The Leadup to & Aftermath of the
2020 US Election
POLS 4310
Fall 2021
TR 10:50a-12:05p
Ross Hall 103

Office hours: By appointment only; to be held outdoors.
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Course Overview

The 2020 US Election was among the most divisive in American history. Gallons of ink have been spilled attempting to explain what led the United States to the political point in which it currently finds itself. This class will draw on concepts of political science to explain how American politics became so divisive, and where the United States may go from here.

Specifically, we will examine how the middle class developed and began to erode, why anti-system attitudes have grown so rapidly, how individuals choose for whom to vote, how democracy backslides, and how polarization can be reduced. By the end the of this class, you will have a greater understanding of how we got to this point, and what the paths forward are.

Covid Policies

In order to ensure safety in the classroom, there are a set of Covid-19 policies that we will be employing in this class.

1. **IF YOU DO NOT FEEL WELL, STAY HOME.** There is no attendance policy in this course, you will **NOT** be penalized for non-attendance.

2. The CDC is now recommending that many vaccinated people wear masks indoors. I cannot require mask wearing, in the classroom, however, it is highly encouraged. As I have a 7 year old at home who cannot yet be vaccinated, I will be wearing a mask in the classroom, and I hope that you will also wear a mask while we are in the classroom.

3. Research shows that Covid-19 is substantially less likely to spread outdoors. Classes will be held outdoors as much as possible, weather permitting. On days in which class will be held outside, I will send an email to the entire class informing you of the location we will meet.

4. Office hours will now be held by appointment only, and will take place outdoors. In order to meet, please send me an email, we will choose a time and date, and hold our meeting on terrace of Ross Hall.

Course Materials and Required Reading

You do not need to purchase any books for this course. All readings are either PDFs from books that I will provide for you, or articles. The majority of the articles in this class are popular press. The readings from books will tend to be academic books, however, they are accessible readings (i.e. no complex math).

You should regularly check the syllabus as many of the course materials are podcasts and videos and the syllabus contains hyperlinks to these materials. Those materials that are not hyperlinked to in the syllabus are available in the "Course Readings" folder on Blackboard.

Course Assignments

1. Podcast (Midterm)	30 %
2. Campaign Strategy	30 %
3. Rust Belt Simulation	25%
4. Participation	15%

Grading: Grading will follow a standard scale: 89.5% or higher is an A, 79.5% to 89.49% is a B, 69.5% to 79.49% is a C, and 59.5% to 69.49% is a D.

In order to avoid myriad problems I will tend not do any of the following:

1. Change grades unless a computational error is made.
2. Reveal grades via e-mail or telephone.
3. Give any extra credit opportunities other than those mentioned in the syllabus or by me in class.
4. Accept any late materials, except in extenuating circumstance.
5. Allow any makeup exams, unless in extenuating circumstances.

All grades will be posted on Blackboard, usually within 7-10 days. If you do poorly on any of the assignments, I advise you to see me as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to seek my help if you need it.

It is important to note, I may provide a general curve on each exam. This is done in order to avoid curving the final grades which is again possible, however, unlikely.

Podcast: The midterm for this course will come in the form of a podcast. By the date specified below, you should turn in a 15-20 minute podcast examining one of the historical focuses of the first half of this class. These includes:

1. Bretton-Woods
2. The Southern Strategy
3. The Chicago DNC and the development of primaries
4. Free trade and the Washington Consensus
5. The 2007/2008 financial crisis

In this podcast you should discuss the political ramifications of one of these events beyond what we have discussed in class. That means choose an aspect of our class discussion and dig deeper into that event. You need to do research beyond class readings. As an example, you could examine the effect of the 2007/2008 financial crisis on grassroots organization in the United States.

You can structure this podcast however you please. This means you can have guests, you can do interviews, etc. However, YOU still must play a prominent role in the podcast.

This podcast will be worth 30% of your final grade in this class. You will not be graded on whether I agree with your analysis, but rather whether you set forth a clear constraining narrative in the podcast and provide deeper analysis and evidence for your analysis than has been covered in class.

Campaign Strategy: For the final exam in this class, you will be asked to write a campaign strategy for the 2024 US Presidential election. Imagine yourself to be the campaign manager for the party of your choosing.

If you choose to represent the Democratic nominee for this project, you can choose from any of the following individuals:

1. President Joe Biden (DE)
2. Vice-President Kamala Harris (CA)
3. Sec. Pete Buttigieg (IN)
4. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY)

If you choose to represent the Republican nominee for this project, you can choose from any of the following individuals:

1. Gov. Ron DeSantis (FL)
2. Sen. Josh Hawley (MO)
3. Fmr. UN Amb. Nikki Haley (SC)
4. Sen. Tim Scott (SC)

Using not only the knowledge we have gained in class, but also existing data on public opinion, previous elections, etc. you should construct a clear recommendation on strategy and message for the candidate you have chosen. Importantly, you are constrained by the candidate's previous positions. For example, you cannot recommend that Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez propose lowering corporate taxes as she has taken a clear stance on that issue.

You must turn in, on the due date specified below, a 5-6 page memo providing clear recommendations to the candidate on the best strategy for winning the Presidency in 2024. You should be clear to set the memo up beginning with a discussion of your theoretical approach to elections. You should also provide information regarding the political landscape (e.g. keep in mind that the Electoral College has changed since 2020).

This project will be worth 30% of your overall grade in this class. You will not be graded on whether I think the strategy will work. Rather, you will be graded on how well you applied theoretical ideas, drew in data, and made a compelling case for your strategy.

Rust Belt Simulation: We will be engaged in a semester long simulation. The details of this simulation can be found in the syllabus addendum on Blackboard. This syllabus addendum provides not just information on the setup, details, and rules of the simulation, but also the grading of the simulation and the schedule for the simulation. Please read this addendum carefully as this project is not only worth 25% of your final grade, but provides you with ample opportunities for *EXTRA CREDIT.*

Participation: As this class is seminar style, your participation is necessary, and in fact, is worth 15% of your final grade. This does not mean only in-class participation. You can also gain points by participating in online discussion board through Blackboard. Thus, if you are feeling sick, you don't have to come to class just for points. You can gain them online.

Extra Credit: There are ample opportunities for extra credit in this course. They all come as part of the Rust Belt Simulation. Through this simulation, you have the opportunity to gain extra credit points to be added to your final exam (campaign strategy assignment) grade. ***Importantly, your extra credit points are nearly unlimited, if you play the game to your advantage.***

Communications: If you have any questions about the class, please email me first. If you wish to have a face-to-face meeting we do this, however, please note that all face-to-face meetings are by appointment only. Further, to reduce the possibility of Covid-19 spread, all face-to-face meetings will be held outdoors, weather permitting.

Dropping Courses: Please visit the website of UALR Student Records (http://ualr.edu/records/drop-class/) for information concerning drops, withdrawals, and other administrative information.

Students with Disabilities: Your success in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to create inclusive learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have a documented disability (or need to have a disability documented), and need an accommodation, please contact me privately as soon as possible, so that we can discuss with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) how to meet your specific needs and the requirements of the course. The DRC offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process among you, your instructor(s) and the DRC. Thus, if you have a disability, please contact me and/or the DRC, at 501-569-3143 (V/TTY) or 501-683-7629 (VP). For more information, please visit the DRC website at www.ualr.edu/disability.

Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty, which includes, but is not limited to cheating on an exam, unauthorized collaboration on an assignment, and plagiarism, is taken very seriously in this course. Students who commit such actions will be reported to the Dean of Students and will receive an F for the course. If you have any questions about whether an action is considered to be academically dishonest, please see me or read the complete description of the UALR policy on academic dishonesty, which is available in the student handbook at www.ualr.edu/www/handbook/student_rights.html.

Course Schedule (All Dates Subject to Change)

1. INTRODUCTION

August 24   No Reading to Be Completed for this Day

2. HOW A LITTLE TOWN IN NEW HAMPSHIRE MADE US RICH

August 26 – September 2   **Read/Listen to** by August 26:

[The Dollar at the Center of the World](#)

"What is the Impossible Trinity?" in *The Economist*

"Pros and Cons of Capital Controls" by Tejvan Pettinger

"Why 70% Tax Rate Would Require Capital Controls" by Grace Blakeley

Anti-System Politics: The Crisis in Market Liberalism in Rich Democracies by Jonathan Hopkin (pgs. 24-30)

3. "THE NAACP AND OTHER ANTI-SOUTH FORCES"

September 7 – 14   **Read** by September 7

"Quotes on 'Civil Rights' Issues from Address" by Strom Thurmond

The Long Southern Strategy: How Chasing White Voters in the South Changed American Politics by Angie Maxwell and Todd Shields (pgs. 1-21)

"The Lasting Legacy of the Busing Crisis" by Matthew Delmont

4. DID A PASADENA STABLE BOY GIVE US TRUMP?

September 16 – 23   **Read/Watch** by September 16

[Bobby Kennedy at the Ambassador](#)

[The 1968 Chicago Riots](#)

Mandate for Reform by George S. McGovern (pgs. 32908-32918)

Recommended Viewing: *The Trial of the Chicago 7* (available on Netflix)

5. "THE GIANT SUCKING SOUND GOING SOUTH"

September 28 – October 5   **Read/Watch/Listen** by September 28:

["Allentown" by Billy Joel](#)

[Ross Perot in 1992](#)

"What Is the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)" by Kimberly Amadeo

"Effects of regulating international trade on firms and workers" by Raymond Robertson

Anti-System Politics: The Crisis in Market Liberalism in Rich Democracies by Jonathan Hopkin (pgs. 30-44)

6. TOO BIG TO FAIL

October 7 – 14   **Read/Watch** for October 7:

[Why'd the Economy Go Belly Up?](#)

[TARP Explained](#)

"Criticism of TARP Persists" by John Maggs

Anti-System Politics: The Crisis in Market Liberalism in Rich Democracies by Jonathan Hopkin (pgs. 44-49)

OCTOBER 19: PODCAST DUE BY 11:59PM

7. ROBBY MOOK IS JUST BAD AT HIS JOB

October 21 – 28   **Read/Listen/Watch** by October 21:

"Stronger Together" from NPR

What is "Make America Great Again" about? (Trump Ad)

Does Clinton rebut the corruption claim? (Clinton Ad)

Explaining and Predicting Elections: Issue Effects and Party Strategies in Twenty-Three Democracies by Ian Budge and Dennis J. Farlie (pgs. 21-56)

What is a Robby Mook?

8. DEMOCRATS NEED TO THANK COVID

November 2 – 9   **Read** by November 2:

47 Years of Betrayal (Watch the video)

"How Biden Won: Ramping Up the Base And Expanding the Margins in the Suburbs" by Domenico Montanaro and Connie Hanzhang Jin

"Fatalities from COVID-19 are Reducing Americans' Support for Republicans at Every Level of Federal Office." By Christopher Warshaw, Lynn Vavreck, and Ryan Baxter-King.

9. A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF, CANNOT STAND

November 11 – 18   **Read** by November 11:

"Why Are There So Few Moderate Republicans Left" by Lee Drutman
"Only about 3.5% of Americans Care About Democracy" by Graeme Wood.

Is Unity Possible?

NOVEMBER 21-27: FALL BREAK (NO CLASS)

10. RUST BELT SIMULATION CONCLUSION

November 30   FINAL SIMULATION SYNPOSES DUE

11. BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

December 2

DECEMBER 9: CAMPAIGN STRATEGY DUE BY 12:30PM