

POSC 149
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
 Fall 2012

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 University of California, Riverside
 Hours: Monday & Tuesday, 2-3 p.m., and by appointment

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Course Description

This course is an examination of presidential elections. We will discuss candidate strategy, with special attention to victory in the U.S. Electoral College, politics of candidate selection (i.e., the nomination process), campaigning, media coverage, voter decision-making, candidate rhetoric, and the question of whether the presidential campaign matters much at all.

Required Books

Norrander, Barbara. 2010. *The Imperfect Primary: Oddities, Biases, and Strengths of U.S. Presidential Nomination Politics*. Routledge.

Shaw, Daron R. 2006. *The Race to 270*. University of Chicago Press.

These books represent only a portion of the course readings. For most of the topics we will cover, I have selected additional readings identified below. You should read these articles prior to the class periods where they will be discussed. These additional readings are available through the course site on <http://ilearn.ucr.edu>.

Course Requirements

Debate analysis paper	25 percent
<i>The War Room</i> analysis	25 percent
Forecasting model paper	25 percent
Final exam	25 percent

A Note on Expectations. This class features a substantial reading load and a commitment to developing your skills crafting arguments and analyzing political messages. We will certainly attend to the presidential campaign. According to campus academic policies, "courses are assigned a unit value determined by the number of hours of work per week required of the student. Specifically, Academic Senate regulations require three hours of work per week for each unit of credit."¹ This is a four-unit class. Plan to commit 12 hours per week to it.

Debate analysis. One of your writing assignments will revolve around identifying arguments the candidates make: What is the thesis? What are the supporting points? I will ask you to write a paper identifying and evaluating the quality of an argument either major party presidential candidate, President Barack Obama (D) or former Gov. Mitt Romney (R-MA), advances during their debates. This paper is due **October 25**, after the third presidential debate. However you will draw on arguments made in the first or second debates. You may also look for an argument made by one of the Vice Presidential candidates, Vice President Joe Biden (D) or U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI), in their debate.

The War Room analysis

We will screen the documentary *The War Room* together as a class. There will be a paper. Specifically, I will ask you to compare and contrast insights about campaign management that you get from *The War Room* versus the book you will read, *The Race to 270*. This is due **November 20**.

¹ p. 40, University of California General Catalog 2012-2013.

Forecasting model paper. The third paper for the class is an analysis of forecasting models. Political scientist and economists, in particular, have developed statistical models trying to forecast the results of presidential elections before they happen. This paper will call upon you to “look under the hood” of forecasting models to explain how they work and try to come to grips with the questions of whether and how social scientists can accurately predict the results of an election several months before any one votes. This is due December 7, by 5 p.m. Turn it in to my office, 2222 Watkins Hall.

Late papers will be graded, but with a 1/3rd letter-grade penalty for each day—or partial day—each is late. Any passing paper that is turned in will receive passing partial credit.

Plagiarism and cheating will result in a loss of credit on the spoiled assignment and all cases will be referred to the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity Program Office.

Final Examination

If you are unable to take the final exam at the scheduled time, you may schedule an alternate time by contacting me prior to the scheduled exam time and providing appropriate original-copies documentation (medical, military, etc.) for your inability to take the exam at the scheduled time. Scheduling a makeup exam is your responsibility. I will consider extreme medical emergencies, again with complete original documentation. The final exam is scheduled for **December 14, 2012**, 3-6 p.m.

Course Schedule

1. September 27 Introduction
2. October 2 Who runs for president?
Abramson, Paul R., John H. Aldrich, and David W. Rohde 1987. “Progressive Ambition among United States Senators: 1972-1988.” *Journal of Politics* 49(1):3-35. (33)

October 3 First Presidential Debate

Presidential primaries/Nomination process

3. October 4 History
Norrander, Barbara. 2010. *The Imperfect Primary*, chapter 1. pp. 1-24 (24)
4. October 9 Current Process
Norrander, Barbara. 2010. *The Imperfect Primary*, chapter 2. pp. 25-58 (34)
5. October 11 Fairness
Norrander, Barbara. 2010. *The Imperfect Primary*, chapter 3. pp. 59-93 (34)

October 11 Vice Presidential Debate

6. October 16 Alternatives and Frontloading
Norrander, Barbara. 2010. *The Imperfect Primary*, chapter 4. pp. 94-118 (25)
Fredrick, Heather. 2012. “Reforming the Presidential Primary System: The Voter Turnout Initiative. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45(1):51-57

October 16 Second Presidential Debate

7. October 18 Assessments/Implications for the General Election
Norrander, Barbara. 2010. *The Imperfect Primary*, chapter 5. pp. 119-128 (10)

Currin-Percival, Mary, Garrick L. Percival, Shaun Bowler, and Martin Johnson. 2010. "Citizen Dissatisfaction with the US Presidential Primary System." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*, 20(1):3-30.

Atkeson, Lonna Rae. 1998. "Divisive primaries and general election outcomes: Another look at Presidential campaigns." *American Journal of Political Science* 42(1):256-271. (16)

October 22 **Third Presidential Debate**

8. October 23 Debates

Schrott Peter R., and David J. Lanoue. 2008. "Debates Are for Losers." *PS-Political Science and Politics*, 41(3):513-518 (6)

Cho, Jaeho, and Yerheen Ha. 2012. "On the Communicative Underpinnings of Campaign Effects: Presidential Debates, Citizen Communication, and Polarization in Evaluations of Candidates." *Political Communication* 29(2):184-204.

9. October 25 Vice Presidential Candidates

Sigelman, Lee, and Paul J. Wahlbeck. 1997. "The 'Veepstakes': Strategic Choice in Presidential Running Mate Selection. *American Political Science Review*, 91:855-864. (10)

Ulbig, Stacy. 2010. "The Appeal of Second Bananas: The Impact of Vice Presidential Candidates on Presidential Vote Choice, Yesterday and Today." *American Politics Research* 38(2):330-355 (26)

Uscinski, Joseph. 2012. "Smith (and Jones Go to Washington: Democracy and Vice Presidential Selection." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45(1):58-66.

DUE TODAY: DEBATE ANALYSIS PAPER

10. October 30 Electoral College

Dudley, Robert L., and Alan R. Gitelson. 2002. *American Elections: The Rules Matter*, ch. 6. pp. 131-158. (28)

Shaw, Daron. 2006. *The Race to 270*, chapter 1. pp. 1-16 (16)

11. November 1

Shaw, Daron. 2006. *The Race to 270*, chapter 2. pp. 17-40 (24)

12. November 6

Shaw, Daron. 2006. *The Race to 270*, chapter 3. pp. 41-70 (30)

November 6 **Election Day**

13. November 8 *The War Room* documentary

Shaw, Daron. 2006. *The Race to 270*, chapter 4. pp. 71-110 (40)

13. November 13

Shaw, Daron. 2006. *The Race to 270*, chapter 5. pp. 111-142 (31)

14. November 15

Shaw, Daron. 2006. *The Race to 270*, chapter 6. pp. 143-176 (34)

15. November 20 Assessing the Electoral College

Gelman, Andrew, Nate Silver, and Aaron Edlin. 2012. "What is the Probability Your Vote Will Make a Difference?" *Economic Inquiry* 50(2):321-326.

DUE TODAY: THE WAR ROOM VS. RACE FOR 270

16. November 27 Forecasting

Campbell, James E. 2008a. "Evaluating U.S. Presidential Election Forecasts and Forecasting Equations." *International Journal of Forecasting* 24: 259-71. (21)

Campbell, James E., et al. 2008. "Symposium: Forecasting Presidential Elections." *PS-Political Science and Politics* 41(4):679-728. (49)

Note: <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/id/196443>

17. November 29 Campaign Events and Effects

Panagopoulos, Costas. 2012. "Campaign Context and Preference Dynamics in U.S. Presidential Elections Campaign Context and Preference Dynamics in U.S. Presidential Elections." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties* 22(2):123-137.

18. December 4 Reconciling Campaign Effects and Forecasting

Gelman, Andrew, and Gary King. 1993. "Why Are American Presidential Election Campaign Polls So Variable When Votes Are So Predictable?" *British Journal of Political Science* 23(4):409-451. (42)

19. December 6 Presidential Elections and the Politics of Race

Lewis-Beck, Michael, Charles Tien, and Richard Nadeau. 2010 "Obama's Missed Landslide: A Racial Cost?" *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 43: 69-76 (8)

Kam, Cindy D., and Donald R. Kinder. 2012. "Ethnocentrism as a Short-Term Force in the 2008 American Presidential Election." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(2):326-340.

DUE December 7, 5 p.m.: FORECASTING MODEL COMPARISON AND ASSESSMENT

December 14 Final Exam 3-6 p.m.