

# POLSCI 242: Campaigns and Elections

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Class: Tu/Th 3:05pm - 4:20pm, Levine Science Research Center D243

Office Hours: Gross Hall 294H, W 4-5, F 2-3, or by appointment

## Course Description

Political theorist Adam Przeworski succinctly described democracy as “a system in which parties lose elections.” But how are elections organized, what are political parties, and what factors determine who wins and loses? How do candidates and campaigns compete for votes, and how do voters choose between them? This course will address these questions, among others related to campaigns and elections, with a focus on the United States. It will be conducted in an unstructured seminar style with a heavy emphasis on reading, in-class discussion, and written engagement with foundational and cutting-edge political science scholarship.

This is an intermediate level undergraduate course. While there are no prerequisites, the course assumes that students begin with a basic familiarity with U.S. politics. Students who are successful in this course will gain a deeper understanding of the nature of political competition in the United States, preparing them for further study of and participation in the U.S. political system.

This is a political science course, not a venue for practicing politics itself. This distinction is important. We will discuss topics such as why people turn out to vote and how campaigns approach political advertising; we will not debate who your classmates ought to vote for in the next election or whether a specific ad was objectionable. This is not to discourage you from engaging in these debates! This is to encourage you to do so outside of class in settings ranging from informal discussions with friends and acquaintances to the pages of the Duke Chronicle.

## Office Hours

Office hours are time formally set aside for you to ask any questions about course material, assignments, or anything else you think is relevant. While I generally prefer that you use the listed in-person office hours if possible, you are welcome to email me to set up an alternative appointment if those times do not work.

## Course Texts

With the exception of these books, which I ask that you purchase, all assigned readings (as well as audio/visual material) will be posted on Canvas.

- Masket, Seth. 2020. *Learning from Loss: The Democrats, 2016-2020*
- Hopkins, Daniel. 2018. *The Increasingly United States*
- Hersh, Eitan. 2015. *Hacking the Electorate: How Campaigns Perceive Voters*
- Sides, John, and Lynn Vavreck. 2013. *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election*

If you are having difficulty with costs associated with this course, Duke makes the following relevant resources available:

- Contact the [financial aid office](#) (whether or not you are on aid) for information on loans or connections to other resources on campus that could help alleviate these costs.
- DukeLIFE offers [course materials assistance](#) for eligible students. Students who are eligible for DukeLIFE benefits are notified prior to the beginning of the semester.

## Assignments and Evaluation

### Attendance and Discussion (15%)

Students are required to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned material.

Everyone has different learning styles, and participation in class discussion includes listening as well as speaking. You do not have to talk a lot for talking's sake in order to show that you are prepared to attend class. That said, I reserve the right to administer periodic reading quizzes and cold-call during discussions if it seems as though the class is not prepared.

### Discussion Questions (15%)

Students will be required to circulate discussion questions once per week (due by 6:00am the day of their preferred class) on Canvas. I will use submitted questions to guide our discussion, and may ask you to lead portions of discussion based on questions you submitted.

- If there is a consistent imbalance of questions submitted for Tuesday vs. Thursday class sessions, I reserve the right to randomly assign students to one day or the other.

Read your discussion questions to yourself before submitting them to make sure that they would actually serve as the basis for discussion. Questions that can be answered with a "yes" or "no" are usually a "how," "what" or "why" away from becoming discussion questions.

### **Response Memos (30%)**

Over the course of the semester, you will write three short (up to 1000 words) memos critically engaging with scholarship you have been assigned to read. Each of these response memos will be worth 10% of your final grade. You can choose the weeks in which you would like to submit response memos, but you can only submit one memo in any given week.

Memos will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate an application of original thought to the week's material. This can be achieved through in-depth engagement with a single piece of scholarship or broader synthesis across multiple readings, but it *cannot* be achieved by merely summarizing what you read.

### **Campaign Plan (40%)**

Toward the beginning of the semester, you and a partner will identify a real candidate in a real upcoming election. You will take on the persona of a political consulting firm pitching your services to this candidate. As the 2024 election will have already taken place before this project is due, you may consider campaigns for any congressional (House or Senate) or state (governor or state legislature) election that will take place in 2025 or 2026. Within these parameters, you will complete two assignments that together serve as your final project for the course:

- **Campaign plan video (20%):** A 60-second video that demonstrates an understanding of your candidate's strengths, weaknesses, and path to victory.
- **Oral defense (20%):** A five-minute presentation, followed by a five-minute question-and-answer period, in which you explain key choices you made in producing the video.

### **Due dates**

- Discussion questions: weekly
- Response memos: at your discretion (one per week across any three weeks)
- Final project: December 3rd

## **Reading and Course Materials**

With the exception of books listed above, all readings and audio/visual course materials will be posted on Canvas.

I expect you to read, listen to, and/or watch a non-trivial amount of material on your own in order to prepare for class. However, being prepared to discuss the material is not the same thing as reading every page of the material in full depth. Reading strategically is an important skill that I encourage you to practice in this course.

## Course Schedule

- Week 1 (August 27/29): Introduction and Norms
  - August 27:
    - \* No assigned reading
  - August 29:
    - \* Schattschneider, E.E. 1960. *The Semisovereign People* Chapters 1 & 4
    - \* Riker, William. 1986. *The Art of Political Manipulation*, Preface and Chapter 1.
- Week 2 (September 3/5): Political Parties and Partisanship
  - September 3:
    - \* Aldrich, John. *Why Parties? A Second Look*, Chapter 2
    - \* Bawn, Kathleen, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2012. "A Theory of Parties: Groups, Policy Demands, and Nominations in American Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 10(3): 571-597.
  - September 5:
    - \* Sniderman, Paul, and Edward Stiglitz. 2012. *The Reputational Premium: A Theory of Party Identification and Policy Reasoning*, Chapters 1-2 (Chapter 3 encouraged but optional)
    - \* Elliott, Kevin. 2023. "What is it Like to be a Partisan? Measures of Partisanship and Its Value for Democracy." *Perspectives on Politics* FirstView, 1-15.
- Week 3 (September 10/12) Institutions
  - September 10 (Second Presidential Debate):
    - \* Fraga, Bernard. 2016. "Redistricting and the Causal Impact of Race on Voter Turnout." *Journal of Politics* 78(1): 19–34.
    - \* Grimmer, Justin, and Jesse Yoder. 2022. "The durable differential deterrent effects of strict photo identification laws." *Political Science Research and Methods* 10(3): 453-469.
    - \* (LISTEN) How Presidential Debates Influence Voters. Science of Politics Podcast, Niskasen Center. August 14, 2019 ([Link](#)).
  - September 12:
    - \* Kogan, Vladimir, Stéphane Lavertu, and Zachary Peskowitz. 2018. "Election Timing, Electorate Composition, and Policy Outcomes: Evidence from School Districts." *American Journal of Political Science* 62(3): 637-651.
    - \* Santucci, Jack. 2021. "Variants of Ranked-Choice Voting from a Strategic Perspective." *Politics and Governance* 9(2)
    - \* "Who Won the First Biden-Trump Debate?" FiveThirtyEight, June 28, 2024. ([Link](#))
      - Note that FiveThirtyEight usually publishes these immediately following each debate; I'll swap this one out in favor of the second debate pre/post poll if it's available in time.

- Week 4 (September 17/19): Fundamentals 1 (Participation)
  - September 17:
    - \* Green, Jon, William Hobbs, Stefan McCabe, and David Lazer. 2022. "Online Engagement with 2020 Election Misinformation and Turnout in the 2021 Georgia Runoff Election." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 119(34): e2115900119.
    - \* Pettigrew, Stephen. 2021. "The downstream consequences of long wait times: How lines at the precinct depress future turnout." *Electoral Studies* 71: 102188.
  - September 19:
    - \* Gerber, Alan, Donald Green, and Christopher Larimer. 2008. "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 102(1): 33-48.
    - \* Valentino, Nicholas, et al. 2011. "Election Night's Alright for Fighting: The Role of Emotions in Political Participation." *Journal of Politics* 73(1): 156–170.
- Week 5 (September 24/26): Fundamentals 2 (Choice)
  - September 24:
    - \* Achen, Christopher, and Larry Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*, Chapters 2, 4, 6, and 7
  - September 26:
    - \* Popkin, Samuel, 1991. *The Reasoning Voter*, pages 1-17
    - \* Hillygus, D. Sunshine, and Todd Shields. 2008. *The Persuadable Voter*, Chapter 2.
- Week 6 (October 1/3): Primary Elections
  - October 1:
    - \* Masket, Seth. *Learning from Loss: The Democrats, 2016-2020*, Chapters 1-4
  - October 3:
    - \* Masket, Seth. *Learning from Loss: The Democrats, 2016-2020*, Chapters 5-7
- Week 7 (October 8/10): Campaign Strategy (Broad)
  - October 8:
    - \* Sides, John, and Lynn Vavreck. *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election*, Chapters 1, 3, 5
  - October 10:
    - \* Sides, John, and Lynn Vavreck. *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election*, Chapters 6-8
- Week 8 (October 15/17): Campaign Strategy (Deep)
  - October 15: No class (Fall break)
  - October 17:

- \* Hersh, Eitan. 2015. *Hacking the Electorate: How Campaigns Perceive Voters*. Chapters 1, 2, 5, and 7
- \* (WATCH) Becca Siegel, Keynote Address, Columbia SPS Political Analytics Conference 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSRX3jffXp4>.
- Week 9 (October 22/24): Campaign Finance
  - October 22:
    - \* Ansolabehere, Stephen, John M. DeFigueiredo, and James M. Snyder, Jr. 2003. "Why Is There So Little Money in U.S. Politics?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17(1): 105–130.
    - \* Dawood, Yasmin. 2015. "Campaign Finance and American Democracy." *Annual Review of Political Science* 18: 329-348.
  - October 24:
    - \* Kalla, Joshua, and David Broockman. 2016. "Campaign Contributions Facilitate Access to Congressional Officials: A Randomized Field Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(3): 545-558.
    - \* Oklobdzija, Stan. 2023. "Dark Parties: Unveiling Nonparty Communities in American Political Campaigns." *American Political Science Review*, FirstView.
- Week 10 (October 29/October 31): Nationalization
  - October 29:
    - \* Hopkins, Daniel. 2018. *The Increasingly United States*, Chapters 1-4
  - October 31:
    - \* Hopkins, Daniel. 2018. *The Increasingly United States*, Chapters 6, 7, and 10
- Week 11 (November 5/7): Media, Paid and Earned
  - November 5 (Election Day):
    - \* Sides, John, Lynn Vavreck, and Christopher Warshaw. 2021. "The Effect of Television Advertising in United States Elections." *American Political Science Review* 116(2): 702-718.
    - \* Hewitt, Luke, et al. "How experiments help campaigns persuade voters: evidence from a large archive of campaigns' own experiments." *American Political Science Review*.
    - \* (WATCH): Campaign Ads: [I Like Ike](#), [Daisy](#), [It's Morning Again in America](#), [Switch to Mitch](#), [Revolving Door](#), [Windsurfing](#), [My Job](#), 2024 Ads TBD
  - November 7:
    - \* Hershey, Marjorie Randon. 1992. "The Constructed Explanation: Interpreting Election Results in the 1984 Presidential Race." *Journal of Politics* 54(4): 943-976.
    - \* Ladd, Jonathan, and Gabriel Lenz. 2009. "Exploiting a Rare Communication Shift to Document the Persuasive Power of News Media." *American Journal of Political Science* 53(2): 394-410.
    - \* (WATCH) The War Room ([Stream on Kanopy via Duke Library](#))

- Week 12 (November 12/14): The Campaign Industry
  - November 12:
    - \* Saldin, Robert, and Steven Teles. 2020. *Never Trump: The Revolt of the Conservative Elites*, Chapter 4.
    - \* Martin, Gregory, and Zachary Peskowitz. 2015. "Parties and Electoral Performance in the Market for Political Consultants." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 40(3): 441-470.
    - \* (WATCH) Our Brand is Crisis: [Link](#).
  - November 14 (Guest: Mark White, Polling Data Scientist, BlueLabs):
    - \* Nyhan, Brendan, and Jacob Montgomery. 2015. "Connecting the Candidates: Consultant Networks and the Diffusion of Campaign Strategy in American Congressional Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(2): 292-308.
    - \* Limbocker, Scott, and Hye Young You. 2020. "Campaign styles: Persistency in campaign resource allocation." *Electoral Studies* 65: 102140.
- Week 13 (November 19/21): Political Organizing
  - November 19:
    - \* Chewning, Taylor, Jon Green, Hans Hassell, and Matthew Miles. 2022. "Campaign Principal-Agent Problems: Volunteers as Faithful and Representative Agents." *Political Behavior*, Early View.
    - \* Blum, Rachel, and Michael Cowburn. 2023. "How Local Factions Pressure Parties: Activist Groups and Primary Contests in the Tea Party Era." *British Journal of Political Science*, Early View.
  - November 21:
    - \* Skocpol, Theda, and Caroline Tervo. "Resistance Disconnect" *The American Prospect*, February 4, 2021 ([Link](#)).
    - \* Hersh, Eitan. "Politics is for Power, Not Consumption." *Boston Review*, November 4, 2019 ([Link](#)).
- Week 14 (November 26/28): No class (Thanksgiving Break 11/26-12/2)
- Week 15 (December 3/5): Final project presentations

## Course Policies

### Attendance

Not only are you expected to attend class, you are expected to come to class prepared to engage with that week's material. Excused absences may be requested in writing with reasonable advance notice (more urgent reasons require less advance notice). Duke policies outline personal emergencies, illnesses, varsity athletic competition, and religious observances as acceptable reasons for an excused absence, but I am willing to consider other reasons that do not neatly fall into one of these categories if given sufficient advance notice.

## Deadlines and Late Work

You are expected to turn assignments in on time. However, things happen, and there may be good reasons for additional flexibility. These reasons can range from serious unexpected circumstances to needing to distribute your workload across multiple courses. **Requests to change deadlines must be submitted in writing with reasonable advance notice** (the more urgent the reason, the less notice is required).

Deadlines for the written assignments (response memos) in this class are flexible. However, flexibility can be a double-edged sword, as it places additional responsibility on you to manage your time and you are not allowed to submit multiple response memos in a single week. This means that you are not allowed to submit three memos over the final two (or fewer) weeks of the semester. **Falling behind on memos without arranging an alternative schedule with me in advance will result in the loss of partial or full credit for each missing memo, depending on how severely behind you are.**

## Class Discussions

When you enroll in this class, you become colleagues with everyone else who is enrolled in it. Colleagues frequently disagree, but they do so without being disagreeable.

You are expected to engage with each others' views and perspectives respectfully both inside and outside of the classroom. Even (especially) when you disagree, it is essential to approach this disagreement amicably, with an assumption of good faith, because you are colleagues and not opponents.

Of course it should go without saying, but assumptions of good faith and expectations of mutual respect are not licenses to engage in exclusionary language that is inherently disrespectful.

## Grading

If you feel that a grade you receive on an assignment does not reflect the quality of the work you submitted, you may email me to request either a clarification or a re-grade. The email must include, either in the body or as an attachment, a rationale for why the request is warranted. This means explicitly acknowledging and engaging with any substantive feedback you received and, if requesting a regrade, explaining (with reference to any provided grading criteria, such as a rubric) why the grade you received does not align with that substantive feedback.

Re-grades will be independent from the original grade. This means that the new grade may be higher than, the same as, or *lower than* the original grade.

## Writing

Written work should be proofread for spelling and grammar, arguments should be supported by reliable evidence, and references *must* be appropriately cited (see below). *I do not care what citation format you use as long as you pick one and use it consistently.* I strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with a citation management tool – my personal recommendation is Zotero



because it's free and easily integrates with Microsoft Word and Google Docs – that will make citation formatting quicker and easier when you need to compile a bibliography. You are also welcome to consult myself or the University's writing center for general writing advice.

## Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is when you present someone else's ideas as your own. Students are strongly encouraged to learn from one another through discussions both in and outside of class, so long as individual writing assignments reflect their own intellectual labor. This means that when you submit writing with your name on it and no one else's, you did the work that produced the document. All ideas and claims included in written work that are not your own should be appropriately cited.

You may use large language models such as ChatGPT in this class, provided that you disclose how you used them and provided that they are used within the parameters of assignment guidelines (recall that memos will be evaluated based on their demonstration of original thought applied to the material, e.g.). *Presenting model-generated text as your own writing will be considered academic dishonesty.* While you are not fully prohibited from using large language models in this class, I still generally discourage their use for two reasons:

- You are not learning how to generate or communicate original ideas of your own if you delegate these tasks to language models, which remain worse at these tasks than humans. Language models are very good at summarizing; they are not as good at original thought. Grading in this class will heavily incentivize the latter over the former.
- Because these models are not in fact intelligent, and instead generate predictions of what the text they are asked to produce might resemble, they have a tendency to *make things up* when given more complex tasks such as college-level writing assignments. You can read more about these issues [here](#).

Duke takes the issue of academic honesty very seriously. Any student who appears to violate the University's [Academic Dishonesty Policy](#) may be referred to the University's Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. Academic dishonesty on any aspect of course work will result in failure of the course.

## Support Services

### Academic Support Services

**Political Science Librarian:** Ryan Denniston ([ryan.denniston@duke.edu](mailto:ryan.denniston@duke.edu)) is Duke's librarian for Public Policy and Political Science. In addition to myself, you are welcome to email Ryan with questions as you working on writing assignments for the course.

**The Writing Studio:** I encourage you to visit the Writing Studio where you will find a place beyond our classroom to work collaboratively with an attentive, non-evaluative reader. You can visit at any stage in your writing process, including before you have even started writing. Visit <http://twp.duke.edu/twp-writing-studio> to schedule a face-to-face or online appointment and

to learn more about Studio resources.

**The Academic Resource Center:** The ARC provides academic support and programming for all Duke undergraduates. Their services include one-on-one consultations and peer tutoring, and they work alongside the Student Disability Access Office to serve students with diagnosed learning disabilities. Their programs include opportunities for students to study together in structured groups (“learning communities”), as well as workshops offered throughout the semester. Further information and resources are available on [their website](#).

## Accommodation and Inclusion

**Student Disability Access Office:** If you have any physical, cognitive, or psychiatric needs that require accommodations for this course, please contact the Student Disability Access Office (if you haven’t already) as soon as possible. The SDAO will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations. Please contact them by email at [sdao@duke.edu](mailto:sdao@duke.edu) or visit <https://access.duke.edu/students> for more information.

**Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):** Each of you will face some level of challenge during your time at Duke – whether it be a challenge like procrastination, or a more profound challenge that impairs your ability to function. The CAPS staff includes psychologists, clinical social workers, and psychiatrists experienced in working with college-age adults. Information about their services and workshops is available [here](#).

**The Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity:** This center provides education, advocacy, support, mentoring, academic engagement, and space LGBTQIA+ students, staff, and faculty at Duke. The Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity also serves and supports Duke alumni/ae and the greater LGBTQIA+ community. Further information and resources are available on their [website](#).

## Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 protects individuals from sex or gender-based discrimination, including discrimination based on gender-identity, in educational programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. It applies to all aspects of employment and education programs and activities at Duke University.

If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, options a complete list of confidential and non-confidential reporting options and resources both on- and off-campus can be found on the Office of Institutional Equity’s [website](#). Faculty members and instructors are considered “responsible employees” at Duke University, meaning they are required to report all allegations of sex or gender-based discrimination.

## Acknowledgments

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