

Political Science 205
Campaigns and Elections
Fall Semester 2010
Clark University

Jonas Clark 101
Tuesday and Thursday, 10:25-11:40
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Description

I've said this the last three times I've taught this class, but it's still true. 2010 is shaping up to be one of the most dramatic election years in recent memory. Just two years after Democrats won their largest presidential election victory since the 1960s, and established a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate, the pendulum has swung dramatically in the other direction. We are about to witness the third successive "wave" election (in which the balance of power in Congress shifted dramatically), something unprecedented in recent American history. Usually, when one party posts dramatic gains in Congress, it loses some of these seats in the subsequent election. And usually, the president's party can expect to lose some seats in midterm election years. We in Massachusetts had a front row seat in witnessing the backlash against the Democratic Party's successes as we observed the Scott Brown campaign. Still, the extent of voter frustration is somewhat surprising. Now, it appears that Republicans have an even chance at regaining control of the House of Representatives and an outside shot at regaining the Senate as well.

In other words, much of what we thought we knew about elections is changing – how much so, we will know in a couple of months. In order to understand these changes, we need to know how elections have worked in the past and what their enduring features are. To understand how elections work in the United States, it is necessary to understand the ways in which voters, candidates, parties, political elites, and organized interests interact. In this class, we will consider topics such as political ambition (what kinds of people run for office), the role money plays in elections, the role parties and organized interests play in elections, the role advertising plays in elections, the degree to which election results are indicative of what the public wants, the ethics of campaigning, and the rationale for reforms in American elections. We will close with a brief survey of voting behavior.

The centerpiece of this course will be your analysis an individual congressional race. For the first two months of the course, we will all work together to develop an understanding of how the 2010 election is developing, and we will seek to place these campaigns in the context of previous election cycles. This work will culminate in a dispassionate analysis, on your part, of what is going to happen. We will then turn to a more critical look at campaigns, and you will get a chance to think about whether the way in which American elections are conducted can be improved. The goal of the class is for you to gain the

ability to analyze political campaigns and to think critically about how well elections reflect what we, the voters, want from our government.

There are no prerequisites for this course, but it would be beneficial if you have had the introductory American politics course.

Readings

The following books are required for the course and are available at the college bookstore:

- Abramson, Paul R., John H. Aldrich, and David W. Rohde. *Change and Continuity in the 2008 Elections*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 2010.
- Adkins, Randall, and David Dulio, eds. 2009. *Cases in Congressional Campaigns: Incumbents Playing Defense*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Herrnson, Paul. *Congressional Elections*, 5th edition. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 2008.
- Schier, Steven E., and Janet Box-Steffensmeier, eds. *The Election of 2008*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009.
- Semiatin, Richard, ed. *Campaigns on the Cutting Edge*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 2008.
- West, Darrell M. *Air Wars*, 5th edition. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 2009.

Any other readings on the syllabus will be provided as handouts or as a course packet.

Requirements and Grading

Attendance and Participation: The most important requirement for this class is your attendance and participation. In order to succeed in this course, you must attend class and you must come prepared to discuss the readings. Attendance and participation comprise 20% of your grade. Ten percent of this will be at my discretion, based on my observation of your presence and command of the material. An additional ten percent will be measured through your ability to discuss the campaign you are following; if you are not in class to discuss your campaign and submit a written copy of your class exercise (see below) you will lose a percentage point for each absence.

In-Class Exercises: Each of you will select, after conferring with me, one competitive 2010 congressional election campaign to follow through Election Day. During the first two months of the class, you will complete seven exercises discussing various aspects of the two major party candidates' campaigns in this election. These exercises will collectively comprise 50 percent of your grade; that works out to roughly 7 percent per exercise, but I will take any additional postings you provide into account in figuring out your overall grade. The exercises must be submitted on time; any late submissions will

be penalized. You must include, with your submissions, any necessary references, either to news content, online content, or class readings.

Short Essays: During the final month of the course, you will submit two short (3 to 5 page) essays discussing your views on various problems in American campaigns and elections. Details for these essays are listed below. Each of these essays is worth 15 percent of your grade. You do not need to submit these essays on the blackboard site. These essays must also include proper citations to materials from class.

Summary: Class Requirements and Percent Contribution to Final Grade:

Requirement	Percent Contribution to Grade	Objective
Class participation and attendance	20%	Understanding of material
Exercises #1-7	50% (roughly 7% each)	Ability to apply class material
Essays #1-2	30% (15% each)	Ability to think critically about material

A Note on Web Resources

Throughout the course, you will need to consult various websites to learn about the campaigns you are following. Websites that include information about ongoing campaigns include:

www.politics1.com: A compendium of candidate websites, with news articles discussing recent developments in these campaigns. This is a good portal to all congressional campaign web sites, and in addition to steering you toward the website of the campaign you are following, the main page will, from time to time, contain information on congressional races.

www.opensecrets.com: The website of the Center for Responsive Politics, this site contains data on all contributions received by federal candidates. We will discuss how to use this site in class.

www.cfinst.org: The website of the Campaign Finance Institute, this site will provide occasional updates on trends in congressional campaign financing.

spa.american.edu/ccps: The website of the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies at American University. Contains several good resources on campaign ethics.

www.thehill.com: There are two “insider” newspapers on Capitol Hill. This one is free on line, the other (Roll Call) is not. There are regular stories on congressional campaigns here, as well as other aspects of congressional politics.

www.politico.com: Probably the best on line newspaper covering insider politics.

Party Campaign Committee websites:

www.dccc.org: The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee

www.nrcc.org: The National Republican Campaign Committee

www.dsc.org: The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee

www.nrsc.org: The National Republican Senatorial Committee

www.dnc.org: The Democratic National Campaign Committee

www.rnc.org: The Republican National Campaign Committee.

“Horse race” websites: These provide commentary on developments in congressional races. Many have some password-protected content, but all have some material that you will be able to gain access to:

www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball: Run by the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia, this is the best site for those who are not campaign professionals.

rothenbergpoliticalreport.blogspot.com: Campaign consultant Stuart Rothenberg’s blog. This is updated regularly, with analysis of all competitive races.

www.cookpolitical.com: Along with Rothenberg, Charlie Cook is the other congressional election analyst that Washington insiders follow. Much of the good content here is password-protected, but you can access many of Cook’s summaries of competitive races here.

www.realclearpolitics.com: This is a good compendium of articles on the election, particularly on the presidential race. The site also features state-by-state polling results.

Partisan websites: There are a lot of these; listed below are some of the better ones. Read all with a grain of salt.

<http://www.thedemocraticstrategist.org>: Includes postings by several left-leaning political scientists about Democratic prospects.

www.dailykos.com: The preeminent liberal blog, contains news on congressional races and other aspects of politics.

www.mydd.com: Another left-leaning blogs that have frequent commentary on congressional races.

www.powerlineblog.com: A decent Republican blog, with some coverage of congressional politics but a little less than you’ll find at compendium sites like Real Clear Politics.

<http://thenextright.com>: The most progressive Republican blog, in the sense that this one is seeking to do a bit more to connect with younger, more tech-savvy voters than others.

There are several blogs run by political scientists. Some of the better ones for election-related content are Enik Rising (<http://enikrising.blogspot.com/>), Poly Sigh (<http://polysigh.blogspot.com/>), and the Monkey Cage (<http://www.themonkeycage.org/>). These often have links to other blogs of note.

A last set of websites you will want to acquaint yourself early are the sites of the candidates you are following (for incumbents, this means the campaign site, not the congressional site) and the newspapers that cover their districts. Depending on which race you do, you may also find blogs that deal with the politics of that region or state.

Academic Honesty

Finally, as you should be aware by now, the work you do in this course must be entirely your own. To be sure we all have the same understanding of academic integrity as it pertains to this course, here is what the Academic Advising *Blue Book* (p. 22) has to say on the subject:

Academic integrity is highly valued at Clark. Research, scholarship and teaching are possible only in an environment characterized by honesty and mutual trust. Academic integrity requires that your work be your own. Because of the damage that violations of academic integrity do to the intellectual climate of the University, they must be treated with the utmost seriousness and appropriate sanctions must be imposed. The maintenance of high standards of academic integrity is the concern of every member of the University community.

Plagiarism refers to the presentation of someone else's work as one's own, without proper citation of references and sources, whether or not the work has been previously published. Submitting work obtained from a professional term paper writer or company is plagiarism. Claims of ignorance about the rules of attribution, or of unintentional error are not a defense against a finding of plagiarism.

Suspected plagiarism cases will be referred to the Dean's office. If you are in doubt about whether you have provided adequate citation or used others' work properly, please talk with me before handing your paper in!

Schedule

Tuesday, August 31: Introduction to the Course

Historical patterns in Presidential and Congressional elections
Campaign Finance and Campaign Finance Reform
The 2010 elections in context
Discussion of class project

Thursday, September 2: How we got here

Dean, Howard. 2008. "How the Internet Taught Me that You Have the Power."
In *Mousepads, Shoe Leather, and Hope*, ed. Zephyr Teachout and Thomas
Streeter. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, pp. 15-22.
Semiatin, Ch. 1
Box-Steffensmeier and Schier, ch. 5 (Davidson chapter)
Bai, Matt. 2010. "Democrat in Chief?" *New York Times*, 7 June.
Cook, Rhodes. 2010. "Playing Defense in a Recession." *Larry Sabato's Crystal
Ball*, July. On line,
<http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/2010/07/>

I. Political Ambition: Who are these people, and how did they get here?

Tuesday, September 7: A quick overview of campaigning for Congress

Adkins and Dulio, ch. 1, 2, 4, 6, 12, 14
Statement on which campaigns you plan to cover due at the beginning of class.
*Ungraded class assignment: what lessons do each of the case studies (ch. 2, 4, 6,
12) provide for looking at the 2010 races?*

Thursday, September 9: No Class

Tuesday, September 14: Political ambition – Who runs for Congress?

Linda Fowler and Robert D. McClure, *Political Ambition: Who Decides to Run
for Congress*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989.
Introduction and Chapter 1 (pp. 1-24).
Alan Ehrenhalt, *The United States of Ambition*. New York: Times Books, 1992.
Ch. 1-2 (pp. 5-41).
Thomas Kazee, "The Emergence of Congressional Candidates." In Kazee, *Who
Runs for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1994), pp.
1-22.
Caro, Robert, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power* (New York,
Vintage, 1981), ch. 11 (pp. 174-201).

*Exercise #1 due: Who are your candidates? What are their backgrounds and why are
they running? Do they seem like typical congressional candidates?*

Thursday, September 16: Congressional Nomination politics

Herrnson, Ch. 1-2

Marni Ezra, "The Benefits and Burdens of Congressional Primary Elections." In Galderisi, Ezra, and Lyons, eds., *Congressional Primaries and the Politics of Representation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), pp. 48-61.

Additional handouts TBA (My primaries stuff)

II. The Mechanics of Campaigns: Who, What, How, and Why

September 21 and 23: Stakeholders, Part 1: Political Parties

Herrnson, Ch. 4

Semiatin, Ch. 7 (Shaiko Chapter)

Exercise #2 due: How did your candidates receive the nomination? What role has their party played in their campaign since the primary? Do they seem typical in this regard?

September 28 and 30: Stakeholders, Part 2: Organized Interests

Herrnson, Ch. 5

Semiatin, Ch. 8 (Kasnius and Rozell Chapter)

Exercise #3 due: What sort of interest group support have your candidates received? Do they seem like typical recipients of these groups' support?

October 5 and 7: Campaign finance

Herrnson, Ch. 6

Semiatin, Ch. 2, 10 (Boatright and Francia Chapters)

Exercise #4 due October 8: How have your candidates fared in fundraising? What does their fundraising tell you about how serious they are?

October 14: Learning What the Voters Want

Herrnson, Ch. 7

Semiatin, Ch. 5 (Nelson chapter)

Exercise #5 due: What issues matter in your candidates' campaigns? Why?

October 19: Campaign advertising I: New and old media

Semiatin, Ch. 3 and 4 (Devine and Graf Chapters)

Herrnson, Ch. 7 8

October 21 and 26: Campaign advertising II: Congressional advertising

West (all)

Exercise #6 due October 21: What sort of advertising has been going on in your races? What are the candidates' advertising strategies? What are the strategies of parties or groups?

October 28: Election Results and Mobilization

Herrnson, ch. 9 and 10

Semiatin, Ch. 6 (Semiatin Chapter)

November 2: Election Day: How are we feeling about this election?

Semiatin, Ch. 12 (Simpson Chapter)

November 4: What happened in the 2010 election?

Exercise #7 due: What happened in your race, and why?

III. Presidential Campaigns

November 9: Presidents Without Parties? Developments in Presidential Elections in the 1970s and 1980s

Lowi, Theodore. 1985. *The Personal President*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Ch. 4-5.

November 11: The 2008 Presidential Election in Context

Box-Steffensmeier and Schier, ch. 1-3 (Harris, Owen, and Norrander Chapters)

November 16: The 2008 Presidential Election, continued

Box-Steffensmeier and Schier, ch. 4, 6, 8 (Schier, Campbell, and Boatright Chapters)

November 18:

Should the System be Fixed?

Samples, John. 2003. "The Failure of Taxpayer Financing of Presidential Campaigns." Washington, DC: Cato Institute. On line, <http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa500.pdf>

Malbin, Michael J. 2009. "Small Donors, Large Donors, and the Internet: The Case for Public Financing After Obama." Washington, DC: Campaign Finance Institute. On line,

http://www.cfinst.org/president/pdf/PresidentialWorkingPaper_April09.pdf

Essay #1 due: Should the presidential financing system be fixed? Does this mean that the primary calendar should also be adjusted? Do you think these changes are possible in today's political climate?

November 23: A Brief Detour: Campaigns at the Local and State Level

Readings TBA

IV. Voting Behavior and Campaign Ethics

November 30 and December 2: Why people vote
Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, ch. 4-6

December 7: Do campaigns matter?
Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, ch. 7-8

December 9: Campaign Ethics, and the State of American electoral politics
Sandy Maisel, "Promises and Persuasion"
and L. Dale Lawton and William H. Wood, "Winning Ethically." Both in Nelson,
Dulio, and Medvic, eds., *Shades of Gray: Perspectives on Campaign
Ethics* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), pp. 39-74.
*Essay #2 due: Is there anything that can be done to improve the conduct of campaigns?
Will changes in campaign conduct have any influence on voter turnout?*

Assignment for September 2:

Submit in class a list (in ranked order) of your top three choices of a campaign to follow through Election Day. Choose three in total, *not* three from each category. If you feel particularly strongly about following a campaign that is not listed here, you may submit a request to do that, with an explanation of why you want to do it. Otherwise, here are your choices:

A. House Races:

These are all rated “toss-ups” by the Rothenberg Political Report as of July 20; name listed after the district state & number is the incumbent or the retiring incumbent:

Democratic Seats:

AL 2 (Bright, D)	AR 1 (Open; Berry, D)
FL 24 (Kosmas, D)	FL 8 (Grayson, D)
IL 14 (Foster, D)	IN 8 (Open; Ellsworth, D)
KS 3 (Open; Moore, D)	MI 1 (Open; Stupak, D)
MI 7 (Schauer, D)	MS 1 (Childers, D)
ND A-L (Pomeroy, D)	NH 1 (Shea-Porter, D)
NH 2 (Open; Hodes, D)	NV 3 (Titus, D)
NY 24 (Arcuri, D)	PA 7 (Open; Sestak, D)
SC 5 (Spratt, D)	SD A-L (Herseth Sandlin, D)
TN 8 (Open; Tanner, D)	TX 17 (Edwards, D)
VA 2 (Nye, D)	VA 5 (Perriello, D)
WA 3 (Open; Baird, D)	WV 1 (Open; Mollohan, D)

Republican Seats:

IL 10 (Open; Kirk, R)
HI 1 (Djou, R)

B. Senate Races

These are all rated “toss-ups” or “leaning” to one party by Rothenberg as of July 20:

Democratic Seats:

Bennet (D-CO)
PA Open (Specter, D)
Reid (D-NV)
IL Open (Burris, D)
IN Open (Bayh, D)
Lincoln (D-AR)
DE Open (Kaufman, D)
Boxer (D-CA)
Murray (D-WA)

Republican Seats:

OH Open (Voinovich, R)
FL Open (Martinez, R)
KY Open (Bunning, R)
MO Open (Bond, R)
NH Open (Gregg, R)