

Political Science 357: Campaigns and Elections



Professor Jeffrey L. Bernstein Fall 2018

Class meets on Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 A.M. – 10:45 A.M., 420 Pray-Harrold

Class Overview

Elections matter. Some days, I am not so sure whether or not they are good for democracy. However, I know they matter, in that they pick who will govern us and what policies we will pursue. They also show us a great deal about who we are as a country, and who we want to be. I hope I don't need to say a whole lot more to convince you that this subject is important and worthy of serious study by political science students, and by anyone who wishes to understand America in the 21st century.

Our major work this term will focus on the early machinations of the 2020 presidential election, particularly for the Democrats. Each of you will be part of a group that prepares a strategy for one of the Democratic candidates seeking to parlay the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination into the presidency. This will involve working on the “messaging” for your candidate, preparing and focus group-testing television ads for the candidate, and developing electoral strategies to bring your candidate to victory in November of 2020. The work will be hard – no pain, no gain – but it will be fun. It will also give you an opportunity to learn about running campaigns in a very practical sense.

This is not to say we will forget about the past! We will spend a good bit of time concentrating on the historical development of American elections, focusing particularly on the latter half of the twentieth century as a time of dramatic change (you're going to hear a lot about 1968, just to warn you!). This will give us leverage to understand the evolution of campaigns and elections during the American experiment with democracy. The most recent midterm and presidential elections will occupy a good bit of our time this semester; I've long been fascinated by midterm elections, and I am eager to see how this year speaks to the prevailing theories about them. We will use recent elections to set a basis for what we might see in 2020, thus helping you to perform even better on the class project.

I am very much looking forward to this class and trust it will be a good experience for all of us! I am glad you will be part of this experience this semester.



A Little Bit about Me and My Teaching Philosophy

I have been a professor in the Department of Political Science at Eastern since 1997. My wife Lisa and I have been married for twenty-five years (as of August 1) and have two sons, Zachary (19) and Solomon (14). I am a long-time fanatically devoted fan of the New York Mets, and have been devastated by how this season has gone. I have watched *Apollo 13* many more than thirteen times; I am also a fan of classic sitcoms (*Cheers*, *M*A*S*H*, *The Brady Bunch*, *All in the Family*, etc.) and a couple of current shows (*Orange Is the New Black*, *The Big Bang Theory*). One of my hobbies is juggling things like balls, rings, rubber chickens, clubs, and flaming torches; I recently saw a video on how to juggle five balls, and am now obsessed with getting my skill level to that point. I like to laugh, so I'm going to try to make class as fun and interesting as possible for all of us. Life is not a dress rehearsal – I only have one life on this planet, and I intend to enjoy it as much as I can.

As for my teaching philosophy: after doing this college teaching thing for over twenty years, I think I've reduced my philosophy of teaching down to one sentence: **my job is to provide scaffolding to enable you to reach great heights.** That's my role; that's what I do.

What does this mean? For our course, this has two practical implications. First, I am going to demand that you reach great heights. This is an upper-level class at the university level, and I do not intend to give away grades or college credits. **You will have to work, and you will have to work hard.** You will read a lot, write a lot, and engage in a significant applied research project that will require much effort and excellence from each of you. All of this work is aimed at your learning a great deal about campaigns and elections; if you complete this class successfully, you will understand American electoral politics, and will gain insights into how to design campaign strategies for presidential candidates. The hard work in here is a necessary requirement to achieving this deep learning.

Now perhaps I have you all contemplating dropping this class! ☺ Before you do, let me share with you the other piece of my teaching philosophy. **I will provide you with all the support I possibly can to help you achieve my goals for you.** I will make myself available to you in office hours, and outside of office hours (see below). I will happily meet with you (and your partners in the group project) to help you with the significant project for the term. I will assign readings that will engage and interest you, give exams that are a fair test of the course material, and will structure assignments to help you master course material. I want you to achieve great things in this class, and I will do whatever I possibly can to help you get there. You do your part, I'll do mine, and we'll make this all work out well.

How to Contact Me:

Office: 601E Pray-Harrold, 734-487-6970 (direct) or 734-487-3113 (Political Science Dept.)
 Office Hours: Tuesdays, 11 A.M. – 12 P.M.;
 Wednesdays, 11 A.M. – 1 P.M.;
 Thursdays 2:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.; **and by appointment**
 E-mail: jeffrey.bernstein@emich.edu

I'm usually not hard to find. I'm on e-mail all the time, and will try to check my voice mail at least once a day. I welcome visitors during office hours – this is your time, and I enjoy the company and the chance to get to know you. If you'd like to talk in person but my office hours don't work for you, let me know and we can find a different time that works for both of us. Please do not hesitate to be in touch if you have any concerns about the class, or if you want to talk about other stuff.



Assignments

Reading

There are two required books for this course. The books should be available at all the usual bookstores (as well as online, where you might very well find some better deals). The books are as follows:

Nelson, Michael, ed. 2018. *The Elections of 2016*. Washington, D.C.: Sage. **Hereafter referred to as Nelson.**

Sides, John, Daron Shaw, Matt Grossmann, and Keena Lipsitz. 2018. *Campaigns and Elections*, Third Edition. New York: WW Norton and Company. **Hereafter referred to as Sides, Shaw, Grossmann, and Lipsitz.**

All other course readings will be made available to you on the course website. I expect that you will do the readings for the date in which they are assigned on the syllabus, and that you will come to class having thought about the readings and prepared to be brilliant. People who do not to the readings make me sad.

Introductory Essay Assignment

Your assignments for this course will fall into a few different categories. First, you will have one short introductory essay this semester. The assignment will be given to you on the first day of class and will be due on Wednesday night, September 12. The essay will ask you to consider some general perspectives on elections. It should be fairly short (around 1000 words) and will be fun for you to do. Trust me. 😊

Exams

There will also be three exams in this class. The first two will take place during class time and are aimed at making sure you are keeping up with the readings and the work we do in class; I really do think of them as fairly low-stakes ways for you to check in and demonstrate your understanding. The first will be on Tuesday, October 2, and the second will be on Tuesday, October 30. These will be essay exams. There will also be a take-home final examination, due on Thursday, December 13. Questions for the final exam will be given out before Thanksgiving – it will cover material from throughout the course. My greatest goal for this exam is that it will provide you an opportunity to synthesize what you have learned in the course.



The Big Project: Planning a Campaign

Much of this class will be based on a model of **Project-Based Learning**, in which I throw you into a big project and you do much of your learning through your experience in that project. Our big task will be a group-oriented project (with significant individual components). You will be working in a group of about four people to prepare a campaign plan for one of the potential 2020 Democratic presidential candidates. I have chosen to have us do this work for one of the Democratic candidates since I believe their nomination is more wide open, that their contest offers us more pedagogically useful material to explore, and that the search for the heart and soul of the Democratic Party is among the most important political issues in American politics today. The major pieces of this project include the following:

- A. Campaign Assignment #1: Messaging. As part of this assignment, you will work on developing themes that you might use for the campaign, trying to distill them into a cohesive message for the campaign (some might even call this “branding” the campaign and the candidate). You will research the candidate, come up with some possible messages, and then gather survey data on how well the different potential messages resonated with the respondents. A memo detailing the messaging process, and your recommendations to the candidate concerning the campaign message, will be due on Thursday, October 18. As part of this assignment, you will do a short pre-assignment, due on Wednesday, September 19; details to follow.
- B. Campaign Assignment #2: Commercials. For this assignment, you will develop three potential commercials that you might use for the candidate. One will be a biography ad, introducing the candidate to the country. The second will be a positive issue ad, while the third will be a negative ad directed at one of your opponents. These commercials will be developed, and then tested in two focus groups. A memo detailing the process of creating the commercials, the reaction of the focus groups to the commercials, and how you would use them in the campaign, will be due on Monday, November 19. As part of this assignment, you will once again do an ungraded pre-assignment, due on Monday, October 22.



- C. Campaign Assignment #3: Outline for Presentation to the Candidate. This brief assignment will be due on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving Break (Tuesday, November 27). While ungraded, it will give me an opportunity to see what your group project is shaping up to be, and to offer my guidance before the actual presentation. I would advise those of you doing one of the early presentations to think about handing this assignment in earlier.
- D. Campaign Assignment #4: Presentation to the Candidate. On one of the last four days of class (November 29, December 4, 6, and 11), you will be presenting the report to the candidate. The candidate will be played by a mystery guest to the class, and the remainder of the class will represent the candidate’s entourage. The report should focus on how the candidate who has hired you can be elected president in November of 2020 (and, by extension, how he or she can get the Democratic nomination). It should use available polling data, as well as the reports from the messaging and commercial sessions, to provide strategic guidance. It should also show examples of how the campaign will get its message across, and how it will act in accordance with the structural rules of the campaign process to pull off a victory in two years. The presentation should last *no more than twenty minutes*, and will be followed by discussion. Actual dates for the presentation will be determined in mid-October. This will be expected to be a *highly-polished, professional report*.

I am very excited about this project! However, it is a group project, and I should talk about that here. I know many of you may have an aversion to group work; I understand that (truly, I do). I believe, however, that you will do a great deal of group work in your professional careers, and that anything I can do to give you experience in this area will be to your benefit. I would be willing to bet money that at least a couple of you will one day use this project as an example of how you can work well in groups when you go on job interviews. Moreover, for a significant assignment such as this campaign project, you simply cannot cover as much ground, or learn as much material, working alone.

To make the group work work, I'll be doing the following:

- a. I will require each group to come up with a communication plan, and with a forum by which they will share and communicate ideas. This will be done the first day the team meets. I'll discuss best practices with you, to help you determine the best ways to keep the lines of communication wide open.
- b. The first two campaign assignments will have individual components to them, which will give each of you an opportunity to show off your own work, and also will require that everyone contribute something to the group (no free riding!).
- c. I will be there with you, at every step of the way, to make sure the groups are working well and to intervene when I need to.

Of course, nothing will help make the groups work well as much as showing respect for each other. If it is your intention to coast along on the work of others and contribute nothing to the group's efforts, I assure you it will be quite evident to me, and that will be noted in my grading. **If it is your intention to take advantage of your classmates by doing none of the work, do not take this course.**

A Few Other Notes

Let me make a couple of other comments here. First of all, **academic integrity**. Here at the university, there are few issues that are more important. Academic dishonesty, including all forms of **cheating and/or plagiarism**, will not be tolerated in this class. Anyone caught engaging in academic dishonesty will receive a grade of zero for the assignment in question and may, at my discretion, receive a failing grade for the entire course. In addition, you may be referred to the *Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards* for discipline that could result in suspension or permanent dismissal from the university. If you are not sure whether something constitutes academic dishonesty, talk to me.



For **students with disabilities**, if you wish to be accommodated for your disability, EMU policy requires that you first register with the *Disability Resource Center* in room 240K of the Student Center. You may contact the DRC by phone at (734) 487-2470; their website is <http://www.emich.edu/drc/>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with DRC soon as you will only be accommodated from the date you register with them forward. **No retroactive accommodations are possible.** I am more than willing to offer you all accommodations to which you are entitled, but emphasize this is not something I can do on my own. If you have any questions, talk to me or the Disability Resource Center.

I am willing to make all reasonable accommodations for **absences caused by religious observation**; I will in fact experience some of my own this semester. I do ask that you keep me posted, in advance, when situations like this occur. Like most people, I am familiar with religious observances in my own faith, but know less about other religions. Perhaps your informing me of your absences, should they be necessary, will give me an opportunity to learn something new!

One other thing – for purposes of this course, when I need to reach all of the students, I will use e-mail, specifically e-mail sent to your emich.edu address. Please make sure that all messages sent to this account are accessible by you and that, if you use a different email address, you are able to forward EMU e-mails to your other account. I will consider you to have been informed about something connected with the course if I e-mail it to you at your emich.edu address.

Grading

Grades will be determined by the chart below. I will guarantee you whatever grade the chart says you should get. I do reserve the right to raise grades on the basis of such things as dramatic improvement during the term, strong class participation, or exemplary work on the group assignments. I am happy to raise grades should circumstances warrant.

Date	Assignment	Percentage of Grade
Wednesday, September 12	Introductory Essay Assignment is due	5
Tuesday, October 2	Midterm Examination #1	10
Tuesday, October 30	Midterm Examination #2	10
Thursday, December 13	Take-Home Final Examination is due at 10:30 A.M.	20
Wednesday, September 19	Campaign Assignment #1a is due	Ungraded
Thursday, October 18	Campaign Assignment #1 (and #1b) is due	15
Monday, October 22	Campaign Assignment #2a is due	Ungraded
Monday, November 19	Campaign Assignment #2 (and #2b) is due	20
Tuesday, November 27	Campaign Assignment #3 is due	Ungraded
Thursday, November 29 through Tuesday, December 11	Presentation of Final Campaign Plan to Candidates	20
All Semester	Class Participation	Add-on

As I said above, I believe it is my job to set a high bar for you – the work you will do this semester is difficult. It will challenge you, and it will keep you hopping. This is a three-credit, upper-level political science class, and I intend to have you *earn* these credits – I’m not just giving it away. But I also believe it is my job to help you achieve these high standards by *scaffolding* the work. I will provide you support, in many ways, on all assignments. I will push you hard, but I will make sure you have the support you need to do all the work I ask of you. The effort, however, must be provided by you. I trust it will be.



Schedule of Readings and Classes

Below, I have placed a daily schedule for the course. I anticipate sticking closely to this outline, although we may deviate from it slightly should events warrant. Please make sure to use this section of the syllabus to keep track of your readings and assignments; remember that all readings should be done *before* class on the day for which it is assigned.

Thursday, September 6 – Introduction to the Course; A Fun Exercise with a Great Prize for the Winner

No reading for today.

Assignments:

1. Today, I will give out the Introductory Essay assignment. It will be due on Wednesday, September 12, by 8 P.M.

Tuesday, September 11 – No Class Today (Rosh Hashana)

Wednesday, September 12 – Introductory Essay Assignment due by 8 P.M.

Thursday, September 13 – Theoretical Perspectives on Campaigns and Elections

Reading:

Noel, Hans. 2010. “Ten Things Political Scientists Know That You Don’t.” *The Forum* Volume 8: Issue 3, Article 12.

Sides, Shaw, Grossman, and Lipsitz, Chapters 1 and 2.

Assignments:

1. Today, I will introduce the major project for the term, a campaign consultation gig for a prospective presidential candidate. We will start the process of forming consulting teams.

Tuesday, September 18 – Historical Perspectives

Reading:

Sides, Shaw, Grossman, and Lipsitz, Chapter 3.

Rauch, Jonathan. 2016. "How American Politics Went Insane." *The Atlantic*, July/August issue.

Assignments:

1. The campaign consulting teams will be announced today; you will find out the candidate for whom you will be working. You will also spend some of today meeting with your team to come up with a name for your consulting firm, and to develop a group communication plan.
2. Today you will receive Campaign Assignment #1. The pre-assignment component of it – Campaign Assignment #1a – will be due on Wednesday night, September 19, by 8 P.M., e-mailed to your group members and to me.



Wednesday, September 19 – Campaign Assignment #1a due by 8 P.M.

Thursday, September 20 – More Historical Perspectives; Beginning the Project

Reading:

Nelson, Chapter 1.

Hayes, Danny, Jennifer L. Lawless, and Gail Baitinger. 2014. "Who Cares What They Wear? Media, Gender, and the Influence of Candidate Appearance." *Social Science Quarterly* 95 (5): 1194-1212.

Assignments:

1. The campaign consulting teams will meet today, using Campaign Assignment #1a as the basis of the discussion.
2. We will spend time in class today discussing how to do the surveys, and allowing you to get a head start on them.

Tuesday, September 25 – No Class Today

Class will not meet today. Instead, I will ask each group to set up a meeting with me on Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday of this week, during which we can discuss the project, the survey, and how your group intends to excel on this project.

Tuesday, September 27 – What the Hell Happened in 2016?

Reading:

Nelson, Chapter 8.

Cramer, Katherine J. 2016. "For Years, I've Been Watching Anti-Elite Fury Build in Wisconsin. Then Came Trump." Published November 16, 2016, at:

<http://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2016/11/16/13645116/rural-resentment-elites-trump>

Dovere, Edward-Isaac. 2016. "How Clinton Lost Michigan – and Blew the Election." Published December 14, 2016, at:

<http://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/michigan-hillary-clinton-trump-232547>.

Hopkins, Dan. 2016. "Voters Really Did Switch to Trump at the Last Minute." Published December 20, 2016, at:

<http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/voters-really-did-switch-to-trump-at-the-last-minute/>.

Tuesday, October 2 – Midterm Examination #1

Wednesday, October 3 – Survey Due to Me Today

The survey will be out in the field from October 4-9.

Thursday, October 4 – Nomination Politics – Past and Present

Reading:

Sides, Shaw, Grossman, and Lipsitz, Chapter 9, nomination section.

Nelson, Chapter 2.

Cohen, Marty, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2016. "Party Versus Faction in the Reformed Presidential Nominating System." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 49: 701-708.

Collens, Jack D., and Emily O. Wanless. 2018. "Endorsements in the 2016 Invisible Primary: Still a Useful Indicator?" In Lucas, Jennifer C., Christopher J. Galdieri, and Tauna Starbuck Sisso. *Conventional Wisdom, Parties, and Broken Barriers in the 2016 Election*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.



Tuesday, October 9, and Thursday, October 11 – Working on Survey Results

We will meet in a computer lab these days to work on survey results and see what we can learn. We will also finalize group presentation times for December during this week.

Tuesday, October 16 – General Election Politics – Past and Present

Reading:

Sides, Shaw, Grossman, and Lipsitz, Chapter 9, general election section.
Nelson, Chapter 3.

Thursday, October 18 – Congressional Elections

Reading:

Sides, Shaw, Grossman, and Lipsitz, Chapter 10.
Nelson, Chapter 7.
Fiorina, Morris P. 2016. "The (Re)Nationalization of Congressional Elections." Hoover Institution Essay on Contemporary American Politics.

Assignments:

1. Campaign Assignment #1 and Campaign Assignment #1b are due today by 8 P.M.
2. Today you will receive Campaign Assignment #2. The pre-assignment component of it – Campaign Assignment #2a – will be due on Monday night, October 22, by 8 P.M., e-mailed to your group members and to me.

Monday, October 22 – Campaign Assignment #2a due by 8 P.M.

Tuesday, October 23 – The Art of Creating Campaign Commercials

We will spend today going over examples of campaign commercials, determining what works and what does not, and having brief meetings to continue discussing your commercials.



Thursday, October 25 – Elements of Campaign Strategy

Reading:

Sides, Shaw, Grossman, and Lipsitz, Chapter 5.
Issenberg, Sasha. 2012. "The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns." New York: Crown Publishers. Chapter 5.
Rutenberg, Jim. 2013. "The Obama Campaign's Digital Masterminds Cash In." *New York Times Magazine*, June 20.

Tuesday, October 30 – Midterm Examination #2

Thursday, November 1 – Money and Politics

Reading:

Sides, Shaw, Grossman, and Lipsitz, Chapter 4.

Nelson, Chapter 6.

Assignments:

1. We will be starting focus groups around now. You should be working to make sure you have enough people in your focus groups.

Tuesday, November 6 – The Media and 2016 Election; Talking about Tonight

Reading:

Sides, Shaw, Grossman, and Lipsitz, Chapter 8.

Azari, Julia and Seth Masket. 2018. "Intraparty Democracy and the 2016 Election." In Lucas, Jennifer C., Christopher J. Galdieri, and Tauna Starbuck Sisso. *Conventional Wisdom, Parties, and Broken Barriers in the 2016 Election*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.



Thursday, November 8 – Political Parties; Talking about Tuesday Night

Reading:

Sides, Shaw, Grossman, and Lipsitz, Chapter 6.

Bernstein, Jeffrey L. 2018. "Understanding Political Parties." Draft chapter from in-progress manuscript.

Tuesday, November 13 – Interest Groups – For Good and/or Evil

Reading:

Sides, Shaw, Grossman, and Lipsitz, Chapter 7.

Thursday, November 15 – Mobilization, Demobilization, and Participation

Reading:

Sides, Shaw, Grossman, and Lipsitz, Chapter 12.

Issenberg, Sasha. 2012. "The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns." New York: Crown Publishers. Chapter 7.

Assignments:

1. I will give out the questions for the Take-Home Final Examination today.
2. I will also give out the assignment sheet for Campaign Assignment #3 today. It will be due on Tuesday, November 27.

Monday, November 19 – Campaign Assignment #2 (and #2b) due by 8 P.M.

Tuesday, November 20 – Voting Behavior in Elections

Reading:

Sides, Shaw, Grossman, and Lipsitz, Chapter 13.

Nelson, Chapter 4.

(Re-read): Cramer, Katherine J. 2016. "For Years, I've Been Watching Anti-Elite Fury Build in Wisconsin. Then Came Trump." Published November 16, 2016, at:

<http://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2016/11/16/13645116/rural-resentment-elites-trump>

Assignments:

1. Reminder about Campaign Assignment #3, due on November 27.



Thursday, November 22 – No Class Today (Thanksgiving Break)

Tuesday, November 27 – Pulling It All Together

Reading:

Sides, Shaw, Grossman, and Lipsitz, Chapter 14.

Nelson, Chapter 18.

Assignments:

1. Campaign Assignment #3 is due to me by the start of class.
2. We will have brief team meetings today to finalize preparations for the presentations.

Thursday, November 29 – Campaign Presentations #1 and #2

Tuesday, December 4 – Campaign Presentations #3 and #4

Thursday, December 6 – Campaign Presentations #5 and #6

Tuesday, December 11 – Final Campaign Presentation(s); Wrap-Up



Tuesday, December 13 – FINAL EXAM ESSAYS DUE AT 10:30 A.M. TODAY

And, in conclusion: LET'S DO IT! THIS IS GONNA BE FUN!