Professor Jamie Druckman
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Office Hours: Tues./Thurs.
2:00-3:00 or by appointment.

American Elections

Course Description

What explains the current state of the American political system? How do elections and political campaigns work? Are voters manipulated by slick media-based election campaigns? What about campaign ads or social media? Do polls help or harm voters? Do differences in how states regulate voting matter? The goal of this course is to enhance our understanding of the contemporary political environment, how elections work, how politicians conduct campaigns, how campaigns and media coverage affect voters, and how we study election campaign dynamics. We will not only examine the academic literature on these topics but will also follow the ongoing events of the 2024 campaigns. Through a combination of assignments, quizzes, and tests, we will arrive at an understanding of elections and campaigns. We also will consider the place of elections and campaigns in contemporary American democracy.

Class Meeting and Structure

The class meets in Meliora Room 203 on Tuesday and Thursdays from 3:25-4:40. Students are expected to attend all classes, to complete all assigned readings and assignments on time, and to actively participate. Classes will include some lecture, informal discussions of the 2024 campaign, discussions of the assigned readings, and class activities/assignments. Additionally, assignments will be provided during many classes, and unexcused absences will result in a 0 on such assignments.

Assignments and Grades

Students will be involved in six types of formal activities, as follows.

1. Election Diary. Each student will spend 5-10 minutes a day keeping an election (digital) diary.

   a. This will entail recording from where they received political information (if any), what that information was, and what they thought of it.

   b. It also will involve recording, on a week 1 13at195.44mital) week 1 13at195.44mital) week 1 13a

information on the geographic area such its demographics and political orientation, b) the history of the office since 2000, c) the major party candidates' backgrounds, d) the major party candidates' issue positions and campaign spending, e) media coverage/endorsements, and f) the results. Explain what seemed to matter most in the campaign.

2. *Exit Polling*. The most crucial part of elections and democracy is voting. To observe this experience, students will be deployed to spend up to 90 minutes at a polling station, either during early voting or on Election Day. The class will develop a brief survey and students will be asked to solicit voters, after they vote, to complete the survey. Students will turn in the polls and then write about the experience in their election diaries (roughly a half page).

The early voting location is at Staybridge Suites – 1000 Genesee St. It occurs from October 26th to November 3rd, from 9-5 on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and 12-8 on Tuesday and Thursday.

The Election Day regular voting locations, closest to campus are:

Kennedy Towers – 666 S Plymouth Avenue, 14608

Plymouth Garden Apartments – 1400 South Plymouth Avenue, 14611

St. Anne Church – 1600 Mount Hope Avenue, 14620

State laws require that you remain at least 100 feet from the polling entrance, only approach voters after they have voted, and emphasize that participation is entirely voluntary.

If a student plans to do the polling but unforeseen circumstances prevent it, the student will then be given an alternative assignment.

Each of these five assignments will compose 12% of each student's grade (for a total of 60%).

3. Reading Annotations/Quizzes. We will allocate some class time for reading some of the assigned materials. During this time, students are asked to put away all electronic devices (including phones). Paper copies of the reading material will be distributed in class. After the reading time (roughly 10 minutes), students will have small group discussions, annotate the reading (i.e., write a critical summary), or take a quiz. Unless instructed otherwise, use of electronic devices during the reading time results in failure. These times will be announced at least one class in advance.

These annotations/quizzes (all together) will compose 10% of each student's grade.

4. Tests. There will be two tests based on the readings, lectures, and discussion.

   Each of these tests will compose 10% of each student's grade (for a total of 20%).

5. Attendance/Participation. Students are expected to attend every class. If a student misses a class, it is the   responsibility to provide written documentation of a legitimate excuse (see course policies); otherwise, it will be counted as an unexcused absence. Also, if a student misses a class (excused or unexcused), it is the   responsibility to learn about any missed assignments, discussion, and so on. The student should do this by talking to other students (first), the teaching assistants (second), and, if necessary, the professor (third). Participation involves taking part in class activities, discussing class readings in an informed way, discussing ongoing campaign events, and completing occasional informal assignments.

   Attendance/Participation is not a formal part of students' grade, except in exceptional cases. Students who regularly actively participate can earn a bonus of up to 2% to their final grade. Students also can have up to 2% deducted from their final grade. This occurs for students who are chronically absent, disruptive, and/or clearly regularly spend their time during class engaging in other activities (e.g., sleeping, texting).

All assignments should include the student's name and full references and must be uploaded via Blackboard.

A table with a summary of due dates appears at the end of the syllabus. There will be some informal assignments, however, that are not listed on the syllabus; these will be discussed in class.

<u>Writing requirement</u>.

"Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Elections and Campaigns," National Center for State Legislatures,

State Election Law Paper Due

September 24 Test

September 26 Polling

"Political Campaigns and Big Data

"[A Proposal for Bipartisan Federal Election Reform](),” by Rachel Orey, Bipartisan Policy Center, July 31, 2023.

See https://www.democratic-reforms.org/

December 5   Reflections on the 2024 Election

Assignments

Assignment	Due Date
AI Legislation Assignment	September 10
State Election Law Data	September 17
State Election Law Paper	September 19