

cCampaigns and Elections
GOVT 232
Fall 2016
PAC 002
Monday and Wednesday
2:50-4:10 p.m.

Professor Logan Dancey

Office: PAC 102

Office hours: Mon. & Wed., 4:15 – 5 p.m.; Tues., 2-3 p.m.; and by appointment

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Course Overview

With the 2016 elections as our backdrop, this course will examine the style and structure of American campaigns. We will consider longstanding debates and current controversies in the academic study of elections, including if campaigns “matter” and the extent to which voters make informed, “rational” decisions. We will analyze the key players in federal elections—voters, candidates, parties, interest groups, and the press—and the ways these groups interact to influence the outcome and meaning of elections in the United States.

Although the class is first and foremost an introduction to the academic study of elections, we will use the 2016 presidential and congressional races as an opportunity to examine what political science research can tell us about contemporary campaigns. Each student in the class will closely follow one of the most competitive Senate races and analyze the race both from the perspective of a campaign strategist and an academic analyst. The goal is to translate what we learn in the classroom into knowledge that can be used to better understand contemporary political campaigns.

Note: Although we will discuss and analyze the 2016 election, this is not a course on the 2016 election in particular or campaign strategy. Instead, it is an introduction to the academic study of campaigns and elections.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course you will be better able to:

1. Understand the academic approach to studying elections
2. Evaluate the extent to which contemporary elections live up to democratic ideals
3. Assess the ways in which campaigns do (and don't) affect voter decisionmaking
4. Conduct independent research on congressional elections

Course Structure

This course will be a mixture of lecture and discussion. Students are expected to finish the required readings for each class session and come ready to engage in a critical discussion of the arguments and evidence presented in the readings.

Required Books

Geer, John G. 2006. *In Defense of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Grossman, Matt and Daniel Hopkins. 2016. *Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sides, John and Lynn Vavreck. 2014. *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Course Website

You can access the course website through moodle.wesleyan.edu. Please check the course website regularly (i.e. at least twice a week).

Assignments

Campaign Strategy Memo (10%): Each member of the class will track a Senate race throughout the semester (with 2-3 people per race). On Oct. 10 you will submit a 5-page campaign strategy memo for one of the two candidates in your Senate race (we will watch a movie related to campaigns and elections in class that day). The memo should offer a strategy for the final weeks of the campaign based on research you have done on the candidates and state as well as information gleaned from class readings. More information will be provided at least two weeks before the assignment is due.

Exam #1 (20%): The first exam in this course will be Oct. 19, and it will cover the readings through Oct. 17. The exam will be closed-note, closed-book and consist of essay questions.

Group Campaign Ad Presentation (10%): Class on Nov. 7 will be dedicated to in-class presentations by groups of 4-5 on the content of 2016 presidential ads. Groups will code ads for specific content described in John Geer's *In Defense of Negativity*. We will then compare 2016 ads to the elections Geer chronicles in his book. More information will be provided Oct. 26. Please note that **attendance in class on Nov. 7 is mandatory, and failure to attend class that day will result in a failing grade for this assignment.**

Exam #2 (20%): The second exam for this course will be Dec 7. It will only cover the second half of the course (post-midterm). The exam will be closed-book, closed-note and consist of essay questions.

Final paper (25%): Your final paper will be a 10-15 page academic assessment of the Senate election you followed. The paper will focus on both why the election turned out the way it did and the extent to which the results are consistent or inconsistent with standard political science interpretations of

election outcomes. It is due by Dec. 16 at 2 p.m. More information will be provided in a separate handout.

Campaign Blog (5%): You will be responsible for posting **four** updates on your Senate election on the Moodle forum set up for your race. Each race will have at least two people following it, so the forum will contain posts from both students. The posts are due Sept. 19, Sept. 28, Oct. 26, Nov. 2.

Moodle Posts (5%): You will be responsible for **four** Moodle posts over the course of the semester. These posts should be responses to the readings for that day. There are 12 days marked for potential Moodle posts. Good response posts will not just summarize an argument. Instead, they will *respond* to a particular aspect of the reading. A good response might do one of the following 1) Identify a theoretical question that is sparked by the reading and how one might go about answering that question; 2) Explain how some evidence from a previous reading supports or refutes an author's point; 3) Explain how the reading explains or fails to explain the race you're following; or 4) Identify an area of disagreement with the author and explain why you disagree.

Debate/Discussion Days (5%): **Four** class periods over the course of the semester are reserved for discussion of specific themes. You will be asked to bring typed bullet points those days for and graded on your preparation and participation. The discussion days are Sept. 21, Nov. 9, Nov. 16, and Dec. 5.

NOTE: You are expected to attend part of the Wesleyan Post-Election Conference on Dec 2. This will be the basis for discussion day on Dec. 5. Make-up assignments will be given for those who cannot attend the conference for a documented reason.

Key Dates

Oct. 10: Campaign Strategy Memo Due
Oct. 19: First Exam
Nov. 7: Group Campaign Ad Presentation
Dec. 2: Wesleyan election conference (attendance expected)
Dec. 7: Second Exam
Dec. 16: Final Paper Due by 2 p.m.

Late Assignments

Late papers will lose one letter grade for each day that they are late (e.g., a B+ becomes a C+ if it is one day late). An assignment is considered one day late if it is submitted after the start of class the day it is due. The assignment becomes two days late the following day. Assignments over five days late will not be accepted. Exams must be taken during the time scheduled. Makeup exams will only be granted in rare cases (e.g., a documented medical emergency).

Contacting the Instructor

I encourage you to contact me with questions and concerns about the course content and assignments. Please refer to me as Professor Dancey in all correspondence. In general, if you have a clarification question you can reach me over e-mail or on my office phone. Questions about course material, grades, or how to structure your papers are best dealt with in office hours where we can have a more productive

conversation than over e-mail. If my office hours do not work for you because of your class schedule, work schedule, or another important commitment, I am also available by appointment. I cannot guarantee that if you e-mail me shortly before an assignment is due that I will be able to answer your questions, so please make sure and e-mail me early if you have a time-specific question.

Contested Grades

If you wish to contest a grade you must submit a written explanation of why you believe the grade is inaccurate. You must wait 24 hours from the time the assignment is returned before you submit the written explanation. I will not discuss grades until 24 hours after the assignment is passed back. If you ask me to reevaluate your grade then I reserve the right to either raise or lower your grade based on my reevaluation.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible [during the 2nd week of the semester], so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at <http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/index.html>.

Technology in the Classroom

You may use laptops, iPads, etc. in class for note taking purposes only. Refrain from using these devices for Facebook, instant messenger, e-mail checking, or anything else that may distract you, your fellow students, or me. It is obvious when someone is using his or her laptop for non-class related activities. Research suggests laptops in the classroom may hinder learning (see, for example, <http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom>), and I reserve the right to ask students to put laptops away if they are becoming a distraction. Using laptops for non-course related purposes may result in a lower participation grade.

Academic Integrity

I take plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct seriously. Please see this helpful website: <http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/plagiarism.html>

Suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Honor Board. I expect students to follow the Wesleyan honor code, which can be found here:

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/honorboard/honorcode.html>

Course Schedule:¹

Readings noted with an asterisk (*) are from assigned books. The rest of the material can be found on Moodle or by going to the url listed next to the reading.

LOGISTICS

Sept. 5

- Introductions

PERSPECTIVES ON CAMPAIGNS

Sept. 7 (Moodle Post Day 1)

- Halperin, Mark and John Heilemann. 2013. *Double Down: Game Change 2012*. New York: Penguin Press. Prologue and chapter 22.
- *Sides, John and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble*, chapters 1-2.

Sept. 12: Election Forecasting (Moodle Post Day 2)

- Silver, Nate. 2012. *The Signal and the Noise: Why So Many Predictions Fail—But Some Don't*. New York: Penguin Press, chapter 2.
- “Who Will Be President?” and “The 2016 Election Forecast” TheUpshot Senate Forecasts. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/upshot/presidential-polls-forecast.html>
- Abramowitz, Alan I. 2012. “Forecasting in a Polarized Era: The Time for Change Model and the 2012 Presidential Election.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 45(4): 618-619.

CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGNS

Sept. 14: Congressional Campaign Fundamentals (Moodle Post Day 3)

- Jacobson, Gary C. 2015. It’s Nothing Personal: The Decline of the Incumbency Advantage in US House Elections. *Journal of Politics* 77(3): 861-873.
- Abramowitz, Alan. 2012. “U.S. Senate Elections in a Polarized Era.” In *The U.S. Senate: From Deliberation to Dysfunction*, ed. Burdett Loomis. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Sept. 19: Challengers and Competition (Blog Post 1)

- Abramowitz, Alan, Brad Alexander and Matthew Gunning. 2006. “Don’t Blame Redistricting for

¹ I reserve the right to make modifications to the course schedule during the semester. If I make changes I will both announce them in class and on the website.

Uncompetitive Elections." *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 39: 87-90. (Moodle)

- Jacobson, Gary C. and Jamie L. Carson. 2016. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, selection.
- Thomsen, Danielle M. 2014. "Ideological Moderates Won't Run: How Party Fit Matters for Partisan Polarization in Congress." *Journal of Politics* 76(3): 786-797.

Sept. 21: Campaign Finance (Discussion Day 1)

- McElroy, Lisa. 2010. "Citizens United v. FEC In Plain English." *Scotusblog.com*, Jan. 22: <http://www.scotusblog.com/2010/01/citizens-united-v-fec-in-plain-english/>
- Deniston, Lyle. 2010. "Widening Impact of *Citizens United*." *Scotusblog.org*, March 26: <http://www.scotusblog.com/2010/03/widening-impact-of-citizens-united/>
- La Raja, Raymond J. 2015. "Money in the 2014 Congressional Elections: Institutionalizing a Broken Regulatory System." *The Forum*.
- Franklin Fowler, Erika, Michael M. Franz, and Travis N. Ridout. 2016. "The Regulation of Advertising." In *Political Advertising in the United States*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Raskin, Jamie and John Samples. 2014. "Resolved, the Constitution should be Amended to Overturn the Supreme Court's Ruling in *Citizens United*. Pro and Con." In *Debating Reform*

Sept. 26: Voter Turnout (Moodle Post Day 4)

- Issenberg, Sasha. 2012. "A Vast Left-Wing Competency." *Slate.com*, Nov. 7: http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/victory_lab/2012/11/obama_s_victory_how_the_democrats_burned_by_karl_rove_became_the_party_of.html
- Gerber, Alan S., Gregory A. Huber, David Doherty, and Conor M. Dowling. 2016. "Why People Vote: Estimating the Social Returns to Voting." *British Journal of Political Science* 46: 241-264.
- Barnes, Robert and Ann E. Marimow. 2016. "Appeals Court Strikes Down North Carolina's Voter ID Law." *Washington Post*, July 29: https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/appeals-court-strikes-down-north-carolinas-voter-id-law/2016/07/29/810b5844-4f72-11e6-aa14-e0c1087f7583_story.html.

Sept. 28: Issues and Candidates in Congressional Elections (Moodle Post Day 5)

- Herrnson, Paul S. and James M. Curry. 2011. "Issue Voting and Partisan Defections in Congressional Elections." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 36(2): 281-307.

- Buttice, Matthew K. and Walter J. Stone. 2012. "Candidates Matter: Policy and Quality Differences in Congressional Elections." *Journal of Politics* 74(3): 870-887.

Oct. 3: Race, Gender, and Candidate Evaluations (Blog Post Day 2)

- Lawless, Jennifer L. 2015. "Female Candidates and Legislators." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18: 349-366.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen and Bernard L. Fraga. 2016. "Do Americans Prefer Coethnic Representation? The Impact of Race on House Incumbent Evaluations." *Stanford Law Review*, 68: 1553-1594.

PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS

Primaries

Oct. 5: Presidential Primaries (Moodle Post Day 6)

- *Sides and Vavreck, pp. 32-68.
- Prokop, Andrew. 2015. "Political Scientists Think 'the Party' Will Stop Trump. They Shouldn't Be So Sure." *Vox.com*, Sept. 23: <http://www.vox.com/2015/9/23/9352273/party-decides-trump-sanders>
- Sides, John and Kalev Leetaru. "A Deep Dive Into the News Media's Role in the Rise of Donald Trump." *Washington Post*, June 24: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/06/24/a-deep-dive-into-the-news-medias-role-in-the-rise-of-donald-j-trump/>

Voters

Oct. 10: Campaign strategy memo due by 2:30 p.m.

- Movie day

Oct. 12: Electoral Politics in a Diversifying America (Moodle Post Day 7)

- Hajnal, Zoltan and Michael U. Rivera. 2014. "Immigration, Latinos, and White Partisan Politics: The New Democratic Defection." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 773-789.
- Ramakrishnan, Karthick. 2016. "How Asian Americans Became Democrats." *American Prospect*, July 26. <http://prospect.org/article/how-asian-americans-became-democrats-0>
- Mo, Cecilia Hungjung. 2015. "Why Asian Americans Don't Vote Republican." *Washington Post*, Nov. 2: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/11/02/why-asian-americans-dont-vote-republican/>

Oct. 17: Voting Behavior in Presidential Elections (Moodle Post 8)

- *Sides and Vavreck, pp. 97-122.

Oct. 19: Midterm Exam

CAMPAIGN ADVERTISING

Oct. 24: No Class—Fall Break

Oct. 26: Negative Ads, I (Blog Post Day 3)

- *Geer, *In Defense of Negativity*, chapters 1-3.

Oct. 31: Negative Ads 2 (Moodle Post Day 9)

- *Geer, *In Defense on Negativity*, chapters 4, 5, & 7.

Nov. 2: The Media (Blog Post Day 4)

- Curran, James, Shanto Iyengar, Anker Brink Lund, and Inka Salovaara-Moring. 2009. "Media System, Public Knowledge, and Democracy: A Comparative Study." *European Journal of Communication* 24(1): 5-26.
- Mitchell, Amy, Jesse Holcomb, and Rachel Wiesel. 2016. "Election 2016: Campaigns as a Direct Source of News." *Pew Research Center*.
- Nyhan, Brendan. 2012. "Breaking the Pack Journalism Paradigm." *Columbia Journalism Review*, Oct. 3:
http://www.cjr.org/united_states_project/how_to_avoid_pack_journalism_at_debates.php

Nov. 7: In-class Group Presentations

- Campaign ad presentation

POST-ELECTION DISCUSSION

Nov. 9: Election Recap (Discussion Day 2)

- We'll talk about the election results. Be prepared to talk about the outcome of the Senate race you are following.

PARTISAN DIFFERENCES IN CAMPAIGNING AND GOVERNING

Nov. 14: Grossman and Hopkins, day 1 (Moodle Post Day 10)

- Grossman and Hopkins, pp. 1-69.

- Noel, Hans. "Democrats are as Ideological as Republicans. And Republicans are as Group-Centric as Democrats." *Mischiefs of Faction Blog*, March 13: <http://www.mischiefsoffaction.com/2015/03/democrats-are-as-ideological-as.html>

Nov. 16: Grossman and Hopkins, day 2 (Discussion Day 3)

- Grossman and Hopkins, pp. 198-268, 315-332.

MAKING SENSE OF ELECTIONS

Nov. 21: Possibilities for Reform (Moodle Post Day 11)

- Bateman, David. 2016. "Race, Party, and American Voting Rights." *The Forum* 14(1): 39-65.
- Streb, Matthew. 2015. *Rethinking American Democracy*, selections.

Nov. 23: No Class—Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 28: Retrospective Voting (Moodle Post Day 12)

- Bartels, Larry M. 2013. "Political Effects of the Great Recession." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 650(1): 47-76.
- Healy, Andrew and Neil Malhotra. 2013. "Retrospective Voting Reconsidered." *Annual Review of Political Science* 16: 285-306.

Nov. 30: Mandates? (Moodle Post Day 13)

- *Sides and Vavreck, *The Gamble*, chapters 7-8.
- Dahl, Robert A. 1990. "Myth of the Presidential Mandate." *Political Science Quarterly* 105(3): 355-72.

Friday, Dec. 2: Wesleyan election conference all day. More details to come, but plan to spend at least 1.5 hours at the conference that day (notify me in advance if you have a scheduling conflict)

Dec. 5: Post-Conference Discussion (Discussion Day 4)

- Discussion of papers/presentations at Wesleyan election conference

Dec. 7: Exam #2

Friday, Dec. 16: Final papers due by 2 p.m.

Here is a list of resources that are particularly useful for tracking developments in contemporary campaigns:

Center for Responsive Politics (Great for campaign finance data): <http://www.opensecrets.org>.

CQ Weekly (You will need to access this site on campus or through the library website. It is a potentially valuable source for House and Senate races): <http://library.cqpress.com/cqweekly/>

CQ Press Voting and Elections Collection (Good for statistics on previous races. You will need to access this site on campus or through the library website): <http://library.cqpress.com/elections/>

National Journal (You will need to access this resource on campus or through the library website. Charlie Cook's columns may be especially useful). <http://www.nationaljournal.com>

LexisNexis Academic (You will need to access this resource on campus or through the library website. It is a good resource to find local news coverage of your races).
<http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/>?

Polling/Projection: See <http://www.270towin.com>, <http://fivethirtyeight.com/>, <http://pollster.com/>,
<http://www.nytimes.com/section/upshot>

Real Clear Politics (A good source for the latest polling information and news stories):
<http://www.realclearpolitics.com>

Political Science Blogs: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/> and
<http://www.vox.com/mischiefs-of-faction>

Almanac of American Politics (The latest edition should be available in the reference section of the library. It is a good resource for background on the politics of specific states and biographies of incumbents and existing officeholders).

There are also the major national news sources, such as *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Although these newspapers are likely to have some coverage of your Senate races, the sources with the most consistent news coverage will be local newspapers. You can find those through LexisNexis or another search feature like Google News. It might be worth setting up an RSS feed for news on your race. It is also worth keeping an eye on the candidates' websites for press releases, links to news stories, and the debut of new ads.