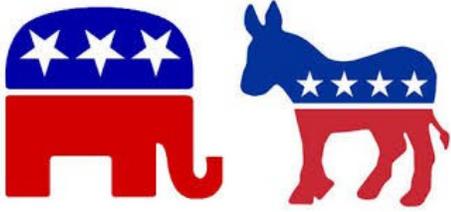


Syllabus

Practical Politics: How Campaigns Are Won or Lost



POSC 323: Applied Politics

Mike Gatto

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Fall 2017: Tuesdays, 5:00pm - 7:50pm

Office Hours: TBD

Course Description and Goals

This course will cover how campaigns are won or lost. We will examine a variety of academic sources that highlight the different methodologies for success at the ballot box. We will review a corpus of historical sources that describe how various campaigns over the course of history were decided. We will study and discuss recent practical applications of the academic and historical case studies. With so many people still trying to understand the results of the 2016 national elections, this is a timely topic.

This course is designed to foster an ability to think critically and apply what you have learned. The case studies will be diverse, and the course will cover a wide variety of subject matter. The goal is for you to be able to synthesize it by the end of the semester, and apply it, in a thoughtful and analytical fashion.

Among our central themes will be the tension between substantive qualities, like candidate qualifications, well-formed policy ideas, and sound strategy - versus less merit-based factors, like outside spending, endorsements, and identity politics. By the end of the course, you should be able to identify what factors will be outcome-determinative in most races.

Grading

This course is designed to be participatory and analytical. Grades will be assigned as follows: 30% based on a research paper in which you will identify the variables of what matters in a current campaign, for example, of one of the several California gubernatorial candidates, and then analyze the chances of that candidate versus the rest of the field. Grading criteria will be distributed in advance of this assignment. 20% will be based on a midterm exam. 40% will be based on the final exam. And 10% will be based on class participation.

Course Materials

We will read selections from the following, which will appear in a reader:

- *Lawrence Lessig, Republic Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress and a Plan to Stop It*
- *Michael W. McConnell, In Defense of Citizens United (Yale Law Review Journal)*
- *Drew Westen, The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Determining the Political Life of the Nation*
- *Mark Paul & Joe Matthews, California Crackup: How Reform Broke the Golden State and How We Can Fix It*
- *Dick Morris, The New Prince: Machiavelli Updated for the 21st Century*
- *Chris Matthews, Hardball: How Politics Is Played, Told by One Who Knows the Game*
- *Rich Becker, Get Elected, Make a Difference*
- *Chuck McCutcheon & David Mark, Dog Whistles, Walk-Backs, and Washington Handshakes: Decoding the Jargon, Slang, and Bluster of American Political Speech*

August 22: Overview

Our goal today will be to gain an overview of the course and the basics of what decides campaigns. At its simplest, of course, the answer is votes. This is why most good campaigns and most effective campaigners have a laser-like focus on votes, and securing the resources to obtain votes. We will review a short anecdote by George Washington about his two campaigns for the Virginia statehouse, one a failure, and a one a success - and compare them to political life today. We will discuss the "Four Ps" that are relevant in campaigns: Policy, Politics, Press, and People.

(No reading)

August 29: Money in Politics (Fundraising)

This week we will tackle one of the most controversial issues in politics: the role of money, and whether and how it can be limited. We will learn what percentage of races are determined by one simple factor: who has more resources. We will compare our system to other historical systems, for example, how voting was conducted in the Roman Republic.

We will read two very different approaches to money in politics: that of Lawrence Lessig and that of Michael McConnell. Which one is correct? Is there a way to "level the playing field" with respect to the role of money in politics?

We will discuss the amount of time it takes to raise money to win a campaign. Is life for elected officials really as miserable as the character of "Mayor Carcetti" in "The Wire?" Sitting in a windowless office all day, raising money, when he should be out in his community solving problems?

Reading: Republic Lost, pp. 1-42; 275-326
In Defense of Citizens United (all)

September 5: Open Primaries, Non-Partisan Runoffs, and Ranked-Choice Voting

Just as there are “horses for courses,” there are certain campaigns that are largely decided by the system itself. For example, recently, the very system with which the Democratic National Committee selected delegates was the focus of much scrutiny, as Bernie Sanders supporters believed the presence of “superdelegates” tilted the process in favor of insiders. Similarly, some candidates do better in “caucuses” and others do better in conventional primaries. There are many different systems in place, not just in the presidential primaries. This week, we will focus on the different systems that exist in California. We will read the thoughts of two California professors, who wrote, “California Crackup,” about ideas for making the system better. Which is the “best” or “most fair” system? Have “open” primaries made a difference in the makeup of the California statehouse? Do cities conducting elections with “ranked choice” voting, like Oakland, better reflect the will of the electorate?

Reading: California Crackup, pp. 126-150

September 12: “Wholesale” versus “Retail” Politics

This week, we will read selections from Chris Matthews’ *Hardball*, on the subject of “wholesale” versus “retail” politics. We will explore the limitations of each, and how they affect practical campaigning. There are many people who believe that Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon could have never been President if they had run deeper into the age of television – both ran at the beginning of the television age. Johnson was a master of “retail” politics: handshakes and eye gazes. Television is a more “wholesale” medium. We will review and apply these principles to modern races in a variety of settings. For example, could a candidate win a city council seat in South Pasadena only by engaging in wholesale politics, like airing cable ads (and shaking no hands, no door-to-door canvassing)? Could a candidate win a California state senate seat (with one million people in each district) just by shaking hands, and with no budget for mass communications?

Reading: *Hardball*, pp. 11-87

September 19: Identity Politics

This week we will dive into identify politics, and the role that they play in determining election results. We will analyze polarized voting patterns in local elections, starting with the Glendale City Council. We will read a 2002 lawsuit, *Cano v. Davis*, that revealed just how critical identity groups are to modern politicians. We will try to come up with formulas that predict identity voting. We will examine case studies of judicial races, and we will study the special problem of redistricting, "gerrymandering." We will examine the different attitudes of the Republican versus Democratic electorate, and the logic that goes into each. We will read selections from the McCutcheon and Mark text, and determine how such coded language is relevant to identify politics as a whole.

Reading: Cano versus Davis
Dog Whistles, Walk-Backs & Washington Handshakes, pp. 129-172

September 26: Midterm and Ballot Designations

Midterm Exam (format TBD)

This week we dive into the significance of ballot designations, and the significance in certain races. We will read the California statutes that govern ballot designations, and notable court decisions interpreting those statutes. The fact that there is so much litigation on a small subject indicates how important they are. We will embark on several case studies, including the 2014 race for California State Controller, where a little-know Republican with a good ballot designation almost upset the whole field. We will again look at the role of ballot designations in judicial races, and review several years' worth of ballots for judicial races. We will look at the interplay of ballot designations with identity politics, and again see if we can come up with a formula for this week, with the assistance of experts.

Reading: Selected statutes and news reports

October 3: Comparing the Different Methods of Voter Communication

This week, we will delve into the different methods of communicating with the electorate during the course of a campaign. We will read several chapters from *Get Elected, Make a Difference*, where the author catalogues ideas for the same, and we will identify whether and how those ideas are dated in the modern world. We will examine why direct mail is still the most utilized tool, for all races except Governor and President. We will look at the role of television. We will analyze online advertisement, door-to-door canvassing, the power of volunteers, and micro-targeting. We will review a case study on micro-targeting, voter communication, and identity politics from a 1999 Los Angeles City Council race. You will be expected to apply what you have learned so far to determine which media will be outcome determinative in various races.

Reading: *Get Elected, Make a Difference*, pp. 79-120, 141-148, 173-248

October 10: Social Media

This week, we will examine whether a new age is truly upon us in political campaigns, due to the power of social media. We will discuss the role that Twitter played in the 2016 presidential campaign. We will look at the average age of voters in various elections, and what that means for social media. We will read selections from "The Political Brain," and understand how those principles apply in spades to social media.

Reading: *The Political Brain*, pp. 25-88 144

October 17: Special Interest Groups and the Power of Parties

This week, we will analyze a key topic: the power of special-interest groups and political parties to tilt the outcome of an election. We will determine which endorsements actually move the needle in political races. We will tackle the special problem of questionnaires and written campaign promises, something most voters are unaware of. We will read actual questionnaires from several local special-interest groups. We will try to understand why one local Democratic club, dedicated to equality, had a question on hedge height. We will review the resources, human

and financial, that special-interest groups can bring to bear. We will read various selections from the Political Brain and the New Prince.

(Research Paper Due)

Reading: The Political Brain, pp. 89-144
The New Prince, pp. 50-53, 105-109

October 24: Negative Campaigning

This week, we will tackle something that everyone identifies as a problem in campaigns, and yet something that continues to persist: negative campaigning. We will read various selections from the New Prince and Hardball, as well as several polls. We will determine when it makes sense for a candidate to “go negative,” and how it’s done. We will review the roles of shady practitioners of the dark arts in politics: opposition researchers, trackers, and the like. We will review several case studies, and determine how much shock politics and negative campaigning matters anymore in the Age of Trump.

Reading: The New Prince, pp. 36-40, 188-203
Hardball, pp. 88-110

October 31: The Cliches of Messaging

This week, we will examine the cliches of messaging, and why they still matter in politics. We will review a variety of mail pieces from several elections, and determine why, even in educated communities, certain cliches (nurses, firefighters, teachers, and veterans), seem to appear on many mail pieces. We will examine the differences between messaging to Democrats and Republicans, after reading key chapters in the Political Brain. We will review a series of campaign advertisements, and learn to identify why cliches matter, and why they help candidates signal their virtues in the short time allotted.

Reading: The Political Brain, pp. 145-209

November 7: The Special Problem of Trump 2016

The 2016 presidential election seemed to shred the manual. We will review a selection of works, mostly by journalists, to determine whether the 2016 election was an anomaly, or a harbinger of a new age.

Reading: Selected articles and analyses (handout)

November 14: Specific Examples from Recent Local Races

No reading this week, as we will go over some specific examples of real local races, and see if we can apply what we've learned to counsel campaigns and predict outcomes. We will focus on the differences in messaging between national and local races, and test the question whether all politics is truly local.

November 21: Case Studies

Casual, in-class case studies. (Applying what you learned and prepping for the final in a relaxed setting). I may ask each of you to present for five minutes on your research papers, but such presentations will not be graded. They will be to share the knowledge you learned with your classmates only.

November 28: Putting It All Together, Recap

Substantive course review. This week I will answer specific questions for the exam, and we will review readings together, etc.)

December 12, 7 to 9 pm: FINAL EXAM

General Notes, Disclaimers, and Legalese

- You should compare the date of our final with your other final exams now so a conflict does not arise at the end of the semester. Likewise, note the date and time of this exam before you book any flights home for winter break. Flights home are not a sufficient reason for altering the date of the exam.
- Note: An “incomplete” will only be granted in this class under the most exceptional of circumstances that must be verified (e.g., a serious illness that prevents you from taking the final) and only if you have completed all of the course requirements except the final exam. In other words, every student must complete each course requirement (midterms, paper, final) in order to receive a passing grade in the course.
- I reserve the right to drop students for being inattentive or disruptive.
- I call on students who are obviously doing non-class activities on their laptops during class.
- Deadlines are firm. Late papers will be marked down by a half a grade (5 points) for every day late.
- The course will occasionally feature an entertaining and topically relevant guest speaker, who does not appear on the syllabus because of availability and scheduling uncertainties. Suggestions are welcome of who you would like to learn from. Whatever topics a guest speaker covers may be tested on exams.
- This syllabus may change, and if it does, I will let you know.