

# CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS

## Syllabus

**Professor Michael Signer, Esq., Ph.D.**

This course will focus on the theory, science, and practice of modern presidential campaigns. Campaigns provide the connective tissue between those who are interested in serving in government, and the governance that actually happens. Through the course of a presidential campaign, voters, donors, parties, the media, and other candidates create a highly dynamic process where even the most keenly-constructive campaign plan is often thrown off course. The end result is the election of arguably the most powerful single person in the world—by a democratic (or mostly democratic) process. This course will teach students about the variables driving outcomes in modern presidential campaigns, while also giving them greater insight into the actual decision-making process that helps govern a campaign.

Over the course of eight weeks, students will read how political scientists have analyze the factors driving outcomes in modern American politics, from campaign finance to negative politics, public opinion to candidates' behavior. These materials will be supplemented by several classic journalistic studies of campaigns, including books and documentary films.

Students will also be required to apply their insights to practice through assignments that walk through the strategic and tactical decisions of a modern presidential campaign, from message, fundraising, and media strategy, to primary and caucus states, to the general election.

Assignments will include a short paper evaluating one of the political science texts, a speech or op-ed about a candidate's strategy, and a longer paper in the form of a strategy memorandum to a candidate. Class participation will also factor into the grade.

Students are expected to read the materials closely and to complete the assignments on time.

### **Course Requirements**

This course has four requirements:

- Attend and participate in all seminars, and lead one discussion: 30% percent of grade.
- Op-ed or speech: 10% of grade
- Short paper (5-7 pp): 20% of grade.
- Final paper/memorandum (12-15 pp): 40% of grade.

## Reading Assignments

Students will need to purchase the following books:

- John Sides, Daron Shaw, Matthew Grossman, and Keena Lipsitz, *Campaigns and Elections: Rules, Reality, Strategy, Choice* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011).
- Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the '72 Campaign Trail*.

All other materials will be available in a course reader.

### Week 1: Introduction

*Tuesday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.:*

- “Author’s Note,” “December 1971,” “January,” and “February,” in Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the '72 Campaign Trail*, pp. 1 – 79.

### Week 2: The Nature of Modern Campaigns

*Tuesday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.:*

**\*\* ASSIGNMENT: 800 word op-ed for your hometown paper on public policy issue. \*\***

- John Sides, Daron Shaw, Matthew Grossman, and Keena Lipsitz, *Campaigns and Elections: Rules, Reality, Strategy, Choice* (W.W. Norton: 2011) (excerpts)
  - Preface, Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and Chapter 3: pp. ix - 81

### Week 3: Polling and Public Opinion

*Tuesday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.:*

- Chapter 5, “Modern Campaign Strategies,” in *Campaigns & Elections*, pp. 120-149.
- “Polling: The Focus of Strategic Vision,” in Daniel Shea (ed.), *Campaign Craft: The Strategies, Tactics, and Art of Political Campaign Management*, pp. 103-119.
- Robert M. Entman and Susan Herbst, “Reframing Public Opinion as We Have Known It,” in W. Lance Bennett and Robert Entman, eds., *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy*, pp. 203-225.

#### Week 4: Message

*Tuesday, July 17<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.:*

- W. Lance Bennett and Jarol B. Manheim, “The Big Spin: Strategic Communication and the Transformation of Pluralist Democracy,” in *Mediated Politics*, pp. 279-297.
- Chapter 1, 2, and 3 in Lynn Vavreck, *The Message Matters: The Economy and Presidential Campaigns*, pp. 1-40.
- “Later in March,” in Hunter Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the '72 Campaign Trail*, pp. 103- 118.

**\*\* ASSIGNMENT: 5-7 pp. SHORT PAPER DUE AT 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY, JULY 20<sup>th</sup>\*\***

#### Week 5: Message (continued) and Campaign Finance

*Tuesday, July 24<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.:*

- Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, Drew Westen, *The Political Brain* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), pp. ix – 88.

***\*\*EXTRA SATURDAY CLASS\*\**: Saturday, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.:**

- Chapter 3, “Building Blocks,” in David Plouffe, *The Audacity to Win*, pp. 55-83.
- Chapter 4 in *Campaigns & Elections*, pp. 82-119.
- Dino P. Christenson and Corwin D. Smidt, “Riding the Waves of Money: Contribution Dynamics in the 2008 Presidential Nomination Campaign,” *Journal of Political Marketing*, 2011, pp. 4-26.

#### Week 6: The Role of the Economy in Campaigns

*Tuesday, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.:*

- Chapters 5, 6, and 7 in Linda Vavreck, 2009. *The Message Matters: The Economy and Presidential Campaigns* (Princeton University Press: 2009), pp. 67 – 166.

***\*\* EXTRA SATURDAY CLASS\*\**: Saturday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.:**

- **In-Class Debate on the Economy**: students will divide into teams with four members: Candidate, Campaign Manager, Debate Prep, and Issues. On Saturday, debates will occur on economic proposals between each team.

## Week 7: Staying on the Offense

*Tuesday, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.:*

- Richard Ben Cramer, *What It Takes*, Chapters 61, (pp. 626-630), 71 (pp. 682-686), 72 (pp. 687-696), 73 (pp. 697-700).
- Chapter 13, “Positively Negative,” in *The Political Brain*, pp. 317-347.
- *The War Room* (film excerpts), *Boogie Man* (film excerpts).

## Week 8: The Early States

*Tuesday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.:*

- Preface, Chapter 1, 2, 3, and 4, in David Redlawsk, Caroline Tolbert and Todd Donovan, *Why Iowa? How Caucuses and Sequential Elections Improve the Presidential Nominating Process* (University of Chicago Press: 2010), pp. xi – 85.
- Vavreck, Lynn, Constantine J. Spiliotes and Linda L. Fowler. “The Effects of Retail Politics in the New Hampshire Primary,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 2002, pp. 595-610.

**\*\* FINAL 12-15 PP PAPER DUE ON DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED \*\***