

U.S. Parties, Groups, and Elections

POLS 215 B1 // Fall 2020 – MOD 1 // Wood Room OR Virtually //

Tuesday 1:45 – 3:45 PM

Wednesday 2:45 – 3:45 PM

Thursday 1:45 – 3:45 PM //

Professor Philip Chen // chenp@beloit.edu //

Office: Morse-Ingersoll 7 // Virtual Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12:30 – 2:30 PM

Course Description

Investigates the nature and functioning of political candidates, parties, and groups and their roles in elections. Students pay special attention to campaigns, media, and political rhetoric while gaining hands-on experience developing strategies and communication material for a Congressional candidate, with an emphasis on production of a portfolio of campaign work. Prerequisite: POLS 110 or 160 or Instructor Permission.

Course Objectives

By the end of this semester, you should be able to:

- Understand and describe how candidates, parties, and social groups work together during elections
- Analyze and critique the strategies used in elections based on the available evidence
- Produce and justify a variety of communication tools used to influence elections

Structure of the Class

Given the current pandemic, this class will be taught as a hybrid class. Students have the option to participate in the class with both in-person and online components (hybrid) or, if you prefer, you can participate in the class entirely online.

Because of the hybrid nature, it will be very important for you to stay up to date on the readings and participate in discussions, both in class (either virtually or in person) and through the Moodle forums. ***Readings need to be completed by Tuesday of each week so we can have a full discussion as a class.*** Most weeks, Tuesdays will serve as our main lecture and discussion days. These classes will be held in-person and virtually. On (most) Wednesdays, we will focus on the practical training necessary to develop an effective campaign portfolio. Again, these classes will be held in-person and virtually. On (most) Thursdays, we will meet as an entire class to discuss the readings and any questions that you have. Because discussion necessarily involves speaking to each other, these classes will be held virtually to reduce the risk of COVID transmission. All of these classes will be livestreamed on Zoom. Students are expected to attend these classes, either in-person or virtually, and if you cannot attend, you will be responsible for a weekly

response paper based on recordings of the sessions. ***Please check the weekly schedules to confirm when our class will meet!***

In these lecture sections, I will talk about new topics or extensions of the readings. However, I do not plan on lecturing on all of the readings because a) you are expected to have read them already and b) I'm not witty or interesting enough to lecture all the time.

The majority of the class will be spent on discussion and activities that are designed to help you integrate the readings and materials. For students who cannot participate synchronously because of time zone differences, there will be an online discussion forum. Please be prepared to discuss the week's readings and have copies of the readings, either in electronic or paper form, as this is a key component of this course.

We will also spend time in class talking about the current election cycle and comparing what is happening to the campaigns that you develop throughout the course. Thus, it is helpful if you stay up to date on what is happening during the election and especially your Congressional campaign.

Office Hours and Help

I strive to make this course understandable and accessible for all students. If you have any questions about the content or structure of the course or about specific assignments, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am always happy to help if you come to me before assignments or exams are due. Please do not wait to ask for help until after the due date, come talk to me before if you are struggling. Because of the pandemic, I will host virtual office hours on Zoom.

Required Texts

This class will feature a mix of academic books and articles as well as pieces written by political practitioners. The required book is listed below and is available at the online college bookstore or from Amazon or other places online. Readings are available on the class Moodle site at:

<https://moodle2021.beloit.edu/course/view.php?id=285>

There is one required book for the course:

Semiatin, Richard J. (ed.). (2020). *Campaigns on the Cutting Edge 4th Edition*.

Grading

Grades are based on four different components, described in more detail below. 40% of your grade will come from the campaign portfolio that you will develop over the semester (1). 10% of your grade consists of discussion group participation (2). 10% of your grade consists of

attendance and participation in the class sessions OR completion of a reflection essay (3). Finally, 40% of your grade consists of weekly reading quizzes (4).

Reading Quizzes (Top 6)	40%	
Campaign Portfolio	40%	
Name, Party, and District of House Candidate		Required (No Grade)
District Analysis		Required (No Grade)
Campaign Message + Message Box		Required (No Grade)
Fundraising Letter		Required (No Grade)
GOTV/Persuasion Advertisement		Required (No Grade)
Media Release		Required (No Grade)
Full Revised Portfolio		
Discussion Group Participation	10%	
Online Attendance/Reflection	10%	

Weekly Reading Quizzes (40%) – Over the past couple years, I’ve come to dislike the concept of midterm and final exams because they place a premium on memorization and intense study rather than a cohesive synthesis of the material we read. In essence, finals and midterms seem to encourage students to memorize minutiae instead of substance.

However, the readings for this class were chosen with intention and I believe they are important for students to get the most out of the class. I will not lecture much on the readings, as I believe classroom discussions are both more enjoyable and a better way for students to learn the ability to critique and challenge the works we read. In order for you to be prepared for these discussions, you will need to do the readings.

While I would love to be able to simply ask “did you do the reading?” and grade you on this, it seems unrealistic. Each week we will have a short, graded, open note, online reading quiz. These quizzes will consist of a few multiple choice or short answer questions, as well as one or two longer (2-3 paragraph) questions that ask you to synthesize the readings in some way.

I understand that sometimes things come up and readings don’t get done. Over the course of the mod there are 7 quizzes. I will drop your lowest score and average the remaining 6 quizzes. While no one quiz will make or break your final grade, failing to do any of the readings will severely limit your potential in this class.

At the end of the semester, I will simply take your highest 6 quiz grades (dropping the lowest grade) and average them. Because you have a quiz that is not counted, you cannot make up late quizzes for unexcused absences. However, if you are going to miss a quiz and let me know ahead of time, I can extend the time you have to finish the quiz online. If you are sick or have an approved absence, just make sure to send me an email or talk to me. ***Reading quizzes will close to answers on Monday night at 11:59 PM.***

Campaign Portfolio (40%) – The second major component of your course grade is the campaign portfolio. This is likely to be a different type of writing than you have done in most

political science classes. Over the course of the mod, you will run a shadow campaign for a real candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives.

What this means is you will be in charge of learning about the district, drafting a campaign message, devising communication for the candidate, and justifying the decisions you make based on the readings that we do throughout the course.

While the individual pieces of the portfolio are due at different times throughout the semester, you are graded on the final, edited campaign portfolio that you put together. This will feature revised versions of each component, based on feedback you receive from me, as well as a reflective writing piece that outlines the changes you made and how the portfolio was informed by the readings from the class.

You'll notice that the individual pieces of the portfolio are marked "Required (No Grade)." These can be thought of as low stakes requirements that give me a chance to give feedback for revisions. In order to receive full credit on your portfolio, you must turn in all of these components, even though your performance on these assignments does not factor into your grade. Failing to turn in these assignments will lower your final portfolio grade by 1/3 of a letter grade for each missing piece. For instance, if your grade for the entire portfolio was a B+, but you failed to turn in your district analysis, your final grade would be a B. If you were missing both the district analysis and stump speech, your B+ would become a B-.

Discussion Participation (10%) – The participation portion of your grade includes regular participation in discussion (either in-person or virtually), evidenced by completion of in-class activities, participation in class discussions, and asking questions during class. All students are expected to participate in discussion, either in-person, virtually, or through the Moodle discussion forum.

Attendance/Reflection (10%) – Every Tuesday and Wednesday we will meet (in-person and virtually) as a class to talk about the readings for the week. All students are expected to attend and participate in these sessions, either virtually or in-person. Since some students may be unable to participate synchronously with the class, there is an option to write a two-page reflection instead of attending the class sections. *These reflections will be due by Sunday at 11:59 PM.*

I will use the following scale to determine your attendance grade. Remember, if you cannot attend the class, you can watch the video of the session and write a reflection paper instead. Thus, there is no excuse to not receive full credit for this portion of the class!

- A 0 – 1 absence
- B 2 absences
- C 3 absences
- D 4 absences
- F 5 or more absences

Grade Scale:

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	<60

Grading – On some assignments, you may receive a grade of B+/A- or something like that. This is just my shorthand way of assigning a number grade between two letter grades. Thus, an A grade is recorded in the grade book as 100 points while an A- grade is recorded as 92 points. If I think your work fell between these points, you may get an A-/A, which would be recorded as 96 points. So a A-/A is technically an A grade, but in the middle of the A range instead of the high end.

When calculating final grades, I always round up. So an 88.7% in the class becomes an 89% (B+), but an 89.1% would be rounded up to a 90% (A-).

Late Work – Assignments are due the day they are listed as due at the specified time. Late work can be turned in for half-credit. Thus, if you turn in a quiz late and received a 90% grade, your grade on this quiz would be a 45%.

Week 1: Election Basics (September 1 – September 7)

Recap:

This week will introduce you to the very basics of American elections. Since it's the first week of class, there are only a couple readings. I will send these readings out before the start of the mod so you can read them in preparation for the first class. Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be available on Moodle. By Thursday of this week, you are expected to pick a US House candidate that you will produce a campaign portfolio for this mod. You can pick any candidate that will appear on the general election ballot, though it is much easier if you pick a candidate from a major party (Democratic or Republican) or one of the more well-known minor parties (Green, Libertarian).

Schedule:

Tuesday, September 1

Lecture and Discussion

Wood Room or Virtually, 1:45 – 3:45 PM

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/93866912782?pwd=Z0F1MkpGMTd3NzFyUkVaeFpvQVRWZz09>

Readings

Semiatin – Chapter 1*

McClain and Tauber – Chapter 15*

Wednesday, September 2

Practical Training (Picking a Candidate and District Analysis)

Wood Room or Virtually, 2:45 – 3:45 PM

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/99965061522?pwd=WHIUcXpyU21DaVFoa1BuMmxUS2cwUT09>

Thursday, September 3

Discussion

Virtually, 1:45 PM – 3:45 PM (or earlier if finished)

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/94036134109?pwd=SzRicEQvZ3NxcGtiZ0VWQ1RoZ0NlZz09>

DUE @ 4 pm: Name, Party, and District of House Candidate

Monday, September 7

DUE @ 11:59 pm: Online Reading Quiz

Week 2: Political Parties and Interest Groups (September 8 – September 14)

Recap:

We will cover the nature of political parties and interest groups this week. We'll talk about the tripartite structure of American parties and the varying ways that interest groups exert influence over the political process. Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be available on Moodle. By Thursday of this week, you are expected to complete a short analysis of the Congressional district your candidate is running in.

Schedule:

Tuesday, September 8

Lecture and Discussion

Wood Room or Virtually, 1:45 – 3:45 PM

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/93866912782?pwd=Z0F1MkpGMTd3NzFyUkVaeFpvQVRWZz09>

Readings

Semiatin – Chapter 7

Semiatin – Chapter 8

Sides, Shaw, Grossmann, and Lipsitz – Chapter 6*

Flanigan, Zingale, Theiss-Morse, and Wagner – Chapter 4*

Mason – Chapter 4*

Vox – Citizens United*

Vox – NRA Influence*

Vox – Problem of Two Parties*

Wednesday, September 9

Practical Training (Campaign Message + Message Box)

Wood Room or Virtually, 2:45 – 3:45 PM

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/99965061522?pwd=WHIUcXpyU21DaVFoa1BuMmxUS2cwUT09>

Thursday, September 10

Discussion

Virtually, 1:45 PM – 3:45 PM (or earlier if finished)

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/94036134109?pwd=SzRicEQvZ3NxcGtiZ0VWQ1RoZ0NlZz09>

DUE @ 4 pm: District Analysis

Monday, September 14

DUE @ 11:59 pm: Online Reading Quiz

Week 3: *Telling Your Story* (September 15 – September 21)

Recap:

This week focuses on how candidates best tell their story. The readings this week are heavily focused on political practitioners, with lots of work from those who are running campaigns for a living. Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be available on Moodle. By Thursday of this week, you are expected to develop the main campaign message for your candidate, as well as complete a message box.

Schedule:

Tuesday, September 15

Lecture and Discussion

Wood Room or Virtually, 1:45 – 3:45 PM

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/93866912782?pwd=Z0F1MkpGMTd3NzFyUkVaeFpvQVRWZz09>

Readings

Vavreck – Chapter 2*

Shaw – Chapter 4*

Shaw – Chapter 10*

Kaufmann, Petrocik, and Shaw – Chapter 8*

Blodgett and Lofy – Chapter 3*

Faucheux – Chapter 4*

Wednesday, September 16

Practical Training (Fundraising Letter)

Wood Room or Virtually, 2:45 – 3:45 PM

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/99965061522?pwd=WHIUcXpyU21DaVFoa1BuMmxUS2cwUT09>

Thursday, September 17

Discussion

Virtually, 1:45 PM – 3:45 PM (or earlier if finished)

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/94036134109?pwd=SzRicEQvZ3NxcGtiZ0VWQ1RoZ0NlZz09>

DUE @ 4 pm: Campaign Message + Message Box

Monday, September 21

DUE @ 11:59 pm: Online Reading Quiz

Week 4: Fundraising (September 22 – September 28)

Recap:

This week is all about fundraising! We'll talk about how candidates raise money, some of the contemporary challenges behind fundraising, and look at how money shapes the issues and policies the candidates and elected officials promote. Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be available on Moodle. By Thursday of this week, you are expected to develop a draft of a fundraising letter that would be sent out to supporters.

Schedule:

Tuesday, September 22

Lecture and Discussion

Wood Room or Virtually, 1:45 – 3:45 PM

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/93866912782?pwd=Z0F1MkpGMTd3NzFyUkVaeFpvQVRWZz09>

Readings

Semiatin – Chapter 2

Semiatin – Chapter 10

Shaw – Chapter 5*

Sorensen & Chen (2020)*

Box-Steffensmeier (1996)*

Gilens and Page (2014)*

Wednesday, September 23

Practical Training (GOTV/Persuasion Advertisement)

Wood Room or Virtually, 2:45 – 3:45 PM

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/99965061522?pwd=WHIUcXpyU21DaVFoa1BuMmxUS2cwUT09>

Thursday, September 24

Discussion

Virtually, 1:45 PM – 3:45 PM (or earlier if finished)

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/94036134109?pwd=SzRicEQvZ3NxcGtiZ0VWQ1RoZ0NlZz09>

DUE @ 4 pm: Fundraising Letter

Monday, September 28

DUE @ 11:59 pm: Online Reading Quiz

Week 5: Persuasion and Mobilization (September 29 – October 5)

Recap:

This week gets into how campaigns interact with voters and try to get them to do what they want. We focus on two main components, persuasion (convincing voters to support you) and mobilization (convincing voters to turn out to vote). Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be available on Moodle. By Thursday of this week, you are expected to develop a draft of an advertisement that would be sent out to voters. You can decide whether to focus on mobilization (Get Out The Vote, or GOTV) or on persuasion.

Schedule:

Tuesday, September 29

Lecture and Discussion

Wood Room or Virtually, 1:45 – 3:45 PM

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/93866912782?pwd=Z0F1MkpGMTd3NzFyUkVaeFpvQVRWZz09>

Readings

Semiatin – Chapter 6

Shaw – Chapter 12*

Green and Gerber – Chapter 12*

Brader – Chapter 4*

Brader – Chapter 5*

Wednesday, September 30

Practical Training (Media Release)

Wood Room or Virtually, 2:45 – 3:45 PM

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/99965061522?pwd=WHIUcXpyU21DaVFoa1BuMmxUS2cwUT09>

Thursday, October 1

Discussion

Virtually, 1:45 PM – 3:45 PM (or earlier if finished)

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/94036134109?pwd=SzRicEQvZ3NxcGtiZ0VWQ1RoZ0NIZz09>

DUE @ 4 pm: GOTV/Persuasion Advertisement

Monday, October 5

DUE @ 11:59 pm: Online Reading Quiz

Week 6: Media (October 6 – October 12)

Recap:

Let's talk about the media! This week looks both at tradition (print, TV, radio) media as well as the increasing influence of social media. Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be available on Moodle. By Thursday of this week, you are expected to develop a draft of a media release. This release could be a traditional press release or you could develop a social media post for your candidate, whichever you believe best fits your candidate's style.

Schedule:

Tuesday, October 6

Lecture and Discussion

Wood Room or Virtually, 1:45 – 3:45 PM

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/93866912782?pwd=Z0F1MkpGMTd3NzFyUkVaeFpvQVRWZz09>

Readings

Semiatin – Chapter 3

Semiatin – Chapter 4

Semiatin – Chapter 9

Blodgett and Lofy – Chapter 8*

Shaw – Chapter 6*

Wednesday, October 7

Practical Training (Portfolio Revisions)

Wood Room or Virtually, 2:45 – 3:45 PM

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/99965061522?pwd=WHIUcXpyU21DaVFoa1BuMmxUS2cwUT09>

Thursday, October 8

Discussion

Virtually, 1:45 PM – 3:45 PM (or earlier if finished)

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/94036134109?pwd=SzRicEQvZ3NxcGtiZ0VWQ1RoZ0NlZz09>

DUE @ 4 pm: Media Release

Monday, October 12

DUE @ 11:59 pm: Online Reading Quiz

Week 7: Challenges to Representation (October 13 – October 17)

Recap:

This is the final week of class! We'll talk about the various challenges to representation that exist, with a specific focus on gender and race. We'll talk both about institutional challenges (like voter identification laws) as well as the challenges faced by candidates of color and women candidates. Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be available on Moodle. By Saturday at 5 pm (the time of our scheduled final for the class), you are expected to revise your campaign portfolio and draft a short description of the revisions you made. *NOTE: Because of the short week, the final reading quiz is due Saturday at 5 pm instead of by Monday night.*

Schedule:

Tuesday, October 13

Lecture and Discussion

Wood Room or Virtually, 1:45 – 3:45 PM

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/93866912782?pwd=Z0F1MkpGMTd3NzFyUkVaeFpvQVRWZz09>

Readings

Semiatin – Chapter 11

Semiatin – Chapter 12

Semiatin – Chapter 13

Atkeson, Bryan, Hall, Saunders, and Alvarez 2010*

Barreto, Nuno, and Sanchez 2009*

Hayes and Lawless – Chapter 6*

Wednesday, October 14

Practical Training (Remaining Questions)

Wood Room or Virtually, 2:45 – 3:45 PM

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/99965061522?pwd=WHIUcXpyU21DaVFoa1BuMmxUS2cwUT09>

Thursday, October 15

Discussion

Virtually, 1:45 PM – 3:45 PM (or earlier if finished)

<https://beloit.zoom.us/j/94036134109?pwd=SzRicEQvZ3NxcGtiZ0VWQ1RoZ0NlZz09>

Saturday, October 17

DUE @ 5 pm: Revised Campaign Portfolio

DUE @ 5 pm: Online Reading Quiz

Attendance: Regular attendance is vital for your success in this course. I understand, however, that sometimes circumstances prevent you from coming to class. Missing one class will not destroy your grade; missing several will.

Grade Changes: Any appeals of a grade must be made at least **24 hours after** I hand back an assignment or exam. If you would like to appeal the grade you got on an assignment, prior to meeting with me you must submit a written statement detailing why you think your grade should be changed. I will then meet with you to discuss your statement and why you think your grade should be changed.

If I make a mistake in totaling your grade for an exam or assignment (e.g. I added the points up incorrectly) then you do not need to write a statement or wait 24 hours. Just talk to me after class or during office hours and I'll double check and fix the mistake.

Contacting the Professor: I encourage you to contact me with questions and concerns about the course, readings, and assignments. In general, quick clarification questions can be handled over email. More in-depth questions are best discussed in person during my office hours, where we can have an actual conversation. If my office hours conflict with your class or work schedule, I am available by appointment as well.

Please allow a full 24 hours for an email response. Often, my responses will be quicker than this, but do not send multiple emails about the same request until 24 hours have passed. I cannot guarantee that if you email me right before an assignment or exam that I will be able to answer your question in time, so please make sure and email me early if you have a time-specific question.

Extra Credit and Retakes: There is no scheduled extra credit in this course. You may not retake quizzes. There may be opportunities for extra credit, however.

Disability Services and Accommodations: Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability or health consideration that may impact your coursework and/or require accommodations, contact Learning Enrichment and Disability Services (LEADS) located on 2nd floor Pearsons (north side), [608-363-2572](tel:6083632572), learning@beloit.edu or through olesena@beloit.edu. For accommodations in my class, I will receive an Access Letter from the Director of LEADS and then we will discuss how to implement the accommodations. Contact that office promptly; accommodations are not retroactive. Every effort will be made to give you agency over disclosure of your disability status. Confidentiality is maintained to the extent possible but at times others need to know to some information to provide you appropriate accommodations.

Free peer tutoring is available for most classes. All tutoring in the fall will be done online. For a tutor, apply by going to your Portal, to the Student Life tab, and then apply using the Tutoring Forms (on left) and Request a Tutor. If you have any questions, contact LEADS.

Inclusivity: Inclusivity is a demonstration of equity and social justice through awareness, understanding, and respect for the differences in identity, culture, background, experience, and socialization, and the ways in which these forms of difference impact how we live and learn. Inclusivity requires equitable, institution-wide representation and access to resources. In practice, this manifests itself by each individual being aware of, committed to, and responsible for the well-being and care of all students, staff, and faculty.