

**First Year Seminar
Campaigns and the 2006 Elections (WRIT-1111-41)
Fall 2006
Professor Seth Masket**

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Office hours: Fridays 9-12

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to teach you about American political campaigns and elections. You will study some of the field's leading scholarship on political campaigns while becoming a more effective and discriminating consumer of political information. Additionally, you will gain some (but only some) of the knowledge and skills you would need to pursue a career in politics.

The readings will include academic texts on campaigns and elections, as well as accounts by campaign managers and candidates. In addition to the readings and audio-visual materials, you will be required to study a current congressional election campaign. You are expected to attend all lectures. You are responsible for all the materials covered in the readings *and* in class.

Work

There will be four written assignments during this course, three short (2-4 pages each) ones and one longer (6-8 pages) one. Additionally, there will be a midterm examination taken in class on Wednesday, October 4th.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

20% - First assignment

20% - Second assignment

20% - Third assignment

15% - Midterm exam

25% - Long assignment

Etiquette

In this course we will have many dialogues, both in class and on-line. In these discussions, you are encouraged to use your personal experiences and perspectives, as well as your understanding of the course material and current events. Direct personal attacks against others in the class are not permitted. Insulting anyone one inside or outside the class on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, or national background is not permitted. Violations of these rules will be reflected in your grade and, if they continue, may result in disciplinary action by the University.

Contacting Me

I frequently check e-mail (smasket@du.edu), so that is usually the best way to get in touch with me. I can also be reached on my office phone (x12718). I will also have regular office hours on Fridays from 9AM to 12PM. If you need me to get back to you within the same day, definitely contact me before 9PM. I can't promise I'll look at e-mail after that.

I would also encourage you to check your e-mail at least once a day. I will occasionally send out information relevant to class.

Students with Special Needs

Please contact me as soon as possible if you have a documented learning disability or other condition that requires accommodations, such as a separate testing room or extra time on exams.

Syllabus Campaigns and the 2006 Elections

Required Texts:

Nelson W. Polsby and Aaron Wildavsky, *Presidential Elections*, 11th edition (Landham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2004).

Samuel Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Other readings made available on class Blackboard website. Those readings are listed below and marked with a computer symbol (🖥). If you have trouble accessing any of those readings, please notify me immediately.

Week 1 – Introduction: The Limits of Campaigns (Sept. 11, 13)

We will discuss what political campaigns can and can't do. Do they change people's minds about the candidates, or do they just get people to do what they were going to do anyway? We will also review several speeches from major party conventions.

Readings:

- Polsby/Wildavsky, pp. 137-153
- Salmore & Salmore, chapter 1 🖥
- Masket, "Do Dems Need a Message?" 🖥

Week 2 – Marketing and Targeting (Sept. 18, 20)

Campaigns draw from the business world in figuring out how to market their candidates. A major technique borrowed from business is polling, which has become an enormous industry in the political world. We will discuss the basic ideas behind polling. We will also look at how campaigns "target" sets of voters while ignoring others, and try to understand whether being a targeted voter affects one's outlook on the world.

Readings:

- Asher, *Polling and the Public*, chapters 4, 7, and 8. 🖥


First short paper assigned

Week 3 – Media and Communications, Part I (Sept. 25, 27)

This week will focus on advertising. You will be introduced to several different campaign advertising media, including, television, radio, and direct mail. We will examine the ways that advertisements make overt and covert appeals to voters based on race, class, religion, and other demographic categories. The difference between paid and unpaid media will be discussed, as will the effects of negative advertising.

Readings:

- Polsby/Wildavsky, pp. 163-68
- Jamieson, *Everything you Think you Know About Politics... and Why You're Wrong*, Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13 🖥

- Joshua Green, “Dumb and Dumber: Why are Campaign Commercials so Bad?” *The Atlantic Monthly*. 

In class: Direct mail pieces, Campaign advertisements from presidential elections.




First short paper on due in class Wednesday, Sept. 27th

You must choose which congressional campaign to focus on by the end of this week.

Week 4 – Media and Communications, Part II (Oct. 2nd)

We will discuss the roll and power of the media in elections, addressing such topics as fairness, bias, and influence.

Readings:





- John Zaller, “Monica Lewinsky’s Contribution to Political Science,” *PS*. 
- Bernard Goldberg, “How Bill Clinton Cured Homelessness.” 
- Al Franken, “The 2000 Presidential Election: How It Disproved the Hypothetical Liberal Media Paradigm Matrix.” 

Midterm in Class, Wednesday, October 4th

Week 5 – Ethics and Campaigns (Oct. 9th, 11th)

What kinds of promises do candidates make and why do they make them? Do they keep them? We will address these questions, as well as look at some ethical dilemmas faced by candidates over the course of campaigns. We will discuss what is acceptable and what is not, and suggest what we should do with transgressors.

Readings:

- William Galston, “The Obligation to Play Political Hardball” 
- Frank Kent, “Humbugger in Every Campaign.” 
- Selections from Machiavelli, *The Prince*. 
- Donald, “A. Lincoln, Politician.” 



Second short paper assigned

Week 6 – Freedom vs. Fairness (Oct. 16th, 18th)

Campaigns cost money. That means that people with more money have an advantage in politics over those with less money. But leveling the playing field (through campaign finance laws) prevents people from speaking freely and spending what they’ve rightly earned. This week, we’ll discuss how we balance the concerns of freedom and fairness in campaign spending. We will look at the evolution of campaign finance rules and reforms, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of incumbency. We will also discuss celebrity candidates, including Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jesse Ventura.

Readings:

- Polsby/Wildavsky, Chapter 3

- Salmore & Salmore, Chapter 4 
- *McConnell v. FEC* (Scalia's Dissent) 


Oct 18th: Movie in class: "Vote for Me"

Second short paper due in class Monday, Oct. 16th

Week 7 – Political Parties I: The Hunt for Red and Blue America (Oct. 23rd, 25th)

You will learn about how people decide whom to vote for, and how they decide whether to vote at all. In particular, we'll investigate some of the purported differences between "Red America" and "Blue America."

Readings:


- Polsby/Wildavsky, chapter 1
- Popkin, chapters 1, 2, and 3
- Masket, "Weakened Warriors" 

Third short paper assigned

Week 8 – Political Parties II: The Modern Machine (Oct. 30th)

Parties do most of the selecting for us in elections. Of the millions of people who could legally be president, we end up choosing among only two with any realistic chance of winning. How do parties do this selecting? Do voters run party nominations through the primaries, or are nominations still made in a "smoke-filled room"? Figuring out who runs the parties goes a long way toward telling us who actually controls our government.

Readings:

- Polsby/Wildavsky, Chapter 4
- Cohen, Karol, Noel, & Zaller, "Polls or Pols? The real driving force behind presidential nominations," *The Brookings Review*. 





Third short paper due in class Monday, October 30th

Nov. 1st: Movie in class: "The War Room"

Week 9 – The Pros from Dover (Nov. 6th, 8th)

Who exactly are political consultants? How much influence over candidates do they really have? Are they a threat to democracy, or do they simply help good candidates become better?

Readings:

- Selection from *Campaign for President: The Managers Look at 2004* 
- Halberstam, *The Fifties*, Chapter 17. 
- Arterton, "Professional Responsibility in Campaign Politics." 
- Maxa, "Can Matt Reese and a System Called Claritas Answer the Prayers of Democrats Everywhere? The Search for Votes is Never Ending," *Washington Post*. 

Week 10 – Congressional Campaign Project Presentations (Nov. 13th)

November 15th: Post-election discussion with political consultant Steve Welchert of Welchert & Britz

Final paper due in my mailbox by 11AM Monday, November 20th