Elections rest at the heart of America’s representative democracy. In this course, we will examine U.S. elections and electoral campaigns, exploring such questions as:

- What are the role of political parties in nominating candidates and influencing campaigns?
- What is the role of the media in elections?
- What are the roles of political action committees and interest groups?
- What kinds of advertising in campaigns are most effective?
- How much are elections influenced by day-to-day campaign activity?
- How are legislative and local campaigns different from presidential campaigns?
- How fair are our elections, and what might we do to improve them?

The course will begin by addressing several of these questions in sequence with application to presidential elections. After spring break, we will spend a few weeks focusing specifically on the 2012 presidential campaign, and competing narratives and explanations for its outcome. The course will conclude with a unit on the particular considerations of legislative and local elections, focusing on congressional campaigns.

**Intended Student Learning Outcomes**

At the conclusion of the course, it is expected that students will be able to:

- Explain the American electoral process and the role of political parties in it.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of campaign strategies and various actors within the process.
- Differentiate between the considerations involved presidential, statewide, and local elections.
- Produce a research paper on an historical campaign integrating outside research with the themes and materials discussed in class.
- Participate more knowledgeably in American elections and politics more generally. Understand undemocratic aspects of American elections.

**Readings**

The course has four required books:


The books should be available from the campus bookstore and online. Additional articles and book excerpts will be posted on Moodle as noted in the syllabus.

**Requirements**

The course grade consists of the following:

1. Midterm Exam (in class October 8): 20%
2. Final Exam: 35%
3. Campaign Strategy Research Paper (due October 20): 15%
4. Campaign Consultancy Paper & Presentation (due December 8): 20%
5. Class Participation: 15%

**Exams:** There will be two examinations in the course, an in-class midterm on October 8th, and a final on the designated final exam date. The final will be cumulative, but focus on material from the last half of the semester. Each exam will have a designated in-class review session. Both exams will include multiple choice, short answer and one or more longer essay questions. All exams are open-notes, although you are not permitted to access electronic devices or the internet during the exam.

**Research Papers:** There are two required papers for this class. The first, a Campaign Strategy research paper, is due Tuesday, October 20th, and is worth 10% of your grade. This is an individual 4-5 page paper describing the campaign strategy (including fundraising, ground game, advertisements, etc.) of an historical presidential candidate of your choice (excluding any candidate from the 2008 or 2012 elections).

The second paper, the Campaign Consultancy, is due Tuesday, December 8th, and is worth 20% of your grade. For this assignment, you will be asked to assemble into groups of three students to prepare a 10-12 paper, as well as a 15-minute presentation, advising one of the current candidates for U.S. President in 2016. Further details of both papers will be discussed in class.

**Participation and Moodle Posts:** Class participation will be composed of both your participation in class discussions and your responses to the readings posted on Moodle.

For each class session, students are expect to:

- Attend all classes, having read the designated material from syllabus;
- Be well-prepared to answer questions about the of the week’s readings
- If you cannot attend a class, please let me know ahead of time

You are required to post three reading responses on Moodle over the course of the semester. At least one of these posts should be made by Week 5, and a second should be made by Week 10. One of the three posts should link to and discuss a recent news or editorial article you have read related to the current presidential campaign and its link to our course materials. You should post under the correct week on the GOVT 215 Moodle site. *Posts are due by 10pm on the night before the associated class meeting.*
There is no required format or length to the Moodle posts, although I would expect many will be about one typed page or two paragraphs. You may respond to any aspect of any the day’s readings; you may tie together multiple readings, readings from previous weeks, current events or you own life experiences or simply argue why you think a particular argument is correct or incorrect, etc.

The Moodle posts will not be given individual letter grades; for the most part, they will be graded on a pass/fail basis. If I find your post particularly interesting or insightful, I may ask you to expand on it in class.

*Board Game:* Over ten weeks of the semester, we will pit the two sections of the class against each other in the board game *1960: The Making of the President*, simulating the presidential campaign between John Kennedy and Richard Nixon. The game is played over nine turns, each representing one week of the campaign, with special turns for the presidential debate and election day. I anticipate that we will play once a week over lunch, beginning in the second week. Representatives of one section will run Kennedy’s campaign, and the other will run Nixon’s, choosing sides in our first meeting. The winning section will be rewarded with pizza for the entire class on our last meeting day. Participation in the game is open to any student in the class who wants to play. *This part of the class is completely optional and not part of your grade in any way.*

**Class Schedule**

**Week 1: Introduction; The American Electoral System**
- September 1:
- September 3:
  - *Text*, Ch. 12: “Voter Participation”

**Week 2: Election Laws & Campaign Finance**
- September 8:
  - *Text*, Ch. 4: “Financing Campaigns”
  - *Nelson*, Ch. 8: “Campaign Finance: Campaigning in a Post-Citizens United Era”
- September 10:
  - Case Excerpt: *Citizens United v. FEC*

**Week 3: Political Parties & Nominations**
- September 15:
  - *Text*, Ch. 6: “Political Parties”
  - *Text*, Ch. 9: “Presidential Campaigns”
- September 17
  - Larry Bartels, “Expectations and Preferences in Presidential Nominating Campaigns”
Week 4 & 5: Campaign Strategy – Get Out the Vote & Advertising

- September 22:
  - *Text, Ch. 3: “The Transformation of American Campaigns”*
  - Alan Gerber & Donald Green, “The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment”
- September 24:
  - *Text, Ch. 5: “Modern Campaign Strategies”*
  - Gerber, Gimpel, Green, & Shaw, “How Long Lasting are the Persuasive Effects of Televised TV Ads?”
- September 29:
  - Excerpt from Darrel West, *Air Wars*

Week 5 & 6: The Media

- October 1:
  - *Text, Ch. 8: “Media”*
  - Nelson, Ch. 5: “The Media: Different Audiences Saw Different Campaigns”
- October 6:
  - Stephano DellaVigna & Ethan Kaplan, “The Political Impact of Media Bias”

Week 6: Midterm

- Midterm review & Catch-up October 6
- Midterm Exam in class Thursday October 8

Week 7: The 2012 Election – Overview

- **NO CLASS October 13 (Fall Break)**
- October 15:
  - Nelson, Ch. 3: “The Election: How the Campaign Mattered”
  - Nelson, Ch. 4: “Voting Behavior: How the Democrats Rejuvenated Their Coalition”

Week 8: The 2012 Election – The Primary Election

- October 20:
  - Halperin & Heilemann, *Double Down*, Ch. 5-13, excluding 6 & 9
  - Campaign Strategy research papers due Tuesday, October 20
- October 22:
  - Sides & Vavrek, *The Gamble*, Ch. 3 and 4

Week 9: The 2012 Election – The General Election

- October 27:
  - Halperin & Heilemann, *Double Down*, Ch. 16-23
- October 29:
  - Sides & Vavrek, *The Gamble*, Ch. 2 and 5 (skim); Ch. 6 and 7 (read)
Week 10: Congressional and Local Elections
- November 3:
  - *Text*, Ch. 10: “Congressional Campaigns”
  - *Nelson*, Ch. 7: “Congress: Partisanship and Polarization”
- November 5:
  - Excerpt from Gary Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, Ch. 2 & Ch. 6

Week 11: Congressional Campaigns & Finance
- November 10:
  - *Text*, Ch. 11: “State and Local Campaigns”
- November 12:
  - Excerpt from Richard Fenno, *Home Style*

Week 12 & 13: Campaign Consultancy Presentations / Discussion of 2016 campaign
- November 17 and 19: Student presentations
- November 24: Reading TBD (Recent articles from campaign)
- *NO CLASS November 26 (Thanksgiving)*

Week 14: Congressional Districting and its Effects
- December 1
  - Nicholas Goedert, “Gerrymandering or Geography?”
- December 3
  - Bernard Grofman and Thomas Brunell, “‘The Art of the Dummymander”
  - Excerpt from David Lublin, *The Paradox of Representation*

Week 15: Congressional and Local Election effects
- December 8:
  - Brandice Canes-Wrone, “Out of Step, Out of Office”
  - Campaign consultancy papers due Tuesday, December 8th
- December 10: Exam Review & Catch-up

Final Exam (DATE TBA)

**Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism or cheating, is a violation of College policy and may result in a failing grade and/or other disciplinary measures. Please review the guidelines on “Principles of Intellectual Honesty” available in the Student Handbook (go to http://www.lafayette.edu/currentstudents and click on Student Handbook under Resources and Services), which elaborate College policy on plagiarism and academic integrity.