

**Political Science 400/500: Fall 2008**  
**Topics in American Government and Politics: Campaigns and Elections**

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 Office Hours: Monday 11-12, Wednesday 1-2 and  
 by appointment

Class Times and Locations:  
 T/Th 3:30-4:45  
 Holmstedt #116

**Required Texts**

Herrnson, Paul S. 2008. *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Streb, Matthew J. 2008. *Rethinking American Electoral Democracy*. New York: Routledge.

Wayne, Stephen J. 2008. *The Road to the White House 2008*. Boston: Thomson / Wadsworth.

Copies of these books are on reserve in the library for two hour periods.

**Overview of Class**

This class will focus on campaigns and elections in the United States. The order in which subjects are covered will not be typical of how elections classes are often taught, as we will examine congressional and presidential elections on a rotating basis instead of in two sections of the class. We will examine the legal aspects of elections, and how laws influence both how elections are conducted, and their outcomes. We will look at who votes in elections and why this matters. We will then examine the process by which candidates are nominated. We will also discuss third parties and address why they aren't more successful in America. Throughout the semester, and especially at the end, we will discuss arguments and evidence about how the election system might be reformed. The first 35 minutes of class will be devoted to lecture over key points regarding elections, the second 35 minutes will be devoted to discussing current events, and how they relate to the concepts we are covering in class.

<b>Date Covered</b>	<b>Class Topic or Activity</b>	<b>Reading Assignment</b>	<b>Paper Topic / Discussion Topic / Test Question</b>
August 21 <sup>st</sup> Thursday	Class Syllabus and Introduction		
August 26 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	Historical overview of presidential elections / The Electoral College  Pick paper topics	Wayne, Chapter 1 (25 pages) Streb chapter 9 (17 pages)	1. How does the Electoral College operate? What consequences does it have for presidential elections?
August 28 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	No class, I'll be at a conference		
September 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday	Overview of congressional elections	Herrnson Intro & Chapter 1 (30 pages) Streb chapter 7 (19 pages)	2. <u>What are some of the basic aspects of congressional elections?</u> How does the redistricting process operate?
September 4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	Rules about money in presidential elections	Wayne, Chapter 2 (37 pages)	3. What are the rules of the presidential campaign finance system and how does it operate in practice?
September 9 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	Voter turnout	Wayne, chapter 3 (32 pages)	4. Who votes? Why does it matter? How does the law influence voter turnout?
September 11 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	Vote choice	None	5. Why do people vote for the presidential

			candidate they vote for?
September 16 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	Nominations for Congress & the decision to run	Herrnson, chapter 2 (35 pages)	6. How does the nomination process for Congress operate? What causes people to run for Congress?
September 18 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	The presidential nomination system	Wayne, chapters 4 and 5 (47 pages)	7. How does the nomination process for the presidency operate?
September 23 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday	The presidential nomination campaign	Streb chapter 8 (17 pages) Wayne, chapter 6 (32 pages)	8. How should the nomination process for the presidency be reformed? <u>What happens after the nomination contest, but before the general election?</u>
September 25 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	How congressional campaigns work	Herrnson, chapter 3 (16 pages)	9. What are the key aspects of congressional campaigns?
September 30 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	Parties in congressional campaigns	Herrnson, chapter 4 (44 pages)	10. What role do parties play in congressional campaigns?
October 2 <sup>nd</sup> Thursday	Interest groups in congressional campaigns	Herrnson, chapter 5 (34 pages)	11. What role do interest groups play in congressional campaigns?
October 7 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	The presidential campaign	Wayne, chapter 7 (34 pages)	12. <u>What are the key aspects of presidential campaigns?</u> What strategies are successful in presidential elections?
October 9 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	Midterm Exam		
October 14 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	Money in congressional elections	Herrnson, chapter 6 (29 pages) Streb chapter 10 (20 pages)	1. What is the role of money in congressional elections?
October 16 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	Strategy in congressional elections	Herrnson, chapter 7 (25 pages)	2. What strategies are successful in congressional elections?
October 21 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday	The media and presidential elections	Wayne, chapter 8 (40 pages)	3. What role does the media play in presidential elections?
October 23 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday	The media and congressional elections	Herrnson, chapter 8 (24 pages)	4. What role does the media play in congressional elections?
October 28 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	The causes and consequences of winning a presidential election	Wayne, chapter 9 (36 pages)	5. What are the causes and consequences of winning a presidential election?
October 30 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	The causes of winning a congressional election	Herrnson, chapter 9 (37 pages)	6. What are the causes of winning a congressional election?
November 4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	Election day, no class	None	
November 6 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	Discuss election	None	
November 11 <sup>th</sup>	Reforming congressional elections	Herrnson, chapters 10 & 11 (43 pages)	7. How should congressional elections be reformed?
November 13 <sup>th</sup>	Reforming presidential	Wayne, chapter 10	8. How should

Thursday	elections	(27 pages)	presidential elections be reformed?
November 18 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	Election Game		9. <u>What basic concepts are illustrated in the games we played in class?</u>
November 20 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	Reforming the system #1	Streb chapters 1-3 (43 pages)	10. What are some criteria for reforming the system? Should we institute reforms to increase voter turnout? Should we reduce the number of offices we elect?
November 25 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	Students pick topic for this day	To be assigned	None
November 27 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	No class: Thanksgiving		
December 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday	Reforming the system #2	Streb chapters 5, 6 and 11 (27 pages)	11. Should ballot laws be changed to give more access to third parties? Should new types of voting machines be used? How do reforms measure up against criteria for reforming the system?
December 4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	Review Day for final		
Tuesday, December 9 <sup>th</sup> 3:00 PM	Final		

### Grading

Your final grade will be determined by the following work. Unless noted otherwise, all grades written on quizzes, tests, papers, etc. will be percentage grades (i.e., out of 100).

1. Reading quizzes (15% of grade): These will be given every day there is a reading assignment. Since you actually have to do the reading for this class, I've kept the reading load as light as possible. I will drop your two lowest quiz grades of the semester. Quizzes can only be made up with an excused absence, and must be taken on the first day back after the excused absence. Makeup quizzes will be essay in format, and will be hard. Students who come in late will not be allowed to take the quiz after other students have handed their quiz in.
2. Two tests: 30% of grade (15% each): these will be essay format. The final will be non-cumulative. You can only make up a missed midterm or final with an excused absence. Makeup tests will also be essay format, and difficult. These tests will consist of three essay questions (or groups of questions from one day) from the above table, exactly as written above. They will be picked randomly.
3. Three Papers: 30% of grade (10% each). These will be between 1,500 and 1,750 words in length (about five pages. Only the body of the text counts toward the minimum limit.). These are to be handed in using Blackboard's digital dropbox feature (this is under "tools" in Blackboard). No hardcopy is to be turned in. They are to be in MicrosoftWord format. Papers are due by 3:00 PM the day before the class they are written for. Late papers will lose 5% of the percentage grade of the paper per day. Papers will be returned using the digital dropbox feature of Blackboard. Wait three days after the due date of a paper before asking me if I've received it. It is your responsibility to make sure that I have received and graded your papers. If you're absent from class and you did a paper for that day, you lose 10% from your paper grade, unless you have a university excused absence.

You are to pick three paper topics (i.e., class dates) from the above table. You are to write your name on the lists that will be circulated starting on August 26<sup>th</sup>. No more than four students may pick one paper topic. I would prefer it if every topic has at least one student signed up for it. Answer the question or questions in the last column of the table above for your paper (although the ones underlined in the table cannot be answered for your paper). November 18<sup>th</sup> will not have a paper due. If you wish to create your own paper topic that pertains to the materials that day, that can easily be arranged with my permission.

Papers are to use at least three articles, books or book chapters from academic sources that are relevant to the topic of the day. Academic sources include all the Political Science journals on jstor. Check with me if you are unsure whether an article or book is an academic one. You are to discuss the content of these sources and explain how they relate to the topic of that day's class. That should be the focus of the paper. Your personal opinion about how elections work is not to be the focus of the paper. Although you should do the assigned reading as background, before writing your paper, do not discuss the assigned reading for the class in your paper. You should also say whether you agree with the conclusions of the articles and why you do or do not do so.

4. Participation: 15% of grade. Your participation grade will be determined in part by whether you bring new information to class for discussion. If you miss five or more classes (with the exception of going to party conventions), you will receive a grade of "F" for the class.

5. Experiential learning: 10% of grade. This component of your grade requires you to do at least ten hours of active participation in elections, broadly defined. Working for a candidate or going to a party convention are examples of ways to participate actively in the upcoming election. A five page paper over your experiences will document your participation. Alternatively, you may write a twelve page paper if you do not wish to participate in elections.

I use standard break points for determining grades.

Percent	Grade	Percent	Grade	Percent	Grade	Percent	Grade
90-100	A	80-85	B	70-75	C	60-65	D
85-90	B+	75-80	C+	65-70	D+	0-60	F

Requests for a grade change must be submitted in writing. No discussion of changing a grade will be allowed before a full description in writing of the student's complaint has been submitted. This request for a re-grade must be submitted in the body of an e-mail. In addition, you must give me any materials pertaining to the re-grade before I will start to reconsider your grade. All materials pertaining to the re-grade (i.e. your written statement and the material to be re-graded) must be received by me within one day of my handing the material back to the class. The more specific your description of your complaint, the higher the chance that your grade will be changed. A simple statement that you do not think your grade is fair will not result in a higher grade.

### **Readings**

Most of the readings for the course are from three books that are at the bookstore. I have tried to assign reasonably priced books for this class. A few other readings may be posted on Blackboard, well in advance of when they are to be read by.

### **Maximizing Learning**

I expect students to do all the readings due for a class and to read them carefully. I advise you to take notes over the readings so you understand the main points.

Please feel free to talk to me about the content of the class whenever you see me outside of class. E-mail is an excellent way to communicate with me. If you feel shy about asking questions in class or making suggestions, feel free to e-mail me or talk with me after class.

### **Respect for Other People**

Respect for other people, by not interrupting them, listening carefully to them, and acknowledging their ideas by responding to them is expected. Under no circumstances are students to belittle the ideas of other people although you are encouraged to disagree.

### **Cheating and Plagiarism**

Cheating on tests includes (but may not be limited to) copying answers from another student, supplying answers to another student, obtaining unauthorized copies of the exam, and so forth. Plagiarism is the representation of someone else's work as your own. One should use quotation marks and citations when quoting from another source. One should also use citations when using another's ideas, even if you do not use their words. Cheating and plagiarism in this class will be punished to the maximum extent possible. I electronically archive all papers students turn in, and use the software "TurnItIn" to detect plagiarism. At a minimum, students will receive a "0" for the assignment where plagiarism was evident.

### **Disability Accommodations**

Go to the link [http://www.indstate.edu/humres/affactdiversity/ADA\\_Final\\_Policy.htm](http://www.indstate.edu/humres/affactdiversity/ADA_Final_Policy.htm) for the University's disability policy.