

COURSE SYLLABUS

The PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION PROCESS

POLS 390A Fall semester, 2015

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Office hours: Fridays, 2-4 p.m. Since on-campus or off-campus obligations may occasionally prevent my being in my office during office hours, making an appointment in advance, even during office hours, is a good idea. But I do expect to be in my office during office hours on a regular basis. I am also available for appointments at other times.

I. INTRODUCTION

On 20 January 2017 a new four-year U. S. presidential term will begin, with the identity of the nation's new president being determined by the on-going 2015-16 presidential selection process. This course will address both the presidential selection process (hereafter "PSP") in general and the 2015-16 presidential nomination process (hereafter "PNP"), which is already well underway, and 2016 presidential general election in particular. The emphasis in this course will very much be the PNP, and we shall probably devote at least three-quarters of the semester to the nomination process and, in turn, pay considerably less attention to presidential general elections.

The PSP determines the occupant of the most powerful governmental office in the United States and perhaps the world. The American political system is classified as a democratic political system, yet the way presidents are nominated and ultimately elected is, by conventional democratic standards, unusual *and* distinctively American. The PNP is particularly unusual (and interesting) and that is a major reason why the bulk of this course will be devoted to it.

POLS 390C is a "Topics" course, not a course that is regularly offered as part of the Political Science curriculum. It is being offered during the semester immediately before the state-by-state delegate selection process that is currently scheduled to begin in Iowa in early February 2016. During the semester, we shall pay considerable attention to the on-going nomination process in the context of 'larger' considerations about the PNP. Students may, indeed will, be expected to be willing and able to take somewhat more initiatives in 'researching' particular facets of the PSP than might be expected in a regular POLS course offering. (See,

for example, “Nuggets” under Part IV below.) Relatedly, this Topics course has greater flexibility and more “To Be Determined” elements than a regular course.

II. OUTLINE OF TOPICS TO BE TREATED IN THE COURSE

PART I The Presidential Nomination Process and the 2015-16 Nomination Process

The historical evolution of the PNP; the role of Iowa, New Hampshire, and money in the process; the PNP, the party system, and consequences for the “Responsible Party Model” of democratic governance; the role(s) of televised debates, news media, and campaigning; predicting PNP outcomes; tactics and strategies of candidates; the 2015-16 PNP; etc.

PART II Presidential General Elections

The Electoral College, voting behavior in presidential elections, the 2000 general election (Bush vs. Gore), the 2008 general election, the 2012 general election, the 2016 general election, etc.

III. READINGS

Most required readings for the course will come from two books, but there will be other sources as well, including relevant websites and perhaps *The New York Times*. The two books that have been ordered through the campus bookstore are identified below, and the identity and availability of other readings is still to be determined.

Wayne P. Steger, *A Citizen's Guide to Presidential Nominations: The Competition for Leadership* (New York: Routledge, 2015). Ordered through the campus bookstore in July 2015.

John Sides and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013). Ordered through the campus bookstore in July 2015.

Details of readings for the course will be provided separately from this syllabus. Information about what readings are required and what are recommended, and when particular reading and writing assignments will be due, will be announced in class and/or on Moodle.

IV. GUEST SPEAKERS/TELEVISED EVENTS/FILMS

During the semester, guest speakers addressing topics relating to the subject matter of POLS 390C may appear on the DePauw campus and attendance at these events may be required or recommended for this course. In addition, televised and local political events will sometimes be called to your attention (e.g., a televised debate among presidential candidates, or a meeting of the Putnam County Tea Party). Short written assignments in connection with guest speakers and/or political events may be required or identified as extra-credit options.

Several documentaries addressing the PNP in the 1960s may also be used in this course. *The Making of the President 1960*, *The Making of the President 1964*, *The Making of the President 1968* (all Wolper Productions), and *Primary* (Robert Drew, 1960) are among the possibilities.

V. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES; GRADING

Students will be expected to come to class having completed assigned readings, having thought about them, and willing and able to discuss them intelligently. In this context, please read or reread the six points under “Academic Expectations for DePauw Students” in the “Academic Life” part of the *Student Handbook* that is available to students both in hard-copy versions and on the DePauw website. Class sessions will consist partly of lectures and partly of class discussion of assigned readings and related topics, as well as some student “Nugget” presentations. Students are responsible for being familiar with and abiding by DePauw’s “Academic Integrity Policy,” which appears in the “Academic Life” part of the *Student Handbook* that appears on the DePauw website.

Unless there is a specific announcement to the contrary, the use of laptops, cell phones, and other similar electronic devices in POLS 390C class meetings is prohibited. Cell phones should, of course, be turned off during class.

DePauw University is committed to providing equal access to academic programs and university administered activities with reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Amendments (ADAAA). Any student who feels she or he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability or learning challenge is strongly encouraged to contact Pamela Roberts, Director of Student Disability Services and ADA Compliance for further information on how to receive accommodations and support. Contact information for Student Disability Services is 408 S. Locust Street, Suite 200, in The Memorial Student Union Building ([765-658-6267](tel:765-658-6267)). It is the responsibility of the student to share the letter of accommodation with faculty and staff members. Accommodations will not be implemented until the faculty or staff member has received the official letter.

Accommodations are not retroactive. It is the responsibility of the student to discuss implementation of accommodations with each faculty and staff member receiving the letter.

Since this is a Topics course on a somewhat specialized subject, I want to gauge students' backgrounds and interests before constructing a firm framework for grading. With that caveat, grades in the course will likely be based on some or all of the following elements. But please note the somewhat provisional nature of what appears below.

- A. Contributions to class discussions, including attendance, evidence of preparation for class, etc. about 20%?
- B. A mid-term test (perhaps traditional in-class, perhaps oral, perhaps take-home) about 22.5%
- C. A final examination (perhaps traditional in-class*, perhaps oral, perhaps take-home) about 22.5%?
- D. "Nuggets" (My conception of these goes something like this: As certain questions about the presidential selection process arise, students will volunteer to research the area and come to class (the next class or the next week?) with a brief, informative, and cogent presentation in response to the question(s) that arose. These brief in-class presentations done on relatively short notice will be called "Nuggets.") about 12.5%?
- E. Medium-length (or longer?) paper(s) on some topic(s) to be determined about 22.5%?

*If a traditional in-class exam is given, the Final Exam will be given in the time period specified in the University's Final Exam Schedule for this course, which is Wednesday, 16 Dec 2015, 1-4 p.m. Please CAREFULLY bear this in mind when making plans to leave campus at the end of the semester.

END