

Political Science 235
Money and Politics
Spring Semester 2012
Clark University

Jonas Clark 104
Tuesday and Thursday, 10:25-11:40
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Course Description

It is quite possible that money matters more in American electoral campaigns today than at any other time in our nation's history. While for many American citizens, political campaigns revolve around government policies, for American politicians, running for office is first and foremost a matter of raising money. The 2008 presidential election was by far the most expensive ever – the presidential candidates spent a combined \$1.7 billion and the political parties spent \$1.8 billion. 2012 will likely cost more; some are forecasting that President Obama alone will raise \$1 billion. Congressional elections, as well, have become increasingly more expensive; the average winning House candidate in 2010 spent over \$1 million and the average winning Senate candidate spent over \$8 million. And that's just the money we can see – the Supreme Court's recent *Citizens United v. FEC* decision has legalized many new types of spending, some of which are difficult for the public to observe or measure.

In this course, we shall analyze the role that money plays in American elections. We shall do this from two vantage points. First, we will look at each of the actors in the American campaign finance system – individual donors, organized interests, political parties, and the candidates themselves. With the exception of the individual donor, each of these actors is both a contributor of money and a recipient of money. We will look at the motivations of each type of contributor, patterns in campaign contributions over time, and the relationships between givers and receivers – that is, what donors expect to get in return for their contributions, and how politicians court individual donors. Second, we will explore campaign finance reform. We will consider arguments for and against the regulation of campaign finance, the causes and consequences of changes in campaign finance law, and proposals for further reforms.

While American campaigns may be more expensive today than ever before, the campaign finance system is also perhaps more transparent than ever before. That is, today the average citizen is able to easily acquire detailed information on campaign contributions and expenditures. This will be a hands-on class – we will make use of this information to draw conclusions about the behavior of particular individuals, advocacy groups, and politicians.

Objectives

For you: This class has two goals. First, it will give you an overview of the role money plays in American campaign politics and an understanding of how campaign fundraising shapes the activities of elected officials. Second, it will enable you to be a more informed consumer of information on campaign finance; by the end of the course you will know how to draw conclusions from campaign finance data and to draw inferences about individual actors in the campaign finance system based on their behavior.

For me: Campaign finance is my main area of research. I'm in the middle of a couple of projects that are somewhat related to the course. One is a study of competition in congressional primaries over the past three decades, a second is a book chapter on the financing of the 2012 election. I'm happy to explain these projects to anyone that's interested, and if I run across any problems in my work or anything that your feedback might be helpful with, I'll introduce it. I am hopeful that this class will serve as a collective endeavor, and that you will be willing to give me regular feedback on points that are unclear and on ways that the material we consider might be organized.

The Worcester Campaign Finance Project: One major piece of this course is our opportunity to use the City of Worcester as a laboratory for looking at campaign finance. Data on the money raised by candidates are available to the public, and it is fairly easy to connect campaign fundraising to what we observe in local politics. I am in the process of working to establish a website at Clark discussing trends in campaign fundraising and spending in Worcester; we will focus a bit on this during the second half of the semester. We have received funding through the LEEP initiative to do collaborative work on this website and to organize a public forum in which you discuss local campaign finance issues. The students who took this course in 2008 and 2010 put together a collaborative paper on Worcester politics, which they were able to present at a regional political science conference. It is my hope that we will be able to build upon what they did in order to continue to develop a multi-year study of local campaign finance which can be a resource for the local media, politicians, and interested citizens.

Readings

The following books are required for the course and are available at the college bookstore; they are listed in the order we will use them in class:

Boatright, Robert G., ed. 2011. *Campaign Finance: The Problems and Consequences of Reform*. New York: Open Society Institute.

Corrado, Anthony, et al. 2005. *The New Campaign Finance Sourcebook*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Green, Mark. 2002. *Selling Out*. New York: HarperCollins.

Magleby, David B., ed. 2011. *Financing the 2008 Election*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Panagopoulos, Costas, ed. 2011. *Public Financing in American Elections*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Smith, Bradley. 2001. *Unfree Speech*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

All other readings will be available on the web or will be distributed in class.

Web Resources

In addition to these books, you will be asked during the course to do work involving several online sources of campaign finance information. You should familiarize yourself with these web sites early in the semester. They include:

Open Secrets (the web site of the Center for Responsive Politics): www.opensecrets.org: contains a searchable database of all federal campaign contributions from 1998 to the present. Users can search by donor or recipient, and can obtain breakdowns of funding sources by industry. We will be using this web site for several of our early exercises. The web site is designed for public use; CRP has been a prominent advocate for campaign finance reform.

Politico (www.politico.com) is one of many sources of information about how the 2012 elections are shaping up. You will find information here, as well as on the websites of major newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, about fundraising by the major candidates in the 2012 presidential elections. There is also a wealth of reporting here about so-called “Super PACs” and other political organizations that are working on behalf of various presidential candidates.

Campaign Finance Institute (www.cfinst.org): Contains several research papers on various aspects of campaign finance, studies of presidential campaign financing, and explorations of proposals for changes in campaign finance law. Also contains a detailed analysis of BCRA. CFI is a nonpartisan group that does at times advocate reform proposals but has generally sought to analyze different reform ideas. (Full disclosure: I was a research fellow at CFI from 2002 to 2004; although some of my own work is on this site, I do not expect you to give it any special consideration).

Common Cause (www.commoncause.org), a left-leaning advocacy group, maintains a website that discusses, among other things, the receipts and expenditures of several interest groups that played prominent roles in recent elections, and describes the relationships between these groups and the political parties.

Political Money Line (www.politicalmoneyline.org) is similar to Open Secrets but uses (according to some) a better means of aggregating contributions. This site is less user-friendly than Open Secrets and requires a paid subscription for much of the more detailed analysis. We will limit our use of Political Money Line to the material we can get without subscribing. Nonetheless, it is important to compare results from Open Secrets with the figures provided on Political Money Line.

Campaign Media Legal Center (www.camlc.org) lists court depositions from the BCRA court case, with explanations of Supreme Court, District Court, and FEC rulemakings regarding campaign finance.

The Center for Public Integrity (www.Publicintegrity.org) is another nonpartisan but reform-oriented organization that provides data on campaign finance. Among other things, their website includes a database of all contributions and expenditures of so-called “527” organizations during the past four elections. The site also includes analyses of the funding provided to various presidential candidates and analyses of lobbying expenditures by interest groups.

The Cato Institute (<http://www.cato.org/research/crg/finance.html>) is a libertarian organization that has argued against campaign finance restrictions. Its website includes several analyses of campaign finance laws and arguments against BCRA and other restrictions.

The Brookings Institution (http://www.brookings.edu/gs/cf/cf_hp.htm) is a slightly left-leaning think tank that has conducted several research projects on campaign finance, including some of the required reading for this course. The web site includes several articles analyzing developments since the implementation of BCRA and a good list of newsworthy developments since the 2004 election.

The Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy (<http://csed.byu.edu/>) is a research organization run by Brigham Young University. It has conducted the “outside money” studies, such as the Magleby and Monson book we will be reading during week four of the course.

Money in State Politics (www.followthemoney.org) is like Open Secrets, but for contributions to candidates for state office. Many individual states provide databases where you can search by candidate or by contributor. Some are easy to navigate, others aren't. The Massachusetts site (www.mass.gov/ocpf/) is somewhat tricky to get through, but has a lot of interesting information, including data on contributions to candidates for local office (including Worcester City Council) as well.

The Federal Election Commission (www.fec.gov) web site includes all of the campaign finance data used in the above web sites and many of the research studies we consider here. The web site is notoriously difficult to navigate, which is why sites such as Open Secrets or Political Money Line exist. This is the site that candidates use to gather forms and file their data, and it is the most up-to-date place to get campaign finance reports.

And, finally, as an example of how other countries do things, you might be interested in looking at the Elections Canada website (www.elections.ca). It has explanations of Canadian campaign finance law, contributions data for the past several elections, and interesting articles on developments in Canadian campaign financing.

Requirements and Grading

Participation: Regular attendance is vital to your success in this course, and to the success of others in the course. Not only are you required to attend class prepared to discuss the readings and to discuss your exercises or reaction papers, but you are also required to listen attentively to the comments of other students and to provide constructive feedback on their take-home work. *Participation will account for 15 percent of your grade.*

Weekly papers & exercises: You will prepare eight short papers for this course *each will be worth five percent of your grade, for a cumulative total of 40 percent.* You will turn in a hard copy of your paper in class, and I may ask you to post a copy to the course Cicada site, and be prepared to discuss your paper in class. There are two types of short papers:

- Analyses of campaign finance data, due weeks two through six. For each of these, you will consult online data sources (drawn from the list of web sites presented earlier in the syllabus) to discern patterns in campaign contributions or receipts. Details of these analyses are provided below. For each, you will hand in a copy of the raw data you are considering (a printout from the website is sufficient) and approximately two pages of your analysis of these data. Depending on the size of the class, I may require you to submit multiple copies so that your classmates may look at your work in class.
- Reaction papers, due weeks 8, 9, and 11. Once we have begun considering arguments for or against campaign finance reform, or arguments about the effectiveness of existing campaign finance laws, you will write brief reaction papers (2 to 3 pages) addressing the questions listed below.

Collaborative Project: Beginning in week 8, we will take a look at campaign finance here in Worcester. This will involve some analysis by you of city council candidates' contribution filings, and you will speak to one or two candidates about how their campaigns were financed and what they did with their money. You will write a short paper for class that week, and we will work in the following weeks on putting those together so that we have a class paper, which we will seek to present and place on the Worcester Campaign Finance Project website. The collaborative project will be worth 20 percent of your grade.

Final paper: For much of the class, we will be considering existing practices in campaign finance. In your final paper, I will present you with a series of proposals about changes in campaign finance law. You will comment on the normative consequences of these changes, using what you've learned in class. *You must write this paper with reference to the upcoming 2012 elections.* That is, you should use fundraising patterns thus far in order to speculate about what more the 2012 elections will tell us about the state of the campaign finance system. You won't need to do extensive research for this, above and beyond what you're learned to do in class, although you should keep track of news coverage of the elections. This final paper will, then, be somewhat akin to a final exam in that I will ask you to synthesize what you've learned throughout the semester and think critically about the course. I may ask you to give a brief presentation of your ideas during the final class session. Your final paper will be worth 25 percent of your final grade.

Schedule

I. Introduction

Tuesday, January 17: Introduction to the Course

Thursday, January 19: Introduction to Online Resources

Readings: Corrado et al, *the Campaign Finance Reform Sourcebook*, ch. 1, 2, 8

II. The Players: Who Gives Money and Who Gets Money?

Tuesday, January 24 and Thursday, January 26: Individual Donors

Readings: Johnson chapter in Boatright book

Panagopoulos, ch. 2 &4 (Malbin and Weissman chapters)

Panagopoulos, Costas, and John Green. 2011. "Flush with Cash: Individual Campaign Contributors in the 2008 Elections." In *The State of the Parties*, 6th ed., ed. John C. Green. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 223-238. (handout)

Exercise: Analyze the contributions since 1998 of two different individual "megadonors" (individuals who have given more than \$100,000 in a recent election cycle): what are this individual's goals? What types of contributions has this person made and what types of candidates does he/she favor?

Tuesday, January 31 and Thursday, February 2: Interest Groups

Readings: Franz chapter in Boatright

Magleby, ch. 7

Robert Boatright, Michael Malbin, Mark Rozell, and Clyde Wilcox. 2006.

“Adaptations and Alliances: Strategic Decisionmaking by Ongoing Interest Groups and Advocacy Organizations.” In *The Election After Reform*, ed. Michael J. Malbin. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 112-138. (handout)

Exercise: Analyze the contributions since 2004 of three different organized interests (a business PAC, a labor union, and an advocacy group). Explain the logic behind their PAC donations, their soft money donations, and their independent expenditures.

Tuesday, February 7 and Thursday, February 9: Congressional Candidates

Readings: Currinder chapter in Boatright

Magleby, ch. 5

Dwyre, Diana. 2011. “Old Games, New Tricks: Money in the 2010 Elections.” *Extensions*, Summer 2011, pp. 18-24. (handout)

Cornfield, Michael. 2011. “Money Worries: Campaign Financing and Spending in the 2010 Elections.” In *Pendulum Swing*, ed. Larry Sabato. New York: Longman, pp. 113-130. (handout)

Toner, Michael, and Kevin Trainer. 2011. “The Impact of the Federal Election Laws on the 2010 Midterm Election.” In *Pendulum Swing*, ed. Larry Sabato. New York: Longman, pp. 131-156. (handout)

Exercise: *First*, analyze the donations received in 2010 by four congressional candidates – a Democratic incumbent, a Republican incumbent, a challenger to one of these incumbents, and an open seat candidate. Discuss the sources of funds for each, the level of party and interest group support, and relationship between this candidate’s activities and views and their funding sources. You should compare the incumbents’ totals to those of their previous campaigns. *Second*, analyze the contributions by these four candidates to others – both from their campaign funds and from their PACs if they have them.

Tuesday, February 14 and Thursday, February 16: Presidential Candidates

Readings: Corrado *et al*, ch. 6

Magleby, ch. 1 - 4

Exercise: Examine the contributions received by one of the candidates in the 2008 presidential primary elections. Discuss the sources of funds for each, the level of interest group support, and the role that public funding played in this person’s campaign.

Tuesday, February 21 and Thursday, February 23: Political Parties

Readings: Corrado *et al*, ch. 5

Magleby, ch. 6

Michael J. Malbin *et al*. 2011. "The Need for an Integrated Vision of Parties and Candidates: National Party Finances, 1999-2008." In *The State of the Parties*, 6th ed., ed. John C. Green. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 185-204. (handout)

La Raja, Ray. 2011. "Back to the Future: Campaign Finance Reform and the Declining Importance of the National Party Organization." In *The State of the Parties*, 6th ed., ed. John C. Green. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 223-238. (handout)

Exercise: Analyze the contributions of the DCCC and the NRCC, or the DSCC and the NRSC, in the 2010 elections. What are the priorities for these organizations? How do they decide who will receive money and who won't?

Tuesday, February 28 and Thursday, March 1: State and Local Campaign Finance Laws

Readings: Panagopoulos, ch. 3, 5-9

Worcester Campaign Finance Project Work Begins

March 5-9: Spring Break

III. Campaign Finance Reform

March 13 and 15: BCRA, The Courts and Campaign Finance (week 1)

Readings: Corrado *et al*, ch. 3, 4, 7, 8, 9

Hasen and Smith articles in Boatright

Diana Dwyre, "After *Citizens United* and *SpeechNow.org*: Considering the Consequences of New Campaign Finance Rules" (handout)

March 20 and 22: BCRA, the Courts, and Campaign Finance

Reading: *McConnell v. Federal Election Commission* (on line)

Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (on line)

(Skim both the majority opinion *and* the dissents)

Reaction Paper: What types of regulations are permissible after *Citizens United*?

March 27 and 29: Comparative Campaign Finance

Readings: Part 4 in Boatright

Other readings TBA

Reaction Paper: Discuss the regulatory system in one country other than the United States. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this nation's system? What can Americans learn from this system?

April 3 and 5: The Case for Reform

Reading: Green, *Selling Out*

No Reaction Paper

April 10 and 12: The Case Against Reform

Reading: Smith, *Unfree Speech*

Reaction Paper: Which side are you on? Who has a better argument?

April 17 and 19: *Worcester Campaign Finance Project Sessions*

April 24 and 26: What Role will Money Play in 2012? What does the future hold for campaign finance regulation?

Readings TBA

Final Reaction Papers due