Political Science 202: Parties, Interest Groups and Elections

This course examines linkages between the mass citizenry and elite policy makers in America. Its goals are four: (1) to explain the operations of parties, interest groups and elections; (2) to examine the correspondence between public opinion and the activities of parties and interest groups, (3) to explore public opinion and voting behavior in the 1996 election; and (4) to critically examine several

The course is organized around two group projects in which all students will participate. During the first five weeks, the class will divide into four analysis groups to examine public opinion and voting behavior in the 1996 election. Each group will examine the relationships between the social, demographic, party identification and ideological traits of voters and one of four distinct types of attitudes or behaviors: (1) voting behavior and political involvement, (2) attitudes on social and other domestic issues, (3) media involvement and (4) general attitudes toward government. Groups will present important findings from their investigations in reports (each 30 minutes in length) on January 31 and February 2.

During the second half of the course, students will organize into four groups to assess possible campaign finance reforms. Each group will present arguments for one of four possible approaches to campaign finance reform, that of: (1) the McCain-Feingold 1997 Senate legislation, (2) the Kerry-Wellstone 1997 Senate legislation, (3) William Thomas’ 1998 House legislation and (4) the approach of Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Ky). The groups will present their arguments on behalf of the approaches on March 6 and 8. Our final class, day, March 10, will involve class discussion and voting on these four possibilities.

Students will write a 5-7 page paper for each project. The election analysis paper should examine one aspect of the group topic in detail, with references to the related scholarly literature. It is due in class on February 14. The campaign finance reform paper should critique the four alternative approaches and present your overall recommendations for reform. It is due at my office by Noon Monday, March 13. You'll find more information on the projects later in the syllabus.

The following books are required and available at the bookstore:

- William Riordan, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall*
- Jeffrey Berry, *The Interest Group Society* (3rd edition)
- Steven E. Schier, *By Invitation Only: The Rise of Exclusive Politics in the United States*
- Charles Prysby and Carmine Scavo, *Voting Behavior in the 1996 Election*
- Anthony Corrado, et al. *Campaign Finance Reform: A Sourcebook*

Two copies of each of the required books are available on closed reserve in the library.

Final grades are calculated on the following basis:

Electoral analysis paper 20% (60 points)
Campaign finance paper  20% (60 points)
Midterm  20% (60 points)
Class and group participation  15% (45 points)
Final  25% (75 points)

Final grades are figured from a class total of 300 points. A's range from 270-300, B's from 240-269, C's from 210-239 and D's from 180-209.

What follows is a schedule of class sessions by topic.

1. Introduction (1/5)

2. Parties, interests and voters: an overview (1/7)
   Schier, ch. 1 (download this from my web page); Maisel, ch. 1; Polsby and Wildavsky, chs. 1 & 2

3. Introduction to the 1996 Election Data Set (1/10)
   Prysbry and Scavo, chs. 1-6
   ******* Election analysis group preferences due at my office by noon, 1/11 *******

4. Assessing voting behavior (1/12)
   Maisel, chs. 4 & 5

5. The history and functions of Parties (1/14)
   Maisel, chs. 2 & 3

6. Movie: The Great McGinty (1940),
   winner of the academy award for best original screenplay. Written, produced and directed by Preston Sturges. (1/17)
   Riordan, introduction through "Tammany the Only Lastin' Democracy"

7. Assessing Plunkitt and McGinty (1/19)
   Riordan, remainder of book

8. State and local nominations (1/21)
   Maisel, chs. 7 & 8

   P&W, ch. 3

10. Presidential nominations and the fall campaign (1/26)
    P&W, chs. 4-5

11. Evaluating presidential elections (1/28)
    P&W, chs. 6 & 7
12. Election Analysis Project Presentations I (1/31)

13. Election Analysis Project Presentations II (2/2)

14. Contemporary campaigns on television (2/4)
    Maisel, ch. 12

15. Midterm exam (2/9)

16. How interest groups form (2/11)
    Berry, chs. 2 & 4

17. Interest group influence (2/14) ELECTION ANALYSIS PAPERS DUE
    Berry, chs. 5 & 6

18. Interest groups and governance (2/16)
    Berry, chs. 8, 9, & 10

19. The campaign finance thicket (2/18)
    Maisel, ch. 11; Corrado, chs. 1 & 2; handouts
    ****** Campaign finance group preferences due at my office by noon, 2/20 ******

20. Does money talk? (2/21)
    Corrado, chs. 3 & 4

21. PACs and soft money (2/23)
    Corrado, chs. 5 & 6

22. Issue advocacy and express advocacy (2/25)
    Corrado, ch. 7

23. Recent innovations (2/28)
    Corrado, ch. 9

24. The Great Disintegration (3/1)
    Schier, chs. 2, 3 & 4

25. Governance and Reform (3/3)
    Schier, chs. 5 & 6

26. Campaign Finance Reform Presentations I (3/6)

27. Campaign Finance Reform Presentations II (3/8)

28. Class Deliberation and Vote on Reform Proposals (3/10)
****** Campaign finance reform papers due at my office by noon, 3/13 ******

ELECTION ANALYSIS PROJECT

In this project, groups of students will analyze a random sample survey of the American population in order to understand why American citizens thought and acted as they did during the 1996 presidential election. Your analysis group must examine the relationship between several independent variables -- social, demographic, party identification and ideological variables (V145-161, V008, V062) -- and one of four sets of dependent variables: voting behavior and political involvement, social and other domestic issue attitudes, media involvement and general orientations toward government. The underlying assumption of the project is that individuals' social, demographic and ideological characteristics help to determine their specific opinions and behaviors during an election campaign. But which independent variables are particularly important in explaining citizens' thought and behavior? Your group must find out.

Your first task is to draw up a list of preferences for the group in which you would like to work. The groups are organized around the dependent variables for investigation. They are (1) voting behavior and political involvement (V001-V013); (2) social and domestic issue attitudes (V095-V113); (3) media involvement (V014-V026) and (4) general orientations toward government (V132-V144). List your preferences in rank order and hand them in to me in my office by noon Tuesday, January 11. I will announce the analysis groups on January 12.

Once your group forms, it is important to divide up its responsibilities. Check political science journals - particularly PUBLIC OPINION QUARTERLY, AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW, AMERICAN JOURNAL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, POLITICAL RESEARCH QUARTERLY, POLITY and AMERICAN POLITICS QUARTERLY - for articles on public opinion and voting behavior in recent elections. The list of references in the Prysby and Scavo book is particularly useful in this regard.

Also, check the reserve books that analyze public opinion and voting behavior in the 1996 elections (see appended list). Examining the literature first gives you an idea of what is commonplace and what is surprising in the data you will examine.

Once you complete the literature review, divide up the subject area so that each person has a distinct paper topic that relates to your project. Since each group will examine several dependent variables, each group member can write a paper based on an analysis of the relationship of the independent variables to one or a few of the dependent variables. Be sure, overall, that your group examines all the major characteristics of your topic in your area.

Here is a helpful procedure at this point. First, get information about all survey respondents' characteristics on each of your dependent variables. Next, examine each dependent variable in greater depth in reference to the independent variables. If you are examining attitudes on abortion (V095), for example, examine them in relation to all of the independent variables and then look further by adding a second independent variable, known as a control variable, to the table - such as abortion attitude by gender by race, for example - allowing you to examine subcategories in detail. Keep your eyes open for interesting findings.

Your group presentation in Willis 211 will allow you to present particular tables from your SPSS analysis on screen. You will be able to save these tables in your group folder on the network, and present them through SPSS or through other presentation software, such as Powerpoint. Decide in advance which tables deserve our attention. Be SELECTIVE, though, because time is limited. Present the most important and interesting findings and explain WHY they are important and interesting. You may want to present some on paper. Your handouts are limited to what you can include on two 8 ½ by 11 inch sheets of paper, on one side. I must have your handouts at my office by 9 AM on the morning of your presentation. At the time of your presentation, you must HAND IN a one-page explanation of your role in the group activities and of the efforts of other members of the group.

Your papers should first state your topic clearly and then relate your findings to the related literature on your topic. You should emphasize particular surprises in your findings. Complete citations must accompany your
CAMPAIGN FINANCE PROJECT

Your first step involves reading the handout that summarizes the four possible positions on campaign finance reform. These four alternatives are (1) the McCain-Feingold Senate legislation of 1997, (2) the Kerry-Wellstone Senate alternative of 1997, (3) the Thomas House alternative of 1998 and (4) the position of Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Ky), an opponent of many forms of campaign finance reform. You MUST send your preferences to me at my office no later than noon, February 20.

Once you are assigned to a group, you should first examine related information about your position by examining the closed reserve readings and by searching the web for information. You can start with the web sites recommended on pp. 413-4 of the Maisel book. Just put "campaign finance reform" in a web browser and you'll also find a lot. Go to it! The closed reserve readings offer a variety of general perspectives on campaign finance reform. Once you understand your group's alternatives, examine the closed reserve and web for information on the other positions, looking for weaknesses in the arguments and evidence employed in their support.

Your group then has thirty minutes to explain and defend your position and to note the weaknesses of their positions. You may develop a handout, no longer than two 8 ½ by 11 inch sheets of paper, on one side, for distribution to the class during your presentation. I MUST have these handouts at my office by 9 AM on the morning of your presentations. Remember that thirty minutes is not a long time to explain complex proposals, so strive to make your proposals and presentation comprehensible. At the time of your presentation, you must HAND IN a one-page explanation of your role in the group activities and of the efforts of other members of the group.

During our last day of class we will discuss each group proposal and discover if we can agree upon one of them. Be prepared to consider supporting a rival proposal, if any is to receive a majority vote!

Your papers will certainly draw on your group research, but must consider the topic of campaign finance more broadly as well. Feel free to critique the proposals of each group, but be certain to present a clear justification for your particular reform ideas as well. Be sure to include full citations of your sources.

ELECTION ANALYSIS PROJECT SOURCES

Gerald M. Pomper, editor, THE ELECTION OF 1996

Paul R. Abramson, John H. Aldrich and David W. Rohde, CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN THE 1996 ELECTIONS (uses NES data)

Herbert F. Weisberg and Janet M. Box-Steppensmeier, editors, REELECTION 1996 HOW AMERICANS VOTED (uses NES data)

James W. Ceaser and Andrew E. Busch, LOSING TO WIN: THE 1996 ELECTIONS AND AMERICAN POLITICS

E. D. Dover, THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1996 (concentrates on media effects)

William H. Flanigan and Nancy H. Zingale, POLITICAL BEHAVIOR OF THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE (9th edition)

Robert S. Erikson and Kent L. Tedin, AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION (5th edition)

CAMPAIGN FINANCE PROJECT SOURCES

Frank J. Sorauf, INSIDE CAMPAIGN FINANCE
Larry Sabato, PAYING FOR ELECTIONS

David Magleby and Candace Nelson, THE MONEY CHASE

Anthony Gierzynski, MONEY RULES

Robert K. Goidel, Donald A. Gross and Todd G. Shields, MONEY MATTERS: CONSEQUENCES OF CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM IN U.S. HOUSE ELECTIONS

Dan Clawson, Alan Neustadtl and Mark Weller, DOLLARS AND VOTES: HOW BUSINESS CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS SUBVERT DEMOCRACY