

PSCI 3100.002: Presidential Elections

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Office hours:
On campus W 12:00-1:30
On line Tues 10:00-11:30
and by appointment

Presidential elections are the one time when a majority of Americans simultaneously express their opinion about the direction of public policy in the United States. Leaders of the winning party often interpret the results of the presidential election as the people's mandate for one set of policies or another, while the defeated downplay the election's significance. Who should we believe? What goes into the selection of the only elected official who is responsible to the entire electorate?

This course starts with the theories of voting in presidential elections. Attention is, then, devoted to such topics as candidate strategy, voter mobilization and participation, voter information, the media's role in the presidential election process, and the nomination process. The goal of this course is to examine the inputs of the presidential selection process and use knowledge of these inputs to evaluate how voters make decisions and as a starting point for evaluating how well our system selects good leaders.

There is one book required for the course.

1. Aldrich, John H., Jamie L. Carson, Brad T. Gomez, and David W. Rohde. 2018. *Change and Continuity in the 2016 Elections*. CQ Press. ISBN 9781544356778

Other readings will be available either on Canvas or in e-journals available through the library web-site (<https://library.unt.edu>).

Grades and Extra Credit

Students are responsible for keeping up with all reading on the syllabus. There will be a comprehensive final examination at the conclusion of the course that is worth 30% of the final grade. NOTE, THERE WILL BE NO MAKEUP EXAMS OR INCOMPLETES GRANTED WITHOUT AN EXCUSE FROM THE DEAN OF STUDENTS OFFICE. You also have four short paper assignments that are collectively worth 40% of your grade and a longer paper assignment that is worth 30%. Papers need to be turned in through Turnitin on the class Canvas site. **You are responsible for making sure that assignments are posted on time.** All papers must be posted **by class time** on the date that they due. If a paper does not show up in Turnitin as being received by the due time, the paper's grade will be dropped by 10% per day, up to three days. Papers posted more than four days after the due time will not receive any credit. Exceptions will also be granted only with an excuse from the Dean of Students Office.

You should *not* expect extra credit. If I do offer extra credit, it is only when I can make it available to everyone in the class and when it furthers some educational goal that complements the goals of the course curriculum. I will not offer it as a "do-over" to students who have not completed their work satisfactorily. If you need a particular grade to graduate, maintain a particular GPA, etc. make sure you are putting in the effort to get that grade. If problems arise, address them early before they become unresolvable.

Grades will be posted on Canvas in a timely fashion. In the event of questions about grades records, questions must be resolved within two weeks of their posting. So, for example, challenges to recorded grades from assignments in October will not be entertained at the end of the semester. Finally, keeping apprised of your standing with respect to your grades is your responsibility. Use the percentages above to calculate a rough estimate of your current grade. I will not calculate your overall grade during the semester. Finally, do not use the total points in the grade book on Canvas to estimate your grade as that figure does not account for differences in how each paper or exam are weighted.

Classroom Policies

With respect to classroom policies, I assume that you are adults who are either capable of making your own decisions regarding your best interests or at the time when you need to start learning how to make such decisions. I also assume that most, if not all, of you are in college to prepare yourself in some way for professional life beyond college. As such, you should ask yourself whether your actions in this class are preparing you to conduct yourself successfully in that life.

- COVID-19 Impact on Attendance

Given the pandemic, in-person attendance is not required. If you do not attend lecture in person, I do encourage you to take advantage of remote access. All lectures will be recorded on Panopto and available through Canvas. Additionally, I will try to have Zoom sessions to allow students to participate live remotely. If you do attend, please do so **only on the day** that you are registered for in order to allow us to maintain social distance within the classroom.

Likewise, if you do attend, you are required to wear a mask—**NO EXCEPTIONS**. Face coverings are required in all UNT facilities. Students are expected to wear face coverings during this class. Since you have the option of receiving all content remotely, in-person attendance means that you accept the mask requirement. Disposable masks are available for students at a number of locations on campus. Please refer to <https://vpaa.unt.edu/return> for a list of locations. If you are unable to wear a face covering due to a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Access to request an accommodation. UNT face covering requirements are subject to change due to community health guidelines. Any changes will be communicated via the instructor.

It is important for all of us to be mindful of the health and safety of everyone in our community, especially given concerns about COVID-19. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>) please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Hotline at 844-366-5892 or COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure. While attendance is an important part of succeeding in this class, your own health, and those of others in the community, is more important.

- Class Recordings & Student Likenesses

Synchronous (live) sessions in this course will be recorded for students enrolled in this class section to refer to throughout the semester. Class recordings are the intellectual property of the university or instructor and are reserved for use only by students in this class and only for educational purposes. Students may not post or otherwise share the recordings outside the class, or outside the Canvas Learning Management System, in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

- Class Materials for Remote Instruction

The UNT fall schedule requires this course to have fully remote instruction beginning November 28th. Additional remote instruction may be necessary if community health conditions change or you need to self-isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19. Students will need access to a microphone to participate in fully remote portions of the class; although, without a microphone you can still listen to the lecture and post questions through the Chat feature in Zoom. Information on how to be successful in a remote learning environment can be found at <https://online.unt.edu/learn>.

Academic Integrity

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Students should review the policy, which may be located at <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>. Faculty are required to submit reports of violations

of academic dishonesty even in instances that do not result in sanctions. There will be no deviation from this policy.

Disabilities Accommodation

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://disability.unt.edu>.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify you with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

1 Introduction (Aug. 24)

This lecture will cover basic course requirements and provide a framework for examining the qualities of the presidential selection process.

1. Federalist #68 (http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_68.html).

2 Voting Behavior

2.1 Social Group Theories of Voter Behavior (Aug. 26-Sep. 2)

These lectures will discuss the effect of campaigns and communication among social group members upon how—and when—voters make up their minds during a presidential election.

1. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet *The People's Choice* Ch. 1, 3, 7, 8, 15-16 (see Canvas).
2. Zingher. 2020. "On the Measurement of Social Class and its Role in Shaping White Vote Choice in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election." *Electoral Studies*. (Canvas).
3. *Change and Continuity in the 2016 Election* Ch. 5.

⇒ No class Sep. 7 (Labor Day)

2.2 Social Psychological Theories of Voter Behavior (Sep. 9-14)

These lectures will focus upon an alternate means, party identification, for explaining how voters make up their minds during a presidential election.

1. Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes *The American Voter* Ch. 4, 6-7 (Canvas).
2. Bankert. 2020. "Negative and Positive Partisanship in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Elections" *Political Behavior* (Canvas).
3. *Change and Continuity in the 2016 Election* Ch. 8.
4. Social group and party identification paper due Sep. 14.

2.3 Rational Choice Theories of Voter Behavior (Sep. 16-21)

These lectures provide yet a third theory, issue proximity, for explaining how voters make up their minds during an election, and how this theory helps us better understand candidate behavior in campaigns.

1. Downs *An Economic Theory of Democracy* Ch. 2-3, 7-8 (Canvas).
2. Gibson and Shaw. 2019. "Politics as Unusual? Exploring Issues and the 2016 Presidential Vote." *Social Science Quarterly*. 100(2):447–465.
3. *Change and Continuity in the 2016 Election* Ch. 6.
4. Issue voting paper due Sep. 21.

2.4 Retrospective Theories of Voter Behavior (Sep. 23-28)

These lectures provide one more class of theories, retrospective evaluations, to explain how voters decide which candidate to support in presidential elections.

1. Key *The Responsible Electorate* Ch. 1-2 (Canvas).
2. Fiorina *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections* Ch. 1 & 4 (Canvas).
3. Jones. 2019. "Partisanship, Political Awareness, and Retrospective Evaluations, 1956–2016" *Political Behavior*. (Canvas).
4. *Change and Continuity in the 2016 Election* Ch. 7.
5. Retrospective evaluations paper due Sep. 28.

2.5 Candidate Trait Theories of Voter Behavior (Sep. 30-Oct. 5)

These lectures discuss the ways in which voters evaluate candidates' images and the images that appeal most to voters in presidential elections.

1. Kinder, Peters, Abelson, and Fiske. 1980. "Presidential Prototypes" *Political Behavior* 2(4):315-337.
2. Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk. 1986. "Schematic Assessments of Presidential Candidates" *American Political Science Review* 80(2):521-540.
3. Stiers, Larner, Kenny, Breitenstein, Vallee-Dubois, and Lewis-Beck. 2019. "Candidate Authenticity: To Thine Own Self Be True" *Political Behavior*. (Canvas)
4. Christenson and Weisberg. 2019. "Bad characters or just more polarization? The rise of extremely negative feelings for presidential candidates" *Electoral Studies* 61 (Canvas).
5. Candidate traits paper due Oct. 5.

3 The Candidates

3.1 Campaign Strategy (Oct. 7-12)

The lectures examine one aspect of candidate strategy: resource allocation.

1. Shaw. 1999. "The Methods Behind the Madness: Presidential Electoral College Strategies, 1988-1996" *Journal of Politics*. 61(4):893-913.

2. Chen and Reeves. 2011. "Turning Out the Base or Appealing to the Periphery? An Analysis of County-Level Candidate Appearances in the 2008 Presidential Campaign" *American Politics Research*. 39(3):534-556.
3. Darr and Levendusky. 2014. "Relying on the Ground Game The Placement and Effect of Campaign Field Offices." *American Politics Research*. 42(3):529-548.
4. Shaw. "Assessing the Impact of Campaigning in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election" (Canvas).
5. *Change and Continuity in the 2016 Election* Ch. 2.

3.2 Candidate Image (Oct. 14-19)

These lectures examine a second aspect of candidate strategy: presentation.

1. Petrocik. 1996. "Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections" *American Journal of Political Science*. 40(3):825-850.
2. Baum. 2005. "Talking the Vote: Why Presidential Candidates Hit the Talk Show Circuit" *American Journal of Political Science* 49(2):213-234.
3. Brader. 2005. "Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions" *American Journal of Political Science*. 49(2):388-405.
4. Tedesco and Dunn. 2019. "Political Advertising in the 2016 US Presidential Election: Ad Hominem Ad Nauseam." *American Behavioral Scientist*. 63(7), 935-947.

3.3 Mobilization and Voter Participation in Presidential Elections (Oct. 21-26)

Presidential elections are decided by the people who turn out to vote. But it is very clear that, at best, a slim majority of eligible voters cast ballots in presidential elections. These lectures discuss why some people are more likely to vote than others and how candidates approach turnout strategically.

1. Leighley. 1995. "Attitudes, Opportunities, and Incentives: A Field Essay on Political Participation" *Political Research Quarterly*. 48(1):181-209.
2. Highton. 1997. "Easy Registration and Voter Turnout" *Journal of Politics* 59:565-575.
3. Thompson, Wu, Yoder, and Hall. 2020. "Universal vote-by-mail has no impact on partisan turnout or vote share." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (Canvas)
4. Holbrook and McClurg. 2005. "The Mobilization of Core Supporters: Campaigns, Turnout, and Electoral Composition in United States Presidential Elections." *American Journal of Political Science*. 49(4):689-703.
5. Valentino, et al. 2011. "Election Night's Alright for Fighting: The Role of Emotions in Political Participation." *American Journal of Political Science*. 73(1):156-170.
6. *Change and Continuity in the 2016 Election* Ch. 4.

3.4 Voter Information in Presidential Elections (Oct. 28-30)

Voters have the opportunity to consume vast amounts of information during a presidential campaign. Most choose to ignore most of the information that is presented. These lectures discuss the process by which voters use information and how that process influences how candidates present themselves.

1. Popkin *The Reasoning Voter* Ch. 1-3. (Canvas).

2. Holbrook. 1999. "Political Learning from Presidential Debates." *Political Behavior*, 21(1):67-89.
3. Bartels. 1996. "Uninformed Votes: Information Effects in Presidential Elections" *American Journal of Political Science*. 40(1):194-230.
4. Lau, Anderson, and Redlawsk. 2008. "An Exploration of Correct Voting in Recent U.S. Presidential Elections." *American Journal of Political Science*. 52(2):395-411.

4 The Media in Presidential Politics (Nov. 2-9)

These lectures examine the role of the news media in the presidential election process and how journalists' incentives for covering the news can influence election outcomes.

1. Patterson *Out of Order* Ch. 2 (Canvas).
2. Gilens, et al. 2007. "The Mass Media and the Public's Assessments of Presidential Candidates, 1952-2000." *Journal of Politics*. 69(4):1160-1175.
3. Dalton, et al. 1998. "A Test of Media-Centered Agenda Setting: Newspaper Content and Public Interests in a Presidential Election." *Political Communication*. 15(4):463-481.
4. Hayes 2008. "Party Reputations, Journalistic Expectations: How Issue Ownership Influences Election News." *Political Communications*. 25(4):377-400.
5. Patterson. 2016. "News coverage of the 2016 general election: How the press failed the voters." <https://shorensteincenter.org/news-coverage-2016-general-election/>

Discussion of Election Outcome (Nov. 4)

5 Presidential Primaries

5.1 The Nomination Process (Nov. 11-18)

These lectures describe how the unique American process for nominating presidential candidates influences how they navigate the primary period in terms of their receipt and allocation of resources and the subsequent effect upon the outcome of the nomination race.

1. Polsby *Consequences of Party Reform* Ch. 1 (Canvas).
2. Aldrich. 2009. "The Invisible Primary and Its Effects on Democratic Choice" *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 42(1):33-38.
3. Donovan and Hunsaker. 2009. "Beyond Expectations: Effects of Early Elections in U.S. Presidential Nomination Contests" *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 42(1):45-52.
4. Haynes and Pitts. 2009. "Making an Impression: New Media in the 2008 Presidential Nomination Campaigns" *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 42(1):53-58.
5. Atkeson and Maestas. 2009. "Meaningful Participation and the Evolution of the Reformed Presidential Nominating System" *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 42(1):59-64.
6. Cohen, et al. 2016. "Party versus Faction in the Reformed Presidential Nominating System." *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 49(4):701-708.
7. Dowdle, et al. 2016. "Forecasting Presidential Nominations in 2016: #We Predicted Clinton AND Trump." *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 49(4):691-695.
8. *Change and Continuity in the 2016 Election* Ch. 1.

5.2 Reforming the Nomination Process (Nov. 23-25)

These lectures examine proposals for changing the way that presidential candidates are nominated in the United States.

1. Tolbert et al. 2009. "Reforming Presidential Nominations: Rotating State Primaries or a National Primary?" *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 42(1):71-79.
2. Lewis-Beck and Squire. 2009. "Iowa: The Most Representative State?" *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 42(1):39-44.
3. Mayer. 2009. "An Incremental Approach to Presidential Nomination Reform" *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 42(1):65-69.

6 Presidential Elections and the Efficacy of Democracy (Nov. 30-Dec. 2)

These lectures will provide an overview and review of the topics covered during the semester to provide an overall assessment of how well the actual presidential selection process compares with the desired characteristics described in Federalist 68.

1. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and McPhee *Voting* Ch. 14 (Canvas).

Final Exam

(Tentatively, Dec. 7 1:30 p.m. Check Registrar's Web Site to confirm date and time <http://registrar.unt.edu/exams/final-exam-schedule/fall>)