

PSCI 490/685: The 2018 US Election

Fall 2018

HH 259, Monday, 11:30-2:20

Instructor: Gerry Boychuk
Email Address: gboychuk@uwaterloo.ca
Office Location: Hagey Hall 302
Office Hours: Monday, 9:30-10:30 or by appointment

Course Description:

The November 2018 US midterm elections potentially will be historic. Many observers wonder whether the 2018 midterm elections will be an anti-Trump “wave” election. Regardless, the 2018 midterm elections will likely be more competitive than they have been in a decade. Democrats stand to capture the House of Representatives. In more than 20 states, elections for the governorship are classified as “battleground.” With fewer state-level senate and house seats being contested by incumbents, there are more open seats and the number of races won by acclamation will be down significantly from previous elections. There is also an unprecedented number of women running for office in November 2018. Several would be the first woman, woman of color, or LGBTQ official elected to their particular seat if successful in November. The course will consider whether the outcomes of the election signal any immediate or longer-term shifts in the US political situation.

A major component of the course will be a team-based term-long simulation in which student teams will mount simulated election campaigns against opposing student teams in real-life battleground states/districts.

Pre-Requisites: A minimum of 0.50 unit of PSCI; Level at least 4A.

Territorial Acknowledgement

The instructor would like to acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes 10 kilometres on each side of the Grand River.

Course Objectives:

The central objective of the course is to help students to understand how elections work in the United States given the system's many institutional intricacies including offices at multiple levels on a single ballot (Senate, House of Representatives, state governor, state senate, state legislature, etc.) as well as other peculiarities such as primaries and term limits.

It also challenges students to think about how major interpretations (e.g. polarization, nationalization, negative partisanship) of US elections differ and to consider the distinctive hypotheses these interpretations raise in regard to the outcomes of the 2018 US elections as well as whether these hypotheses appear to be borne out by the actual election results.

By the end of this course, students should:

- be able to explain the basic structure of US elections at the federal and state level;
- be able to identify divergent major interpretations of the nature of US elections and identify the main differences among them;
- be able to creatively envision what a realistic campaign might look like at the federal (Senate or House) and/or state (governor, state senate, state house) level and appreciate the complex linkages between campaigns at these different levels;
- demonstrate an ability to understand, analyse, and critically assess book-length works written at a professional social science standard;
- understand the formal debate structure and be able to effectively and comfortably participate and contribute to a team within that structure.

Readings:

Abramowitz, Alan I. *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation, and the Rise of Donald Trump*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2018. [Required reading.] Available via Amazon.ca.

Kinder, Donald R. and Nathan P. Kalmoe. *Neither Liberal Nor Conservative: Ideological Innocence in the American Public*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2017. [Required reading.] Available via Amazon.ca.

All other required readings will be available via LEARN.

Course Requirements, Expectations, and Standards:

Overview

Component Type	Assignment	Due Date	Weight
Written Assignments	Book Review #1	Online prior to class, Oct.15 (no option for late submission)	10%
	Book Review #2	Online prior to class, Nov. 5 (no option for late submission)	10%
	Book Review #3 (Combined)	Online prior to class, Dec.3 (5% late penalty per day)	25%
	Written Simulation Assignments (see simulation notes)	On assigned date (variable)	25%
Oral Participation	Seminar Participation (book discussion segment of course)	October 15, 22, 29 and Nov. 5	10%
	Book Debate Team Participation	on assigned debate date	5%
	Simulation Participation	On assigned “performance” items	15%

Assignments:

Book Review #1: Review of Abramowitz, The Great Alignment.

Students will be required to write a 1500 word (approx.) book review providing a critical assessment of the book under review. The review should clearly and concisely identify the work’s central argument (although it should NOT provide an overview of the book) and the basis on which the argument is established. The review should then consider the major strengths and weaknesses of the book and providing an overall assessment of whether the book’s central argument is compelling.

This assignment is basically optional. Students who submit a paper will receive a grade but, more importantly, also significant comments intended to help improve their performance on the combined/synthetic book review. Students who choose not to submit an on-time review (there are no provisions for late submission) will have the 10% of the final course weight added to the combined book review assignment (Book Review #3.)

Book Review #2: Review of Kinder and Kalmoe, Neither Liberal Nor Conservative.

Students will be required to write a 1500 word (approx.) book review providing a critical assessment of the book under review. The review should clearly and concisely identify the work’s central argument (although it should NOT provide an overview of the book) and the basis on which the argument is established. The review should then consider the major strengths and weaknesses of the book and providing an overall assessment of whether the book’s central argument is compelling.

This assignment is basically optional. Students who submit a paper will receive a grade but, more importantly, also significant comments intended to help improve their performance on the combined/synthetic book review. Students who choose not to submit an on-time review (there are no provisions for late submission) will have the 10% of the final course weight added to the combined book review assignment (Book Review #3.)

Book Review #3: Combined Assessment of Abramowitz, The Great Alignment and Kinder/Kalmoe, Neither Liberal Nor Conservative.

Students will be required to write a 3000 word (approx.) synthetic book review providing a critical assessment of the two books under review. The review should identify points on which the two books agree and disagree and provide an overall assessment of which book the student believes makes a more important contribution in understanding the 2018 US election outcomes.

Written Simulation Assignments.

Additional written assignments in this course will be related to the course simulation. Students will be assigned to one of four positions (candidate, campaign manager, media relations and advertising, or journalist.) Each position will have two written assignments (unique to that particular position) with the exception of the journalist position which will have three shorter written assignments. The due dates are variable depending on the position. Please see section on course simulation.

Extension Policy for Written Assignments

All requests for assignment extensions must be completed in writing (e.g. email) and be received before the due date. Extensions will only be granted in the event of an officially documented extenuating circumstance (that is, serious personal illness, critical personal or family crisis, etc.). If a situation arises that may prevent you from completing an assignment on time, contact instructor as early as possible and, without exception, before the assignment is due. The UW Verification of Illness Form can be found at:

www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html

There are no extension provisions for participating in the assigned seminar debates and simulation. Officially documented extenuating circumstances that result in a student's inability to participate in their assigned debate and/or simulation activities will result in the other components of the course being re-weighted appropriately.

Class Participation

In this course, there will be three components of oral in-class participation: participation in the seminar book discussions, participation in a team-based debate on the two assigned books for the course, participation in the term-long team-based simulation.

Seminar Participation. (10%) Seminar participation will be graded on each of four dates (Oct. 15, Oct. 22, Oct.29, and Nov.5.) Grade will be awarded (e.g. starting from zero and working upwards) based (roughly half) on quantity of oral contributions and (roughly half) quality of contributions (student demonstrating that they have read and thought about the assigned book reading.)

Debate Participation. (5%) Students will be assigned to a team (size depending on the number of students in the course) which will in turn be assigned to take the position of one or the other books on an assigned debate proposition. Depending on the size of the debate team, team members will work together to prepare their debate position and strategy. They will determine among themselves which student will take specific presentation roles in the in-class debate (preliminary construction of argument, rebuttal of opposition argument, conclusion.)

Simulation Participation. (15%) Each of the specific simulation positions will have a unique set of performance activities from which they can choose which will range from participating in a debate with the other candidate (mandatory for students assigned as candidate) to holding a press conference, producing/participating in a campaign ad, etc. Each of the two performance activities will be weighted at 5% plus an extra 5% will be assigned for team participation.

Extra Participation Grades.

Students may choose to attend up to three sets of in-class debates in PSCI 264 The US Election for extra participation grades. (Students enrolled in both courses and/or graduate students assigned as a teaching assistant for PSCI 264 are not eligible for these extra participation grades.)

These debates (taking place from 8:00-9:20 pm on Tuesday, Nov.6, Nov. 13 and Nov. 20th) will each consist of four candidate debates from the parallel simulation to that taking place in PSCI 264. (Further details regarding time and place will be announced in class.) Students attending these debates, participating in the debates where appropriate (e.g. asking a question during general participation segment) and completing a short online assignment regarding the debates will receive a credit between 1% (for attendance) and 2% (depending on participation and/or quality and effort put into feedback provided) per debate attended up to a maximum of 6% credit on their course grade.

SIMULATION OVERVIEW

A major component of the course will be a team-based, term-long simulation in which students will mount election campaigns (of their own design) but in real-life battleground districts/states to which they will be assigned. We will also be following the real-life version of these races (as well as a handful of exceptional additional races) in class throughout the term.

At the start of the course, we will identify a number of real-life campaign races in specific states/districts that are seen as races to watch. For each race chosen for the simulation, students will be assigned to one of three teams: Democratic campaign, Republican campaign or journalist. For each of the two party teams, one student will be assigned to each of three positions: candidate, campaign manager or media relations/advertising. (While final numbers may vary, one journalist will normally be assigned to cover each race.) While students will not technically have a “choice” of assignments, they will have the opportunity to express their role preferences: candidate, campaign manager, media relations/advertising or journalist and, for the former political staff, Democrat or Republican. Opportunities for expressions of preferences will take place via Learn on the week of September 18th. (While we will try optimize the degree to which student preferences are filled, not all students will get their top choice.) Teams will be announced via Learn on the week of September 24th. (This is the earliest feasible date to announce teams without having to constantly rebalance teams due to drop/adds.)

While individual roles will have specific responsibilities as regards written assignments, the teams as a group will produce a background briefing book on their candidate and opposing candidate, a briefing book on their district/state, a confidential strategy memo to the instructor outlining their campaign strategy, a brief campaign platform for public release (i.e. to give the opposing team and journalists something to react to and/or attack), and at least one (but possibly more) video campaign ads. Students assigned as candidates will participate in one live in-class debate against their opponent in front of a segment of the class. Journalists will cover the campaign, write at least three news story and have the opportunity to offer their editorial endorsement of individual candidates (or decline to endorse either candidate/party.)

Thus, the simulation is comprised of a set of four separate assignments/activities for each student. Each participant will have at least two written assignments (described more fully below) with journalists having three. While each team member will be designated as responsible for a given written component of the campaign (e.g. district backgrounder, backgrounder on candidates, campaign platform, confidential strategy memo, etc.), team work on the written assignments is encouraged and class time will be provided for team work.

Each student will also participate in at least two performance activities (described more fully below) with the various possibilities including an in-class debate, a press briefing, and/or producing or appearing in a campaign ad video.

Most of the work and activities will take place during dedicated class time slots each week typically consisting of the second half of the class (80 minutes) following the lecture portion (first 80 minutes plus a 10 minute break.) The instructor will be available throughout these work

sessions to provide guidance, suggestions, answer questions, help address concerns, etc. Students will not only have significant opportunities to work with their own team but to also meet/consult with other students in the same role in different states/districts.

That is, the simulation is really intended to be a group learning experience so students should not be concerned that they do not have enough background knowledge to fill any of the specific roles but, rather, should reasonably expect to learn what they need to know with the support of their team, role colleagues in other states/districts, and instructor. In their submission of role preferences, students should focus primarily on the issue of which perspective/role about which they are most interested in learning.

Assignments and Activities

Below is a list of written assignments and menu of options for performance activities for each position. Please note that teams or individual team members may propose alternative activities to the instructor which the instructor will endeavour to facilitate as best as possible (although instructor pre-approval is required.)

Please note that except where a written assignment is designated as ‘confidential’ it will be either made available to the team or the class as a whole (e.g. the written campaign document, public press releases from the campaign team, campaign coverage by journalists.) To preserve student privacy, students are expressly prohibited from making the work of, images of or sound recordings of any other student publicly or otherwise available to any third party without their written consent outside of the class.

Candidate.

-Written Assignment #1. [Due before class Monday, Oct.15.] Candidate background brief outlining the background (personal background, professional background and previous political experience, performance in the primaries, etc.) of the real person they are assigned to play as well as that of their real-life opponent. *Who are we and who are we running against?*

-Written Assignment #2. [Due Friday, 11:59 pm, Oct.26.] Confidential strategy memo to instructor outlining the campaign’s central strategy based on the background work done by the team (candidate background, district background, media market background.) The strategy memo should include the campaign’s central message (what issues to emphasize and how to frame them), what voters to appeal to, whether to adopt negative campaign strategies and when, etc. *How do we maximize our advantage against our opponent? What do we need to do to win?*

-Performance Activities (at least two): in-class debate performance (solo), paired in-class debate performance with one other team member (which counts as half an activity), press conference (solo) or press conference paired with another team members (which again counts as half an activity), solo (or paired with another team member) media interview (presented in-class or via video), etc.

Campaign Manager.

- Written Assignment #1. [Due before class Monday, Oct. 15.] Background brief on the generic political context of the actual district/state being contested (demographics/political history/patterns of political support/relationship to other electoral districts). *Where are we campaigning? For whose votes are we competing?*
- Written Assignment #2. [Due Friday, 11:59 pm, Oct.26] Official campaign platform for public release (does not need to replicate the real-life campaign platform.) *What issues are we campaigning on, how do we prioritize them, how do we frame them?*
- Performance Activities: same as candidate (except solo in-class debate participation which is not eligible.)

Media Relations and Advertising

- Written Assignment #1. [Due before class, Monday Oct. 15.] background brief on media context/targets (media market including opportunities for paid outlets and unpaid coverage; previous coverage of primaries by the media, etc.) *What is our media market like both in terms of supply (available media outlets for paid and unpaid coverage) and demand?*
- Written Assignment #2. [Due Friday, 11:59 pm, Oct.26] Media strategy document and scheduled media releases. *Who are we trying to reach and how best do we reach them given this media market?*
- Performance Activities: at least two of the following – produce campaign ads (up to two), design campaign website, and/or any of the paired activities with candidates listed above.

Journalist.

- Written Assignment #1. [Due before class, Monday, Oct.15.] Major background article on district and candidates as well as how this race fits with other races. *What can your readership expect given what we know about who is running and where they are running?*
- Written Assignment #2. [Due 11:59 pm, Friday, Nov. 2.] Major article on campaign platforms and related campaign materials (campaign ads, website, press releases) available to date (prior to debates). *Is the direction that each campaign is taking what we would expect given #1 above? Implicitly, do the simulation campaigns seem realistic given what we know about who is running and where they are running?*
- Written Assignment #3. [Due 11:59 pm, Friday, Nov. 30.] Major article on campaign debates and related materials (post-debate spin) available to date (following debates.) *As above, but with emphasis on how the two campaigns are responding to each and whether those responses seem effective (and/or realistic)?*
- Performance Activities: at least two of the following -- participation in in-class debate (posing questions/moderating debate), participation in press conference (posing questions), video or in-class interview with candidate or campaign manager, or video or in-class news clip of campaign coverage.

LECTURE/SEMINAR SCHEDULE:

Week 1 (Sept. 10)

Introduction

PART ONE:

UNDERSTANDING AMERICAN ELECTIONS

Week 2 (Sept. 17)

An Election Primer: Peculiarities of the US Election Process

Reading: TBA

Week 4 (Sept.24)

A System Primer: Peculiarities of the US Political System

Reading: Sides, John. Chpt. 5 Modern Campaign Strategies in Campaigns and Elections, 3rd edition. Available on Learn.

Nelson/Thurber, Chpt. 2 pp. 22-28 ONLY.

Sides, John. Chpt 12 excerpts from Campaign Strategies and Elections, eBook. Available on Learn.

Seminar: Introduction/Meeting of Campaign Teams

Week 4 (Oct.1)

Guest Speaker and Campaign Team Meetings*

Reading: TBA

Seminar: Introduction/Meeting of Campaign Teams

*class this week will be comprised of a guest speaker, 11:30-12:50, and the regular class (campaign team meetings running from 1:00-2:20. Attendance at the guest speaker is recommended for undergrad students and required for graduate students.

PART TWO: INTERPRETING AMERICAN ELECTIONS

Week 5 (Oct. 15) Book A – Discussion 1

Reading: Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment*.

Seminar: Campaign team meetings

Week 6 (Oct. 22) Book A -- Discussion 2

Reading: Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment*.

Seminar: Campaign team meetings

Week 7 (Oct. 29) Book B -- Discussion 1

Reading: Kinder/Kalmoe, *Neither Liberal Nor Conservative*

Seminar: Campaign team meetings

Week 8 (Nov. 5) Book B – Discussion 2

Reading: Kinder/Kalmoe, *Neither Liberal Nor Conservative*

Seminar: Campaign team meetings

Week 9 (Nov. 12) Overview of Elections Results

Reading: TBA

Seminar: Book Debate Team (prep)

Campaign Team Meeting

Week 10 (Nov. 19) Book Debates – Abramowitz vs. Kinder/Kalmoe

**PSCI 685 students are required to attend undergrad portion of debates.

Week 11 (Nov. 26)

Campaign Debates

Week 12 (Dec.3)

Overview/Wrap-Up

Seminar: View campaign ads and final editorial endorsements.

University Regulations:

Cross-listed course:

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

Academic Integrity:

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71>.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70>. In addition, consult <http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/student-grievances-faculty-arts-processes> for the Faculty of Arts’ grievance processes.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72>.

Academic Integrity website (Arts):

http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html

Academic Integrity Office (uWaterloo): <http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/>

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

Note for students with disabilities: The AccessAbility Services (AS) Office, located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.