

# POLA 4150-01: Elections in America

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## Instructor

Dr. Brian J. Brox

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## Office Location

Norman Mayer 302

## Office Hours

Tue & Thur, 11:00-12:15,

and by appointment.

Mask required.

## Course Information for Fall 2021

CRN: 30624

Date & Time: Tuesday & Thursday 9:30 – 10:45 AM

Classroom: Richardson 108

## Course Overview

This course examines the role of elections within the broader American political system. Elections are the process by which people execute the most fundamental aspect of our democracy: allowing citizens to choose their representatives.

In this course we will investigate what political science can tell us about elections and the campaigns that seek to influence electoral outcomes. We will also explore some practical issues involved in campaigns and elections.

While this course is not explicitly a “how-to” for installing a candidate into office, it provides students the opportunity to see campaign efforts from both the outside and the inside by examining campaign needs and motivations.

## Learning Outcomes

This course will help students to establish a firm grounding in the basic information about American elections and electioneering by examining both the rules of the game and the players, to develop analytical skills with which to analyze the strategic situations faced by campaigns, and to become familiar with the work of both political scientists and political practitioners that provide insight into how campaigns are waged and elections are won. Upon completion of this course, students will be able (1) to demonstrate substantive knowledge about the institutions and processes of American elections; (2) to articulate and evaluate theories of behavior among actors in the American electoral system; and (3) to understand the means by which the behavior of ordinary citizens is shaped by institutional arrangements and mediating groups to produce electoral outcomes.

## Required Texts

- John Sides, Daron Shaw, Matt Grossmann, and Keena Lipsitz, *Campaigns and Elections*. Third edition, 2019. W.W. Norton & Co. 978-0-393-66467-6.

In addition to the text, there are several required readings located on Canvas, noted with an \* in the course schedule. Logon to <https://tulane.instructure.com/>, click on the course link for Elections in America, and on the left side of the page click on the link for Files.

## Assignments

There will be four components to the grade in this course. There will be three exams. These will consist of multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and/or essay questions; the exact format will be discussed before the first exam. Additionally, students will complete an essay; the essay prompt and instructions will be distributed in class at a later date. These components will contribute to the final course grade as follows:

Assignment	Date Due	Points
Exam 1	Oct. 5	25 Points
Exam 2	Nov. 11	25 Points
Essay	due Dec. 16	15 Points
Exam 3	Dec. 20	35 Points
TOTAL		100 TOTAL POINTS

## Course Policies

- **Format:** The format for the course will vary. Some classes will primarily consist of lecture, though I will frequently interrupt lecture to call on students to answer questions and give opinions. Other classes will operate as a seminar, and on those days students should be ready to engage one another in discussion. In all circumstances students are encouraged to stop me for questions or comments.
- **Grading:** This course will be graded according to Tulane's plus/minus grading system. Grades will be available by seeing me before or after class or during office hours. I will not provide grades over email or by phone.

A	93-100	A-	90-92.99	B+	87-89.99
B	83-86.99	B-	80-82.99	C+	77-79.99
C	73-76.99	C-	70-72.99	D+	67-69.99
D	63-66.99	D-	60-62.99	F	59.99 and below

- **Expectations:** Students are expected to attend each class, to be on time, and to have all course materials read prior to the class in which they are discussed. Please turn off all electronic devices during class. Laptop computers are not permitted in class; please turn them off and put them away before class starts. All assignments must be completed for a student to pass the course. Requests for regrading any exam or assignment must be made no later than one week after it has been returned. No make-ups will be allowed except in very serious circumstances (I reserve the right to determine what is "very serious"). Course incompletes will only be allowed for circumstances in which the student is physically unable to complete the course; the student must otherwise be passing the course in order to be granted an incomplete.
- **Accommodations:** If you have any kind of special circumstances, such as a disability, illness, or handicap, or if you are involved with a university activity that requires you to miss class, let me know as soon as possible. This information is confidential. All students attending Tulane University with documented disabilities are eligible and encouraged to apply for services with the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility. Please see me or go to <https://accessibility.tulane.edu> for more information. Students needing accommodations must provide me a copy of the accommodation granted by the GCSA as soon as possible.

- **Academic Integrity:** As described in the Tulane University [Code of Academic Conduct](#), students are expected to uphold the honor and integrity of the academic process. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating on an exam (either providing answers to or receiving answers from another student), plagiarism (the use of another author's words or arguments without attribution), and unauthorized collaboration (working with another person in preparing written work for fulfillment of any course requirement). If a student commits any violation of academic integrity, I will pursue disciplinary action as outlined in the Code of Academic Conduct.
- **Academic Freedom:** In any classroom situation that includes discussion and critical thinking, particularly about political ideas, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. Students may disagree with each other at times, or with me. These differences can help enhance class discussion and create an atmosphere where students (and I) will be encouraged to think and learn. In any event, grades will not be adversely affected by any beliefs expressed in class or in assignments.
- **Note regarding syllabus dates:** Please take into consideration the dates of exams and the due dates for essays when scheduling other activities, travel, etc. This applies especially to course requirements that occur immediately before or after holidays. Note also that the final exam date is set by the registrar. Students must take final exams on this date; exceptions can only be granted by the Dean of Newcomb Tulane College. Finally, please note the university-designated makeup dates: October 23, 24, and November 13, 14. These dates will be used for makeup classes in the event of a university closure.
- **Religious Accommodation Policy:** <https://registrar.tulane.edu/academic-calendar> (bottom of the page)
- **Title IX Policy / Support:** <https://allin.tulane.edu/>
- **Code of Student Conduct:** <https://conduct.tulane.edu/resources/code-student-conduct>
- **Compliance with COVID-19 Regulations:** <https://tulane.edu/covid-19/health-strategies>

## Course Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Aug 24	Introduction to the course / Syllabus distribution	(none)
Aug 26	Studying Campaigns	Sides Ch. 1
Sept 14	History of Campaigns	Sides Ch. 3
Sept 16	Electoral Context	Sides Ch. 2
Sept 21	Decision to Run	*Semiatin 2-3
Sept 23	<i>No class - Fall Break</i>	(none)
Sept 28, 30	Campaign Finance	Sides Ch. 4
Oct 5	EXAM 1	(none)
Oct 7	Campaign Organization	*Semiatin 4
Oct 12	Polling & Research	*Jones 3
Oct 14, 19	Free Media	Sides Ch. 8
Oct 21, 26	Paid Media	*Jones 5
Oct 28	Social Media	*Jones 6
Nov 2, 9	Other Campaign Actors	Sides Chs. 6-7
Nov 4	<i>No class - (Virtually) Attend State of the Parties</i>	(none)
Nov 11	EXAM 2	(none)
Nov 16	Campaign Strategy	Sides Ch. 5
Nov 18	Field	*Jones 7
Nov 23, 25	<i>No class - Thanksgiving</i>	(none)
Nov 30	Primaries	Sides pp. 252-263, *Ridout
Dec 2	Presidential Campaigns	Sides Ch. 9
Dec 7	Congressional Campaigns	Sides Ch. 10

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Dec 9	State & Local Campaigns	Sides Ch. 11
Dec 14	Turnout	Sides Ch. 12
Dec 16	Vote Choice – ESSAY DUE	Sides Ch. 13
Dec 20	EXAM 3	(none)

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## Essay Instructions

The purpose of this essay is to relate concepts from the course into an analysis of the material you saw at the recent political science conference. Please address the following concepts in an essay of 5-7 pages. Your essay must be typed, double-spaced, with 12 point font and 1 inch margins. You need not include a bibliography, but you are responsible for citing non-original arguments (e.g. “This argument is usually associated with Campbell et al. (1960) and has structured much of the debate on the subject. However...”). The essay is due Thursday, December 16 (or before!).

1. Think back to the session you watched at the State of the Parties Conference.
  - a. If you could not watch any of those sessions, please watch **two** of the following for use in this essay:
    - i. [https://youtu.be/jm\\_q1DsNjI4](https://youtu.be/jm_q1DsNjI4)
    - ii. [https://youtu.be/YPjC\\_hsYXPU](https://youtu.be/YPjC_hsYXPU)
    - iii. [https://youtu.be/rMbiJkrc\\_FI](https://youtu.be/rMbiJkrc_FI)
2. Briefly summarize the presentations
3. Relate the ideas in each of the presentations to material from at least two of the units from this course. Do the ideas from the presentations reinforce ideas we covered? Do they contradict the things we covered? In general, explain how the research discussed in the presentations fits in with the broader understanding of American campaigns & elections that we are developing in this course.
4. Next, provide your own review of the presentations. Did they enhance your understanding of American campaigns & elections? Or perhaps make things more confusing? Did you think the research being presented was well done, or would you have done things differently had you been the one to conduct the research?
5. Conclude your essay with your thoughts on what the material (both the presentations and the course material that you related them to) means for the American electoral system. Does they provide hope/positive considerations for better, fairer, and more participatory campaigns and elections? Or do they provide warning signs? In general, explain what this material means for the future.