign and Its Future*, Norman Ornstein and Thomas Mann (eds.). 1-37. (Dropbox)

Case Study, 40% of your grade.