

PSCI 315  
Fall 2020  
Online

3 credit hours

William D. Adler  
Office: LWH 2068  
Hours: By appointment  
Email: w-adler@neiu.edu  
Phone: (773) 442-5657

## **Electoral Politics**

### College of Arts & Sciences Syllabus

A review of major developments in electoral politics (including political parties and electoral law) and voting behavior in recent years, and an analysis of current elections.

#### **Prerequisites:**

Undergraduate level PSCI 216 Minimum Grade of C or Undergraduate level AMER 216 Minimum Grade of C

#### **Required Texts**

There are three required texts for this course.

- John Sides, Daron Shaw, Matt Grossman, and Keena Lipsitz, *Campaigns & Elections: Rules, Reality, Strategy, Choice* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) (Norton, 2018). [referred to below as SSGL] (ebook available: <https://wnorton.com/books/9780393664676>)
- Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (University of Chicago Press, 2008).
- John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck, *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America* (Princeton University Press, 2018). (ebook available: <https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691196435/identity-crisis>)

#### **Objectives**

This course is intended to give students insight into elections in the U.S. Substantial reading and writing is required, as well as informed class discussions. Students are expected not only to learn the substantive material, but also to apply the theories they learn across multiple areas. By the end of the semester students should have a detailed understanding of the electoral process in the U.S.. Students are also expected to write a paper that demonstrates both their grasp of the material and their ability to generate informed opinions based on empirical research.

#### **Academic Integrity Policy**

By enrolling in this course, you are bound by the NEIU Student Code of Conduct: <http://www.neiu.edu/university-life/student-rights-and-responsibilities/student-code-conduct>. You will be informed by your instructor of any additional policy specific to your course regarding plagiarism, class disruptions, etc.

## **ADA Statement**

Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To request accommodations, students with special needs should make arrangements with the Student Disability Services (SDS) office, located on the main campus in room D104. Contact SDS via (773) 442-4595 or <http://www.neiu.edu/university-life/student-disability-services>.

## **Campus Safety**

Web links to Campus Safety: Emergency Procedures and Safety Information can be found on NEIUport on the MyNEIU tab or as follows:  
[http://homepages.neiu.edu/~neutemp/Emergency\\_Procedures/MainCampus/](http://homepages.neiu.edu/~neutemp/Emergency_Procedures/MainCampus/).

## **Course Requirements**

- 1) This is an online course. Assignments will all be submitted through the Desire2Learn platform, and you will earn participation points through discussion on the D2L discussion board. Be aware that online does not mean easier! This course is the equivalent to any other course offered.
- 2) Complete all readings on schedule and take the required quizzes on terms from the SSGL book.
- 3) Actively participate in class discussions. As this is an online course, our work will occur online, and discussions will happen on the D2L discussion board. You are expected to regularly contribute to the discussions. **At minimum**, you must make one original post per unit, and comment twice per unit on your classmates' posts. Your participation grade will be determined by the **quality** of the posts you make in addition to meeting the minimum posting requirement.
- 4) Keep up with the news. We will frequently discuss current events as they relate to the concepts we are discussing in class. This way, we will be able to connect what can be abstract ideas to real-world outcomes. Read a newspaper, visit [cnn.com](http://cnn.com), or do anything that helps makes you an informed citizen.
- 5) Take the midterm and final exams. Both will consist of essay questions. Make-up exams will only be given in the event of an emergency, verified with proper documentation.
- 6) Submit all required writing assignments. **Late papers will be penalized one-third of a letter grade for each day they are late** (barring serious emergencies, which must be documented). I will not accept submissions via email or in hard copy. Do not wait to the last moment to submit assignments.

*Writing Assignment:* You will report on a candidate for Congress. At the beginning of the semester you will each be assigned a candidate for a seat in Congress (either a challenger or incumbent). You will track the campaign and write a field journal of the candidate's activities

and his/her success or failure. After the election, you will then write an analytical report examining the candidate's actions through the lens of the theories we are discussing in class. The field journal is due no later than **November 13<sup>th</sup>**. This is an informal report but should nevertheless be presented using proper grammar and punctuation, and written clearly. Note all significant activities of the candidate from the start of the semester up to and including Election Day. I expect the report will be between 3-5 pages, but this is not a strict requirement.

Your analytical report must be between 8-10 pages and include appropriate references (either footnotes or parenthetical style is acceptable) as well as a bibliography. Your paper must be submitted no later than **December 2<sup>nd</sup>**. You will also have the opportunity, if you wish, to revise your paper after it is returned to you. If you choose to submit a revision you must do so no later than **December 9<sup>th</sup>**.

All written assignments must be typed in a 12 point font, double spaced, with one-inch margins, and have page numbers. Papers not meeting these criteria will be penalized.

### **Grading**

Work conducted towards the end of the semester will be more heavily weighted in my mind when dispensing final grades; in other words, *improvement counts*.

Participation: 20%  
Quizzes: 10%  
Field journal: 10%  
Analytical report: 20%  
Midterm: 20%  
Final: 20%

90-100 A  
80-89 B  
70-79 C  
60-69 D  
Below 60 F

Incompletes will only be given for valid, documented emergencies.

**NOTE ON PLAGIARISM:** Any student found plagiarizing work will receive a grade of **zero** for that assignment and an **F** for the course. You will also be reported to the University for violating the academic integrity policy. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to: direct copying of material that is not your own, copying the material even while providing a citation, or copying ideas without proper attribution. **It is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism; if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask!**

## Schedule of Classes and Exams

### Unit 1: Introduction to Elections and Campaigns

READ:

- SSGL, chapter 1

WATCH:

- Trump's Stunning Win
- Election Night (SNL)

DO:

- Discussion post: What do you know about American elections? (**due August 31<sup>st</sup>**)

### Unit 2: The American Electoral Process

READ:

- SSGL, chapter 2

WATCH:

- Abilify for Candidates

DO:

- Discussion post: What matters in understanding our electoral process? (**due September 4<sup>th</sup>**)
- Quiz on SSGL chapter 2

### Unit 3: Campaigns in History

READ:

- SSGL, chapter 3

WATCH:

- Attack Ads from 1800

DO:

- Discussion post: How have campaigns changed? (**due September 9<sup>th</sup>**)

#### Unit 4: Campaign Finance

READ:

- SSGL, chapter 4
- Ballotpedia on federal campaign finance laws

WATCH:

- Campaign Finance, from Watergate to Soft Money and Citizens United

DO:

- Discussion post: What kind of campaign finance system should we have? (**due September 16<sup>th</sup>**)
- Quiz on SSGL chapter 4

#### Unit 5: Campaign Strategy

READ:

- SSGL, chapter 5

WATCH:

- Leslie Knope Walks on Ice (Parks and Recreation)

DO:

- Discussion post: What kind of campaigns are being run now? (**due September 23<sup>rd</sup>**)

#### Unit 6: Congressional Campaigns

READ:

- SSGL, chapter 10
- Ballotpedia, 2020 Congressional Elections

WATCH:

- Best congressional campaign ads of 2016

DO:

- Discussion post: Name and analyze a congressional campaign from 2018 (**due September 30<sup>th</sup>**)
- Quiz on SSGL chapter 10

Unit 7: Political Parties and Interest Groups in Elections

READ:

- SSGL, chapters 6 and 7
- Ezra Klein, “The single most important fact about American politics”
- Julia Azari, “Weak parties and strong partisanship are a bad combination”

WATCH:

- Message from the DNC (SNL)

DO:

- Discussion post: How do we understand the interactions between parties and groups? **(due October 12<sup>th</sup>)**
- Quiz on SSGL chapters 6 and 7

Unit 8: The Media and Campaigns

READ:

- SSGL, chapter 8
- Nate Silver, “How Trump Hacked the Media”
- Levi Boxell, Matthew Gentzkow, and Jesse M. Shapiro, “A note on internet use and the 2016 U.S. presidential election outcome”

WATCH:

- Leslie Sets the World Straight (Parks and Recreation)

DO:

- Discussion post: How much does the media matter? **(due October 19<sup>th</sup>)**

**October 21<sup>st</sup>: Midterm Exam Due**

Unit 9: Presidential Campaigns – Introduction

READ:

- SSGL, chapter 9

WATCH:

- Selections from The Living Room Candidate

DO:

- Discussion post: How much does advertising really matter? **(due October 28<sup>th</sup>)**
- Quiz on SSGL chapter 9

Unit 10: Presidential Campaigns – The Party Decides (part 1)

READ:

- *The Party Decides*, chapters 1, 4, and 5

WATCH:

- The US Elections Explained – Nominations

DO:

- Discussion post: Analyze the old system of presidential nominations (**due November 6<sup>th</sup>**)

Unit 11: Presidential Campaigns – The Party Decides (part 2)

READ:

- *The Party Decides*, chapters 6, 7, and 9

WATCH:

- America’s Presidential Primaries, Explained
- Bern Your Enthusiasm (SNL)

DO:

- Discussion post: What has changed in the nomination process and to whose benefit? (**due November 13<sup>th</sup>**)
- Submit field journal

Unit 12: Presidential Campaigns – Does the Party Decide?

READ:

- Seth K. Goldman, “Fear of Gender Favoritism and Vote Choice during the 2008 Presidential Primaries”
- Conor Friedersdorf, “How the Party Decided on Trump”
- Matthew C. MacWilliams, “Who Decides When the Party Doesn’t? Authoritarian Voters and the Rise of Donald Trump”

WATCH:

- Donald Trump’s Campaign Launch Fires Up Critics
- Donald Trump Makes His Mark During Republican Primary Debate
- Donald Trump dominates CNN Republican debate
- Donald Trump Takes the Heat in GOP Debate

DO:

- Discussion post: What does the nomination of Donald Trump say about our system? (**due November 20<sup>th</sup>**)

Unit 13: Presidential Campaigns – The General Election (part 1)

READ:

- *Identity Crisis*

WATCH:

- Donald Trump vs. Hillary Clinton Third Debate Cold Open (SNL)
- A recap of the insane 2016 election

DO:

- Discussion post: Why did Trump win? (**due December 2<sup>nd</sup>**)
- Submit analytical report

Unit 14: Presidential Campaigns – The General Election (part 2)

READ:

- Andrew Gelman and Julia Azari, “19 Things We Learned from the 2016 Election”
- Marc Hooghe and Ruth Dassonneville, “Explaining the Trump Vote: The Effect of Racist Resentment and Anti-Immigrant Sentiments”
- Mark Setzler and Alixandra B. Yanus, “Why Did Women Vote for Donald Trump?”
- Aaron C. Weinschenk, “That’s Why the Lady Lost to the Trump: Demographics and the 2016 Presidential Election”
- Martin P. Wattenberg, “From the Obama Youthquake of ’08 to the Trumpquake of ’16: How Young People’s Dislike of Hillary Clinton Cost Her the Election”

WATCH:

- Hillary Actually (SNL)

DO:

- Discussion post: Why did Hillary Clinton lose? (**due December 9<sup>th</sup>**)
- Submit analytical report final draft

**December 10<sup>th</sup>: Final Exam Due**