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 analyze contemporary debates in the study of campaigns, elections, and political communication.

• You will 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.

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 required 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 (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 3. 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 four 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. A few are linked in the syllabus.

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

**Books**


COURSE SCHEDULE (Readings marked with [*] are posted on Blackboard.)

August 27: Introduction


September 3: Early and Classic 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


More Reading

September 10: Economic and Retrospective Voting

Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck, Chs.1-2


More Reading

September 17: Issue Voting, the Spatial Model, and the Folk Theory of Democracy


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

September 24: Campaign Agendas and Strategy


More Reading


October I: Groups and Identity in Elections


Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck, Ch. 5-6


Achen and Bartels, Chs. 8-11
More reading


October 8: Candidate Traits and Image


More Reading


October 15: Campaign Effects


Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck, Chs. 7-8

More Reading

October 22: Fall Break. Go Nuts.

October 29: Media Coverage and Voter Exposure


Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck, Ch. 4


Guess, Andrew M. 2019. “(Almost) Everything in Moderation: New Evidence on Americans’ Online Media Diets.” Available at: https://webspace.princeton.edu/users/aguess/Guess_OnlineMediaDiets.pdf

*More Reading*


*November 5: Media Effects in Campaigns*


More Reading


November 12: Political Ambition and Candidate Emergence


More Reading


November 19: Theoretical Perspectives on Turnout


More Reading


November 26: Mobilization


More Reading


December 3: PSC 8286 Mini-Conference
Other Course and University Information

Credit Hour Policy
Over 15 weeks, students will spend 2 hours (100 minutes) per week in class. Required reading for the seminar meetings and written response papers or projects, final exam, or final projects are expected to take up, on average, ~6 hours (350 minutes) per week. Over the course of the semester, students will spend 25 hours in instructional time and 87.5 hours preparing for class.

University Policy on Religious Holidays
In accordance with University policy, students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details and policy, see: students.gwu.edu/accommodations-religious-holidays.

Support for Students outside the Classroom
Disability Support Services (DSS)
Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information see: disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/

Mental Health Services
The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. For additional information see: counselingcenter.gwu.edu/

Academic Integrity Code
Thinking of cheating? Don’t do it. Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For details and complete code, see: studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity

Safety and security
In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.