COURSE OVERVIEW
This course surveys major theoretical approaches and empirical research in the study of campaigns, elections, and political communication. We will focus primarily on American politics, although many of the theoretical perspectives are applicable outside the United States. Among the topics we will address: voting behavior, campaign strategy and effects, the role of groups and identity in elections, media effects, why people run for office, and voter turnout.

This course has four learning objectives:

• You will become familiar with a wide range of literatures that are routinely part of Ph.D. field examinations, particularly in American politics.

• You will understand contemporary debates in the study of campaigns, elections, and political communication.

• You will be able to think both appreciatively and critically about social scientific research.

• You will develop a research question and make progress on a paper intended to result in a dissertation topic and/or publication.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
This course is a seminar, which means it will be driven by class discussion. You are expected to come to class prepared to engage in a thoughtful, critical, and lively conversation about the questions, issues, and debates raised in the week’s required reading. The more you participate, the more you will benefit from the course.

Each week, one student will be designated to lead the seminar. On your week, you will be responsible for organizing and stimulating a discussion of the week’s readings. This should not take the form of a lecture or lengthy summary of the material. Instead, you should highlight the most important questions arising from the collection of readings and use those to generate discussion among the rest of us. To facilitate this, you should circulate (by e-mail) a list of 8-10 questions for discussion by 5 pm the Monday before the class.

Every other week, you will submit a short paper (no more than 2-3 pages, double-spaced) responding to the week’s readings. (I will divide up the weeks alphabetically, so that half of the class will be writing a paper each week. All told, you will write six papers.) These should be e-mailed to me by 12 pm the Monday before the class, and I will return them to you the next day. The papers should critically discuss a portion of the week’s readings. You do not need to shoehorn in every article or chapter, but you should address several works. There is no single template for a good paper, but you should minimize the summary of the readings; I am
more interested in your discussion of their strengths and weaknesses. Here is an incomplete list of questions that might animate your weekly papers:

- Are there competing explanations of, or approaches to understanding, a single substantive phenomenon?
- Is there a fundamental argument between or among authors?
- Do different authors employ different methods? Do those differences lead them to draw different conclusions? Would another methodological approach be better?
- Are there major shortcomings in a set of readings on a topic? How could they be addressed?
- What questions for future research emerge from the readings, and how might those questions be answered?
- Does the empirical evidence support an author’s (or authors’) claims?

At the end of the semester, you will be required to submit a research paper of 15-20 (double-spaced) pages. The paper may take one of two forms. First, you may write a paper based on original empirical research, similar to much of the work we’ll be reading this semester. Second, you may write a paper that addresses a debate in the literature and proposes a research project, including a research design. At some point during the semester (with the date to be determined), I will ask you to submit a paragraph describing your proposed final project. The due date for the paper will be announced later in the semester. Finally, you will be expected to present a preliminary version of your paper at a mini-conference during our last class session, on December 5. It will be fun.

Your course grade will be determined by an overall evaluation of your participation in class, your weekly papers, and your final research paper.

READINGS
There are five required books. The list is below. The bulk of the course reading, however, consists of journal articles, chapters from edited volumes, or excerpts from books. Most of the readings are available through JSTOR and/or the GW library’s electronic journal collection.

Some readings, however, are not available online. Those are marked with (*) below, and I have placed them on our course Blackboard page.

Books


August 29: Introduction


September 5: Early Studies of Voting

Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, Intro, Chs. 2, 6-7, 10-14

Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, Chs. 1-4, 6-8, 19-20


September 12: Economic and Retrospective Voting

Sides and Vavreck, Chs.1-2


September 19: Issue Voting, the Spatial Model, and the Folk Theory of Democracy


Achen and Bartels, Chs. 1-2, 4-5, 7

September 26: Campaign Agendas and Strategy


Sides and Vavreck, Ch. 5

October 3: Candidate Traits and Image


October 10: Fall Break. Go Nuts.
**October 17: Groups and Identity in Elections**


Achen and Bartels, Chs. 8-11

**October 24: Campaign Effects**


Sides and Vavreck, Chs. 6-7

**October 31: News Media**


**November 7: Presidential Primaries**

Bartels, Chs. 1-7, 11-12

Sides and Vavreck, Chs. 3-4


**November 14: Deciding to Run**


**November 21: Theoretical Perspectives on Turnout**


**November 28: Mobilization**


Enos, Ryan D. and Anthony Fowler. 2016. “Aggregate Effects of Large-Scale Campaigns on Voter Turnout.” *Political Science Research and Methods*. https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2016.21


**December 5: PSC 8286 Mini-Conference**