



PS 141E: Electoral Politics: Elections, Media, and Strategy

Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30-4:45pm

On-Line Only

Instructor: Dr. Ajax Peris

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00-11:00am

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Purpose of the Course

The purpose of this course is twofold. The first is to introduce students to key theories of campaign, media, and elections strategy found in political science. The second is to help students develop the critical thinking and writing strategies they will need to be savvy consumers of media and engaged citizens. Throughout the course, we will draw clear connections between theory in political science and the “real world,” paying special attention to the 2016 Presidential Election and the ongoing 2020 campaigns.

Remote Learning

Following UCLA's requirement that this term be taught entirely remotely, I am transitioning this course to be taught completely via on-line video lectures, web-based exams and quizzes, and electronically submitted homework assignments. Many of these provisions are new to many of us, so please bear with me as there will certainly be a few bumps in the road along the way. I appreciate your patience.

It will be important for all students to have access to a reliable high-speed internet connection and a device with a moderately-sized screen/keyboard interface, meaning a desktop or laptop computer or a tablet. Handheld mobile devices (like phones) will likely not be sufficient for students to fully participate in the course. If you are concerned about your ability to participate in remote classes or exams, please contact the Dean of Students Office at 310-825-3894 or dean@saonet.ucla.edu.

For this course, I will be presenting my lectures in real-time using the Zoom platform. Each Tuesday and Thursday, enrolled students may find links to enter the lecture on the CCLE page under the appropriate week's tab. If you monitor the lecture at the scheduled time (T/R 3:30-4:45) you will have the opportunity to ask me questions via chat about the material we are covering. After the lecture is over, I will upload the video recording of the lecture to the course site. If you are unable to monitor in real time, then you can view the lecture recordings at a time convenient to you. For your discussion section, your TA will have instructions for participation.

Course Requirements

Some material for exams may be discussed in lecture but not covered in the readings. You are responsible for all material in assigned readings and discussed in class.

Textbooks (Available at the UCLA Bookstore or can be ordered online in print or e-book)

C&E: Campaigns and Elections (Third Edition)

by John Sides, Daron Shaw, Matt Grossmann, Keena Lipsitz
2018

IC: Identity Crisis

By John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck
2018

Additional readings will be distributed as PDF documents via the course webpage. You are responsible for having the appropriate software to view these materials.

Current Events

Many of the elements of electoral campaigns that we will discuss in this course will be playing out in real time during the term. With the ongoing campaigns, particularly among Democratic presidential candidates, you'll have an opportunity to see politics in action as we learn about it. Your familiarity with current events in American politics will greatly enhance your understanding of the course material, plus it will help you participate in class discussions. You should keep up with current events through various news sources.

The way news is consumed and produced is changing along with technologies that make data easier to collect, store, and analyze. Below are a few recommended resources to help you gather political news.

- Google News – Google aggregates news from a multitude of sources, and it even provides multiple sources for any given news story.
- Twitter – Many political reporters rely on Twitter to communicate with one another and with news consumers. I recommend opening a Twitter account and following a few political reporters and political scientists. Some suggestions:
 - Ezra Klein, David Leonhardt, Vox.com, The Upshot, John Dickerson, Chuck Todd, Lynn Vavreck, Michael Ross, Nate Cohn, John Sides, Maggie Haberman, Jake Tapper, Katy Tur, John Ray, Daniel Drezner.
 - *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*

Discussion Forums and On-Line Office Hours

There are two sections of the on-line discussion forum on the course CCLE website. The Course Administration Discussion Forum and the American Politics Discussion Forum.

The Course Administration Discussion Forum is a place where you can post questions about assignments, clarification on reading assignments, homework due dates, or what chapters a quiz covers, for example. I monitor the discussion and check daily for questions that need answers or clarification.

The Campaigns, Media, Strategy Discussion Forum is a place to discuss the topics we cover in the class. Here you can ask clarifying questions, discuss topics that aren't entirely clear to you, or ask about quiz questions you didn't understand, for example. Again, I will be checking the forum regularly to address your questions.

If you have a question about the class, I strongly recommend you post it in one of the two forums above. Undoubtedly, you are not the only person with that question or concern, and others will benefit from seeing the answer.

If you would like to discuss something privately, you may contact me via email at ajaxperis@ucla.edu. I will try to respond quickly. If necessary, we can set up a video meeting to discuss your concerns.

Office Hours. I will conduct virtual office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10-11am. During those hours, you may post questions to me in the "American Politics Discussion Forum" on the CCLE page and I will answer them immediately. We will adjust these procedures as we evaluate their effectiveness in practice.

Quizzes

Each Tuesday (except weeks 1, 6, and 10), there will an on-line quiz over material in the readings. The quizzes are OPTIONAL. They will be open book, but they will also be time-limited. If you elect to take the quizzes (you have to take at least five of the seven to get credit), your highest five grades on them will be incorporated into your overall course grade. You will not be penalized for not taking the quizzes. If your quiz score would lower your overall grade, I will not include it. If you do not attempt the quizzes, you will not be able to access them later to study for exams.

- Bottom line, the quizzes can **ONLY** help you to get a higher grade, to be prepared for class, and to be prepared for exams.

Homework Assignments – Interpreting Strategy via Social Media

We're going to take advantage of the fact that there is a campaign ongoing during this term. Every Thursday you will submit a homework assignment as described below. Note: There will be no homework assignment required for weeks 1, 6, and 10.

Each student will select a current major candidate for President (either Trump, Biden, or Sanders) to follow on social and other media. You will use the same candidate every week for the whole term, though you may change candidates in Week 7. If your candidate drops out of the race for any reason, you may switch to a different candidate.

Once you have selected your candidate, you are to engage the campaign in every way you can find. For example, you should sign up through their website to join their email mailing list and follow them on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, etc. You should also endeavor to watch or listen to every interview, press conference, or campaign speech they conduct.

Each week you'll prepare a 2-3 page analysis of your candidates' strategy, as evidenced by their media activity that week. Who are they targeting? What is their core message? What policy positions are they emphasizing? Are they making references to other candidates? Are they changing their strategy over time? As the term progresses, you'll have more tools to help with your analysis. Make sure to explicitly reference your evidence from social media. We'll talk more about this in class.

Turning in Assignments

All assignments will be submitted electronically as PDF documents to the appropriate link on the course page. It is your responsibility to ensure you have the software to publish a PDF. Please do not email your papers. The electronic document shall be formatted such that, when printed, it meets the formatting instructions posted on the course website. I expect your papers to be correctly formatted and to have correct spelling and grammar.

Late Work

In general*, assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date, unless an alternate due date/time is given. Any work submitted late receives a penalty of one letter grade for every day it is late (starting immediately after the work is due). The only acceptable excuses for late work are 1) a note from a UCLA administrator, or 2) a note from a doctor documenting an illness. Computer crashes and software problems are not excusable. You may submit your work late, but you pay a price of one letter grade per day on the assignment.

* "Life Happens": One time during this term, you may use the "life happens" excuse to turn in any single assignment late, no questions asked, and receive no penalty. This provision does not apply to quizzes or exams, and it expires at 11:59pm on Friday, June 5, after which any work that hasn't been submitted will receive a zero grade. You do not need to notify me in advance that you are using this provision. When you are ready to submit your work, upload it as you normally would, then send me an email so I can go in and grade it.

Grading

This course will have seven homework assignments, seven optional quizzes, one in-class exam, and a final exam. Your grade will be determined by weighing each assignment as follows:

	Without Quizzes	With Quizzes
• Mid-term Exam	33%	30%
• Final Exam	34%	30%
• Homework Assignments (7)	33%	20%
• Quizzes (7)	NA	20%

Academic Honesty

All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. I encourage you to discuss matters relating to this course with other classmates, friends, family members, and students, but your papers and exam answers must be your own ideas and your own words. If you are having trouble completing a paper, contact me or the UCLA Undergraduate Writing Center for help before you resort to the use of someone else's words or ideas without proper attribution. If you are unfamiliar with the University's policy on academic dishonesty and associated penalties, see <http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu>.

Lying to a faculty member about anything relating to this course constitutes academic dishonesty and requires reporting to the Dean and can result in possible suspension or dismissal.

Learning Disabilities

Students with university-documented learning disabilities should inform me as soon as possible of their needs. This is especially important if you require more time for exams. If you suspect you have a learning disability and have not been tested for one, contact the UCLA Office for Students with Disabilities (310) 825-1501. You cannot tell us you have a learning disability on the day before the exam. We won't be able to accommodate you on such short notice.

Schedule of the Course

Day	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Week 1 – Tues Mar 31	Introduction Campaigns, Strategy, and Media	C&E Ch 1	ISideWith.com
Week 1 – Thurs Apr 2	Identity Politics	IC Ch 1	
Week 2 – Tues Apr 7	Electoral Rules	C&E Ch 2	Quiz #1
Week 2 – Thurs Apr 9	The Political Environment	IC Ch 2	Homework #1
Week 3 – Tues Apr 14	Political Parties	C&E Ch 6	Quiz #2
Week 3 – Thurs Apr 16	The Invisible Primary	IC Ch 3 “How to Understand the Invisible Primary” “The Invisible Primary	Homework #2
Week 4 – Tues Apr 21	Campaign Finance	C&E Ch 4 “Buying Elections?”	Quiz #3
Week 4 – Thurs Apr 23	The Media Media Bias	C&E Ch 8 “Ratings, Ratings, Ratings”	Homework #3
Week 5– Tues Apr 28	“The Donald Show”	IC Ch 4	Quiz #4
Week 5 – Thurs Apr 30	Who Votes? Turnout and Election Fraud	C&E Ch 12 “Democracy in Crisis?”	Homework #4
Week 6 – Tues May 5	MID TERM EXAM		
Week 6 – Thurs May 7	Vote Choice The Swing Voter	C&E Ch 13 “As Moderates Go, So Goes the Nation?”	

Week 7 – Tues May 12	Priming Voters Big Data	IC Ch 5 “The Victory Lab”	Quiz #5
Week 7 – Thur May 14	Congressional Elections	C&E Ch 10	Homework #5
Week 8 – Tues May 19	Campaign Strategy and Tactics	C&E Ch 5 “Strategy, Tactics, and Operations”	Quiz #6
Week 8 – Thur May 21	Cracks in the Ceiling	IC Ch 6	Homework #6
Week 9 – Tues May 26	The Trump Tax	IC Ch 7	Quiz #7
Week 9 – Thur May 28	What Happened?	IC Ch 8	Homework #7
Week 10 – Tues Jun 2	Democracy or Chaos?	C&E Ch 14	
Week 10 – Thurs Jun 4	Final Exam Review		
Final Exam TBD			