

**POLSCI 390 - Conventions and Presidential Elections**  
Online Instruction  
Summer 2020

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## Course Overview

This is an upper division special topics course on “Party Nominating Conventions and Presidential Elections.” Since the 2020 Democratic National Convention was supposed to be located in Milwaukee from July 13-16 (before COVID-19), this summer course will leverage the geographic location or online format of the convention in order to allow students to participate in various activities for course credit.

Party nominating conventions and presidential primary elections have a robust history and are continuously undergoing changes for improvement. The course will cover the historical trajectory of these institutions of American Politics. In addition, the course will explore how issues and campaigns have an effect on winning the presidency in the United States. Finally, this course will allow students an opportunity to receive credit for participating in activities surrounding the 2020 Democratic National Convention (DNC). Students will reflect on their experiences and relate them to what they have learned about the process more generally.

A typical online week will consist of a combination of readings, reflection posts, and lectures conducted against the background of the 2020 election and the role of party and voters in Presidential selection. At the end of this course, it is my hope that students will understand much more not only about presidential elections, but about the phenomenon of politics generally.

## Course Objectives

This class is designed to provide a basic understanding of presidential elections. In particular, it is important that students are able to:

1. Identify the different modes of presidential candidate selection that have been used historically.
2. Articulate the roles that party nominating conventions play in American politics.
3. Identify and articulate the different electoral rules that are used for electing a party’s candidate in the primary.
4. Identify and articulate the different electoral rules that are used for electing a President.

# Course Requirements

## Online Instruction

Since the class is conducted online, attendance/participation is a difficult aspect of the course to assess. Further, several people are taking this class online because their schedules do not allow for regular, constant class attendance. Therefore, there is a great deal of leeway built into the completion of required coursework. However, it is up to you to pay attention to due dates and requirements. Finally, **you must have stable internet access for this class.** I will not at any point in the semester hear complaints regarding late assignments due to not having internet access. The level of technological knowledge for participating in this class is minimal.

In order to access content on Canvas, **you must complete a quiz dealing with the content of this syllabus.** You cannot access the first lecture on "Presidential Nominations" until you finish the quiz. The quiz can be attempted an unlimited number of times, cannot hurt your grade, and must be completed with a 100%. The point of the quiz is to ensure that you understand the guidelines and requirements for the class so that there is no possibility for complaints later. In addition, your completion of the syllabus quiz is a contract that both of us agree to the guidelines set forth in this class.

I expect that class reading will be done **prior to the lecture slides being accessed**, and that students will ask questions if they are not understanding something. The lecture slides can be accessed immediately after you finish the quiz on the same topic.

**A note about conduct:** It is understandable that the class is not face-to-face, thus there is a certain level of anonymity. On rare occasions, this anonymity is accompanied by a lack of formality or professional conduct. Please take note to not be disrespectful to other students. Further, I expect that emails to me will be accompanied by a professional header, consist of a professional tone, and include formal writing (as though it were a business email). If the emails are not drafted in this manner, I will simply not respond to them. If they are written in a professional manner, you can expect a response in two business days or less.

If you need technical support, you can contact Canvas support through the help tab on Canvas. Additional help or inquiries regarding success in the class should be directed at the Student Support Services center.

## Sequential Tasks of the Online Course

The course is designed so that tasks must be completed sequentially. What sequentially means is that you must complete the preceding task before Canvas will allow you to access the following task. In particular, you must take the quiz on a topic before you can access the lecture slides. Likewise, you must access the lectures slides before you can access the next topic's quiz.

## **Due Dates**

There are dates in the syllabus schedule that indicate when specific sets of tasks should be completed. However, there are no guidelines regarding moving at your own pace quicker than the schedule implies. Therefore, as you move sequentially, you are allowed to work ahead. This flexibility is built into the schedule so that you can work, as much as possible given the time frame, at your own pace.

## **Participation = 10%**

You will be required to complete one particular task at the beginning of the semester in order to receive open any of assigned material. You must introduce yourself on Canvas in the Discussion section of Canvas titled “Introductions.” I would like everyone to introduce themselves in a paragraph or two during the first week of the course. When introducing yourself, I would like you to indicate why you decided to take the course. Your specific response is not graded, and you will simply receive points for completing the task.

## **Online Reflections (4 x 10 = 40%)**

In the discussion section of our online course, you will need to post a thoughtful reflection response to the readings and lecture from the week. The intent of the reflection post is to allow you to digest the week’s topic and thoroughly think about the weekly topic in relation to other areas of study we have touched on in the course. The due dates are listed in the syllabus and on Canvas.

The reflection post should be the equivalent of two single-spaced typed pages. The reflections are graded based on your engagement with the literature/readings, the lecture, and your critical assessment of the material. Further, in order to receive any credit for a reflection post, you must cite all of the assigned material for the week in your post. If it is clear that minimal effort was put into the post, or that you did not reflect enough on the topic, the reflection will receive a zero. Further, if there are more than five grammatical errors, the post will receive a zero.

## **Active Learning: Interaction and Feedback**

The online reflection forums are intended to provide a forum for students to process course material and apply course concepts in an interactive format if they so choose. This interaction will allow for “student - student” and “student - instructor” interactions, whereby students are expected to reflect on material. Each student is expected to write a reflection post should be the equivalent of one single-spaced typed page. Further, as your Instructor, I may take an active role in clarifying confusion and providing additional information that serves to advance student understanding in a given content area.

## **Active Learning: Student Engagement**

The lectures will use contemporary examples of political phenomena to illustrate course concepts. These concepts, often contentious, are designed to challenge student understandings of given issues and explore new ways of analyzing institutional performance, political arguments, and political history. Therefore, students are expected to keep up with contemporary news in order to familiarize themselves with the presented issues. Present in the lectures are discussion questions that provide the opportunity to examine and assess their own understandings of new material. Although students are not expected to submit written responses to these discussion questions, this self-directed learning enables students to more fully interact with other members of class during review sessions, and clarifies points of confusion on which to seek further clarification. Again, these exercises are intended to guide students to increasing levels of responsibility for their own learning.

I have provided you with three different modes of engaging with the lecture material. First, I have posted for each topic comprehensive lecture slides. These lecture slides have more material on them when compared to a normal in-person lecture. Second, I provide you with a lecture video in which I lecture in a similar manner as I would in an in-person course. For example, I clarify difficult topics/concepts and I give additional examples beyond the lecture slides. Finally, if you are a student that is not in favor of sitting down and watching lecture videos. I have provided Podcast audio files that you can download and listen to on your computer or phone. Alternatively, you could simply play that audio files through the Canvas app that is supported on most smart phones. Being able to engage with the material while driving or walking to other classes might make it easier to stay actively engaged in the course material.

## **Quizzes (4 x 5 = 20%)**

There will be 4 quizzes in this class worth an overall 20%. The quizzes are intended to ensure that you are reading the material, and that your level of comprehension is as at a point where you do well on the exams. The quizzes are to be accessed on Canvas. The due dates for the quizzes are listed in the syllabus schedule section. It is important to note that the intent of these quizzes are to ensure that you do well (i.e. grade boosters).

You are allowed to take each quiz three times, and I will count the highest quiz grade out of the three attempts. The quizzes are open-note, open-book format. The time limit for quiz completion is one hour. Finally, there are no make up quizzes. You have over several days to complete the quizzes. Therefore, I will not allow anyone to make them up. The quizzes are set up to be graded immediately upon completion.

## **Convention Event Attendance & Reflection (30%)**

The Democratic National Convention (DNC) was scheduled to be held in Milwaukee from July 13th-16th. Over 50,000 visitors were expected in Milwaukee and the revenue generated for the area was expected to be over \$200 million. In the geographic area, there were more

than 1,500 events related to the convention over the four days.

Unfortunately, the global pandemic and spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has meant that summer activities and political gatherings have been largely postponed or cancelled in the United States (the exception currently is Donald Trump rallies). The Democratic Party has made the difficult decision to cancel the in-person portion of the national convention, which could reduce the overall impact of a convention, so that people's health and lives are not at risk. Interestingly, the current situation provides an opportunity for you all to participate in activities during the DNC that you would normally not be able to get tickets to participate in. The DNC has decided that almost all activities will be done online. Therefore, the final assignment in the course is that you must participate in **TWO Democratic National Convention events online**.

After attendance to the convention events, you are expected to reflect on your experience. Your reflection should be at least 3 pages for each of the events you have attended. In addition, you are expected to relate your experience at the events to the broader literature that you have read for the course. At minimum, you need to cite four separate readings (chapters, articles, etc) assigned in the course and relate them to your experience in your reflection. Your reflection is to be posted on Canvas so that students share their experiences.

Note: The Democratic National Convention takes place after the scheduled dates of the course. The administration at UW-Parkside has extended the dates for grades to align with the change in the DNC's schedule.

## **Late Work**

Late work is not accepted. All of the assignment due dates, criteria for completion, and full explanation are provided well ahead of time. In addition, all of the assignments are turned in electronically on Canvas without physically being in class. Therefore, there is no excuse for late work. Makeup exams will not be allowed except for extreme circumstances.

## **Grading Scale**

NOTE: In cases in which a student is on the borderline between grades (e.g., 91.5), I will always round up to the higher grade, provided that you have attended class regularly and engaged in regular and active participation in class.

If you have any questions about grading policy in general, or any questions about any particular grade you received, please come see me in my office. I will be more than happy to discuss your grade with you and find ways in which your work can be improved and your grade raised.

Grade	Percentage
A	= 92% - 100%
A-	= 90% - 91%
B+	= 88% - 89%
B	= 82% - 87%
B-	= 80% - 81%
C+	= 78% - 79%
C	= 72% - 77%
C-	= 70% - 71%
D+	= 68% - 69%
D	= 62% - 67%
D-	= 60% - 61%
F	= below 60%

## Academic Dishonesty

**I take plagiarism extremely seriously.** Let it be noted for the record that cheating in any form will not be tolerated. Anyone caught cheating on an examination will be punished according to University guidelines. In addition, if a paper is handed in without any citations, improper citations, or plagiarized material the paper will receive a zero, and you will be referred to the university for disciplinary action. I will assume that you either copied the material or did not complete the assignment as was required. Please consult the section on student academic dishonesty in the Student Guidebook for a listing of the practices that may be considered cheating.

**It is the University's policy to provide, on a flexible and individual basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services for a letter of verification to provide to their instructors. Disability Services is located in WYLL D175 and can be reached at 595-2372 or dss@uwp.edu**

## Required Reading

Karmack, Elaine C. 2018. *Primary Politics: Everything You need to Know About How America Nominates Its Presidential Candidates*. Brookings Institution Press.

(The book can be accessed and read online through the UW-Parkside Library webpage).

Additional required readings will be posted on Canvas.

## Class Schedule

NOTE: Reading for a particular day should be done before attending class on that particular day. I have been known to randomly call on students and ask them questions from the reading. Therefore, it is in your interest to be prepared in order to receive attendance points. In addition, the schedule is subject to change based on the flow of class discussion.

### Week 1: July 13th - July 19th

Syllabus

Student introductions

Topic: *History of Presidential Nominations and Primary Politics*

Read:

- Karmack, Elaine C. 2018. *Primary Politics: Everything You need to Know About How America Nominates Its Presidential Candidates*. Brookings Institution Press.

**Student Introduction, Quiz 1 and Reflection 1 must be finished by July 19th at 10pm**

### Week 2: July 20th - July 26th

Topic: *Presidential Nominations & Primaries Today*

Read:

- Dowdle, Andrew J. Randall E. Adkins, Karen Sebold, and Jarred Cuellar. 2016. "Forecasting Presidential Nominations in 2016: #WePredictedClintonANDTrump," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 49(4): 691-695.
- Weinschenk, Aaron C. 2017. "Polls and Elections Conventional Wisdom: Political Learning During Presidential Nominating Conventions," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 74(1): 186-203.
- Steger, Wayne P. "Conditional Arbiters: The Limits of Political Party Influence in Presidential Nominations," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 49(4): 709-715.
- Listen: FiveThirtyEight - Primaries Project - 3-part podcast series.

**Quiz 2 and Reflection 2 must be finished by July 26th at 10pm**

### Week 3: July 27th - August 2nd

Topic: *Elections - Issues & Candidates*

Read:

- Hansford, Thomas G. and Brad T. Gomez. 2015. "Reevaluating the sociotropic economic voting hypothesis," *Electoral Studies* 39: 15-25.
- Mutz, Diana C. 2018. "Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 115 (19).

- Groenendyk, Eric. 2019. “Of Two Minds, But One Heart: A Good ‘Gut’ Feeling Moderates the Effect of Ambivalence on Attitude Formation and Turnout,” *American Journal of Political Science* 63(2): 368-384.
- Hatemi, Peter K. and Zoltan Fazekas. 2018. “Narcissism and Political Orientations,” *American Journal of Political Science* 62(4): 873-888.

**Quiz 3 and Reflection 3 must be finished by August 2nd at 10pm**

**Week 4: August 3rd - August 7th**

Topic: *Elections - Campaigns & Strategies*

Read:

- Urban, Carly and Sarah Niebler. 2014. “Dollars on the Sidewalk: Should U.S. Presidential Candidates Advertise in Uncontested States,” *American Journal of Political Science* 58(2): 322-336.
- Shaw, Daron R. and James G. Gimpel. 2013. “What if We Randomize the Governor’s Schedule? Evidence on Campaign Appearance Effects From a Texas Field Experiment,” *Political Communication* 29(2): 137-159.
- Gerber, Alan S, Jame G. Gimpel, Donald P. Green, and Daron R. Shaw. 2011. “How Large and Long-Lasting Are the Persuasive Effects of Televised Campaign Ads? Results from a Randomized Field Experiment,” *American Political Science Review* 105(1): 135-150.
- Kalla, Joshua L. and David E. Broockman. 2018. “The Minimal Persuasive Effects of Campaign Contact in General Elections: Evidence from 49 Field Experiments,” *American Political Science Review* 112(1): 148-166.

**Quiz 4 and Reflection 4 must be finished by August 7th at 10pm**

*Convention Event Attendance - July 17th - August 20th*

**Convention Event Reflection Due on August 22nd at 10pm**