

Fall 2009

University of Tampere  
Department of North American Studies

U.S. Campaigns and Elections / NAM 8b

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Overview:

Elections are the chief way that most people become involved in politics – as voters, as campaign volunteers or contributors, as fans rooting for their favorite candidate or party, even as spectators unwillingly caught up in the increased media coverage. According to democratic theory, they are also the means by which the public exercises control of their government. If elections are a good thing, then the U.S. has gone to extremes to have as much of them as possible; there are literally tens of thousands of elected offices in the U.S. ranging from president to dogcatcher. The result is a sort of political “farm system” where many politicians begin in lower offices before advancing to higher ones. There are even elections featuring no candidates at all, where the public votes on public policy proposals including complex and emotional concerns like health care reform and gay rights along with more obscure matters.

This seminar approaches the subject of campaigns and elections from several directions, by looking both at different actors and different types of elections. The goal is to understand how reporters, consultants, candidates, parties and voters respond to different situations and how they try to anticipate one another. That will allow you to cut through the self-serving claims of various participants to think critically about why candidates succeed or fail, who the system benefits or not, whether it works and how it could be improved. No country has invested the sort of resources – time, money, and possibly even effort – into campaigns and elections that the U.S. has, making it especially reasonable to ask whether that investment has paid off and how.

The immediate purpose of the class is to give students sufficient background on U.S. campaigns and elections necessary to write a medium-sized (*maximum* length = 15 1.5-spaced pages) research paper on a topic chosen in consultation with me. Part of that process of becoming informed involves active and meaningful discussion of the readings and other assignments. To reiterate: this course is a seminar, not a lecture, so be prepared to participate. There will be a fairly heavy reading load some weeks, but that will be balanced out by other sessions. To facilitate discussion, I will post discussion questions prior to each week’s class.

Seminar paper/grading:

Successful seminar papers ask and answer a question. The key is to identify a question interesting to you (and me) that you can answer. So a question like, “why did Obama win,” is

definitely interesting (winning being the #1 goal of every campaign) but may be too broad in that formulation to be answered. By contrast, the same question about an obscure local candidate may be easier to answer but harder to care about. I am open to topics incorporating other countries beyond the U.S., but since my knowledge of other countries is severely limited and NAM 8b is a course about American politics, the U.S. must factor heavily into your paper. All research questions must be cleared with me.

To do that, and to force you to think about your papers ahead of time, a one-page paper proposal is due in class by 5.11. Proposals must use the following three-part format:

- \* **Question:** One sentence ending with a question mark. Questions that are not questions will not be accepted and must be rewritten.
- \* **Answer:** A paragraph describing what you think the likely answer to your question will turn out to be, and why you have this expectation. In other words, this is akin to the theory driving your paper.
- \* **Evidence:** A paragraph or two describing the evidence you will use to evaluate your answer, including the sources. Remember that the goal is a project you can do, so make sure you look into any sources you intend to use to make sure that they exist and that your demands are reasonable. For example, a proposal promising to look at all of the Obama campaign's expenditures is closer to a Ph.D. dissertation, not a seminar paper.

Unacceptable proposals will be returned to the student to be rewritten – as many times as necessary. Papers without an accepted proposal will not be accepted.

The seminar paper will count for 75% of your course grade, with participation constituting the remaining 25%. Please note: enrollment is capped at 15-20 students; all students must sign a class list and be admitted by the instructor during weeks 1 & 2 to receive a grade.

Plagiarism:

The *Random House Compact Unabridged Dictionary* defines plagiarism as the “use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work.” Plagiarism is a particularly grave offense in the academic world where books and articles are a main part of what many scholars produce, the basis of their reputation and their livelihood. Plagiarism usually comes in two forms, unintentional and intentional. The first occurs when students fail to cite the work they use because of oversight or ignorance of the proper procedure. The second occurs when students deliberately try to cheat by passing off another's work as their own, for example changing a few words of a passage to make it appear less identical.

Neither form of plagiarism is acceptable in NAM 8b. Plagiarism deemed intentional by the instructor will result in an automatic failing grade for the course, irrespective of one's other work. Plagiarism deemed unintentional will result in an automatic grade of 0 (zero) for an assignment, and a second instance will lead to an automatic failing grade for the course. The penalties for plagiarism are harsh for simple reason: DO NOT PLAGARIZE!

There are some simple rules to follow to avoid plagiarism. If you are quoting someone else's words – as I quoted the *Random House Compact Unabridged Dictionary* above – you should both a) put the passage in quotation marks to indicate to readers that the words come from elsewhere, and b) make sure you identify the source. In the case of using another's ideas as opposed to their words, the same general rules apply. So, if you are, for instance, echoing Mayhew's claim that Congress is organized to advance its members' singular goal of being reelected, you need to make clear that that argument comes from Mayhew. The difficulty comes in determining what ideas need to be cited. As a general rule, I am not interested in facts or theories that are common knowledge (e.g. the Senate has 100 members, or the committee system is important) as opposed to facts or theories that are not. If you have trouble telling the difference, and everyone does from time to time, then you should probably err on the side of caution by citing the author or the source.

How do you do that? There are many different ways to format citations, as you will see from the books you read here and in other classes. Personally, I do not care as long as you do two things. First, you must settle on a single format for each piece of writing you do. If you start with author's name (last, first) followed by date and title and publisher, then you must use the same format for all succeeding citations of other books or articles. Second, whatever format you choose should include all the information needed for a reader to find the same source. So, a reference to Mayhew is entirely worthless unless it includes the specific book or article (he has many) and, in the case of a quote, the actual page number.

Finally, one last thing related to plagiarism. The ability to cite lots of material is nice, but it does not and cannot substitute for your own argument. You should think about the material you read and the lectures you hear as raw material for I will rarely ask you to regurgitate something someone else has already written or said. Instead, what someone else has written and said can influence your thinking and it can back up an argument you make. So citing Mayhew may lend authority to your answer to a question I ask, but it likely will never suffice as an answer.

Schedule/readings:

All readings are available either on-line through an electronic database like JSTOR or through the class website (NAM web), or can be borrowed and xeroxed from the NAM office.

<u>Week/date</u>	<u>Topic/reading assignment</u>
1. (3.9)	Course Intro - No reading
2. (10.9)	The players, part 1: candidates and parties - Downs, Anthony. 1957. <i>An Economic Theory of Democracy</i> . New York: Harper and Row. (selected chapters TBA, NAM web) - Karp, Walter. 1993. <i>Indispensable Enemies: The Politics of Misrule in America</i> . New York: Franklin Square Press. (chaps 1-2, NAM web)

3. (17.9) The players, part 2: the public
  - Converse, Philip E. 1964. The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics. In David Apter (editor), *Ideology and Discontents*. New York: Free Press. (NAM web)
4. (24.9) The players, part 3: the press
  - No reading. We will watch and discuss a documentary, *Journeys with George*, in class.
5. (1.10) The players, part 4: the consultants
  - Johnson, Dennis W. 2007. *No Place for Amateurs: How Political Consultants are ReShaping American Democracy* (second edition). New York: Routledge. (NAM office)
6. (8.10) Voter turnout
  - Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. 2000. The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment. *The American Political Science Review* 94: 653-66. (JSTOR)
  - Krasno, Jonathan S. and Donald P. Green. 2008. Do Televised Presidential Ads Increase Voter Turnout? Evidence from a Natural Experiment. *The Journal of Politics* 70:245-261. (NAM web)
  - McNulty, John E., Conor M. Dowling, and Margaret H. Ariotti. 2009. Driving Saints to Sin: How Increasing the Difficulty of Voting Dissuades the Most Motivated Voters. *Political Analysis* (forthcoming). (NAM web)
7. (15.10) Campaign finance
  - Weine, Kenneth. 1998. The Flow of Money in Congressional Elections. New York: Brennan Center.  
([http://brennan.3cdn.net/f177515ac99d23ad12\\_v8m6ibwe4.pdf](http://brennan.3cdn.net/f177515ac99d23ad12_v8m6ibwe4.pdf))
  - Krasno, Jonathan and Conor Dowling. 2008. Political Parties and the Shrinking Field of Play in U.S. House Elections. Unpublished manuscript. (NAM web)
8. (29.10) Advertising
  - No reading. We will view and discuss an archive of presidential TV ads at [www.thelivingroomcandidate.org](http://www.thelivingroomcandidate.org).
9. (5.11) Running for Congress
  - Sidlow, Edward I. 2004. *Challenging the Incumbent: An Underdog's Undertaking*. Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press. (NAM office)
10. (12.11) Congressional elections
  - Jacobson, Gary C. and Samuel Kernell. 1983. *Strategy and Choice in Congressional Election*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. (NAM office)

11. (19.11) Presidential primaries
  - Polsby, Nelson W. 1983. The Reform of Presidential Selection and Democratic Theory. *PS* 16: 695-8. (JSTOR)
  - Cohen, Marty, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2001. Beating Reform: The Resurgence of Parties in Presidential Nominations, 1980 to 2000. Presented at 2001 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois. (NAM web)
12. (26.11) \*No class\*
13. (3.12) Presidential general elections – selected essays on the 2008 election
  - Crotty, William J., editor. *Winning the Presidency 2008*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers. (NAM office).
14. (10.12) Local elections
  - Kleppner, Paul. 1985. *Chicago Divided: The Making of a Black Mayor*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press. (NAM office).