**Course Overview**

This will be a hands-on, “how it’s done” course that emphasizes the methods and tactics of modern political campaigns. This course will use a case study approach to illustrate the theories and concepts of persuasion, message targeting, and message delivery in the campaign context. The primary focus of these case studies will be on contemporary campaign practices in the United States, but we will also examine important historical cases that illustrate successful and unsuccessful campaign efforts.

**Course Objectives**

The objectives of this course are to familiarize students with (1) theories of mobilization and persuasion that are especially relevant to political campaigns, and (2) the strategies, methods, and mass communication technologies that are used in contemporary political campaigns to mobilize and persuade voters. This course is designed to equip students with basic skills useful for managing and evaluating persuasive campaigns. In this way the course will be relevant both to the student with vocational interests in marketing or political consulting and the student who wants to be an informed consumer and observer of election campaigns.

**Required Readings**

Students are required to obtain the following books, which are available at local bookstores (one copy of each will also be on reserve at the Communications Library in Gregory Hall):


Students are also required to obtain a set of additional readings, available electronically from the course Moodle site.

Course Moodle Site

This course has a Moodle site that will be the primary vehicle for receiving course assignments and distributing course-related materials in electronic form. The Moodle site can be accessed at https://learn.illinois.edu/

Instructional Method

Since I am convinced that the best way to learn applied material is for students to apply it themselves, much of this course will be taught in an active learning style. As such, one of my primary roles in the course will be as “coach” or “coordinator” rather than as “enlightened guru.” Students are expected to be full and active participants in their own learning process, and I hope to be taught at least as much by my students as they are taught by me. To promote this kind of learning environment, group projects requiring a great deal of student initiative are at the heart of this course.

A warning from experience: If you have little curiosity about political campaigns, and if you are enrolled in this class mainly because it fits your schedule and gives you three more units of 400-level credit, then this is almost certainly not the course for you. However, so long as you are willing to give it your best shot, even students with little or no background in matters political will find this a rewarding and fun course.

Assignments

*Final grades for both undergraduate and graduate students* will be determined by performance on the following assignments:

- Pop quizzes and in-class participation activities (10% of final grade)
- Two in-class tests (10% each; 20% of final grade)
- Presidential vote analysis project (5% of final grade)
- Two group project reports (20% each; 40% of final grade)
- Campaign analysis paper (25% of final grade)

In general, students should expect at least one *pop quiz* or *in-class participation activity* per week. Pop quizzes will be given at the start of class to test comprehension of the reading(s) assigned for that class period.

The two *in-class tests* may consist of definitional, short answer, short essay, and analysis/application questions. They will *not* be multiple-choice. The tests for the class draw both from course readings and lecture material.

The *presidential vote analysis project* is an entry-level project designed to help you learn the skills of electoral targeting, statistical analysis using MS Excel, and basic mapping skills using GIS software that you’ll be using throughout the course. The project will consist of two components: an
Excel spreadsheet, and a set of maps reporting the results of your analysis for Electoral College states in one region of the U.S.

The **group projects** involve teams of 4-6 students that will conduct original research on one of three election campaigns, tentatively identified as the **2018 Wisconsin U.S. Senate race** (Democrat Tammy Baldwin, incumbent), the **2018 Missouri U.S. Senate race** (Democrat Claire McCaskill, incumbent), and the **2018 Illinois Gubernatorial race** (Republican Bruce Rauner, incumbent). Teams representing either Democratic or Republican candidates will recommend targeting strategies for making efficient use of campaign resources based on an analysis of prior election returns (the first report) and will both recommend paid media strategies for reaching particular subgroups of potential voters as well as create realistic video advertisements for their campaign (the second report). These group projects are meant to be a realistic, applied learning experience. In order to confront the actual conditions that face those who design political campaigns, students will take the role of consultants whose expertise is sought by a candidate. The projects are a learning experience that simulates—but does not actually involve students in—a real-world, electoral campaign. The results of the projects will be public and may be shared with any interested parties.

As is well known, group projects often end up with some members doing a disproportionate share of the work. To ensure that each member contributes a fair share of the effort for the project, at the completion of each of the two reports I will ask you to confidentially assess the contributions made by each of your team members. If at least two members of a team give any particular team member less than a 100% score for effort, then the average score for that member will be used as a multiplier to reduce the individual’s grade on that report. In this way, it is possible for the group as a whole to receive an “A” while a particular team member receives an “F”. It is important to keep in mind that effort is being evaluated here rather than ability. It is expected that groups will allocate responsibilities according to the skills and abilities of individual members, so that members with fewer relevant skills can work on mastering new ones or take on simpler but more time-consuming tasks required for the project. In addition, you will have the opportunity to allocate a small amount of extra credit among your fellow group members to reward extra effort or special contributions.

Membership in these groups will remain consistent throughout the semester: once formed, you’re with your assigned group for the duration of the course. In exceptional cases, it may be in the best interests of a group to “fire” one of its members, or it may be in the best interests of an individual to “quit” from a group. **Individuals wishing to quit their assigned groups, as well as groups wishing to fire a member, must officially notify me of their intent during the seven-day period following receipt of the first group report grade.** Groups must be unanimous in their resolve to fire a member, which may occur only as a last resort and only with the approval of the course instructor. Students thus fired, along with individuals who voluntarily quit their groups, will be required to earn subsequent group project credit by doing all of the assigned group project work by themselves, and may not join another group for the duration of the course.

The **campaign analysis paper** is a project (approximately 4-5 single-spaced pages of text plus approximately 5 pages of supporting documentation) that can be considered a cumulative final. The paper assignment will assess mastery of concepts covered throughout the course, as well as mastery of the skills developed in the two group projects, by requiring students to apply these concepts and skills to a new and unfamiliar campaign context. This paper takes the place of a final
exam and will be turned in at the end of the semester.

Extra Credit Policy

There are no extra credit opportunities available to students taking this course other than peer-awarded points that can be earned in the group projects.

Makeup Policy

There are no make-ups allowed for missed pop quizzes or in-class participation activities. I understand that circumstances occasionally arise that require students to miss a scheduled test. My policy is to allow those students to take a makeup test within seven days of the missed test that is more difficult than the scheduled in-class test, since people taking the makeup will have had more time to prepare for it than did students taking the in-class test. Makeup tests will consist entirely of short answer, essay, and analysis questions. Makeup tests will not be offered if more than seven days have passed since the date of the original test. Group project reports cannot be made up.

Late Assignment Policy

Unless you make prior arrangements with me, assignments turned in past deadline will lose one full letter grade for each day of class that the assignment is late (beginning with the day the assignment is due). In the case of the final campaign analysis paper, the penalty will be one full letter grade for each 24-hour period that the assignment is late. Only in extraordinary circumstances will I grant extensions when the request is made in the 48-hour period before the time the assignment is due. Group project reports cannot be made up.

Special Accommodations

All qualified students entitled to special testing accommodations or assignment deadlines should let me know as early in the semester as possible so I can make appropriate arrangements. Do not be shy about asking for special accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)—if you have qualified for them, then you deserve to have them. I am fully committed to making sure that all students taking the course have equal opportunities for doing their best work on assignments and exams.

Expectations for Students

1. Readings assigned for particular days should be read prior to coming to class.
2. Conflicts with deadlines or other matters should be brought up with me well in advance of the conflict. I will do my best to find a remedy for the conflict, so long as I am given adequate time to do so.
3. You must attend class. Class sessions will not normally be devoted to repeating material covered in readings. Rather, classes will typically relate relevant material not covered in the readings, use the readings as background for discussing particular examples, go deeper into details or specifics, or use the readings as a springboard for discussion.
4. If you miss a class, you’ll need to get a copy of lecture notes from another student. I don’t provide copies of my notes or PowerPoint presentations to students.
Tentative Schedule

1/16 Introduction

Part I: What Campaigns Attempt to Do

1/18, 23 Fundamentals of Campaign Strategy

* Campaign Craft, chp. 1 “The Campaign Plan” and 2 “The Context of the Race”
Mark Penn “The Plan” Memo to Hillary Rodham Clinton, October 2006
Mark Penn Strategy Memo to Hillary Rodham Clinton, March 19, 2007

1/25, 30 Strategies of Mobilization

* Get Out the Vote (start reading)

Part II: Campaign Research Skills

2/1 Group Project Work Day

* Get Out the Vote (finish reading)

2/6, 8 Basics of Electoral Targeting Analysis

* Campaign Craft, chps. 4 “Segment Analysis” and 6 “Voter Targeting”

2/13 Test #1 on Fundamentals of Campaign Strategy and Strategies of Mobilization

2/15, 20 Constructing Turnout and Support Models using Excel

2/22, 27 Analyzing and Presenting Electoral Targeting Data using GIS Software
Review electoral targeting projections for Illinois (page 9) in Hillary Rodham Clinton’s internal targeting projections for February 5th states, January 21, 2008

3/1, 6 Group Project Work Days

3/8 Group Presentations: Electoral Targeting Research

Part III: The Strategic Use of Campaign Research

3/13 Candidate Research

* Campaign Craft, chp. 3 “Opposition Research”

3/15 Strategies of Persuasion


3/20, 22  [NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK]
3/27, 29  Strategies of Persuasion (cont.)
*The Persuadable Voter, chps. 1–2 (pp. 1-48)
*The Persuadable Voter, chps. 3–4 (pp. 49-106)

4/3  Test #2 on Elaboration Likelihood Model and The Persuadable Voter

4/5  Group Project Work Day

4/10  Selecting the Right Persuasive Strategy
* Campaign Craft, chps. 5 “Survey Research”


Mark Penn Strategy Memo to Hillary Rodham Clinton for New Hampshire, December 30, 2007

4/12  Paid Media Options
* Campaign Craft, chp. 8 “Strategic Communications”

4/17, 19  Group Project Work Days

4/24, 26  Group Presentations: Targeted Campaign Communications

5/1  Ethics of Political Campaigning
No readings assigned

5/10  Campaign analysis papers due no later than 10:00pm: electronic copies (preferably PDF documents) must be posted to Moodle.