# **COURSE SYLLABUS**

# **The PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION PROCESS**

**POLS 390C Fall semester, 2011**

Bruce Stinebrickner Room 102 Asbury Hall

Office phone: 658-4803 Home phone: 653-6225

Email: [Stinebri@Depauw.edu](mailto:Stinebri@Depauw.edu)

Office hours: Fridays, 1:45-4 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

# In 2013 a new four-year U. S. presidential term will begin and the on-going 2011-12 presidential selection process will determine who takes the presidential oath of office on 20 January 2013. This course will address both the presidential selection process (hereafter PSP) in general and the 2011-12 presidential nomination process (hereafter PNP), which is already well under way, in particular. Indeed, our emphasis in this course will very much be the PNP, and we shall probably devote at least three-quarters of the course 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 probably the world. Even though the American political system is classified as a democratic political system, the way presidents are nominated and ultimately elected is, by conventional democratic standards, peculiar, *and* it is distinctively American. The PNP is particularly unusual and that is one reason why the bulk of this course will be devoted to the PNP.

POLS 390C is a “Topics” course, not a course that is regularly offered as an integral part of the Political Science curriculum. It is being offered during the semester immediately before the delegate selection process begins in Iowa on 6 February 2012, and that is not a random coincidence. During the semester, we shall pay considerable attention to the on-going nomination process in the context of larger considerations about the PNP. Moreover, students may, indeed will, be expected to be willing and able to take somewhere 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.) In addition, this Topics course exhibits 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 2011-12 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 2011-12 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, etc.

III. READINGS

Most required readings for the course will come from several books and perhaps

*The New York Times*. One book has been ordered through the campus bookstore,

and the availability of other readings is still to be determined.

Nelson W. Polsby et al., *Presidential Elections: Strategies and Structures of American Politics*, Thirteenth edition (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012). Book ordered through the campus bookstore in July 2011

(?) William G. Mayer and Jonathan Bernstein, eds., *The Making of the Presidential Candidates 2012* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, in press). Book not yet published but whose contents I have hoped would be available to us, in whole or in part, early in the semester one way or another. As of 18 August 2011 (when I was first drafting this part of the syllabus), those hopes were somewhat dashed. As of 23 August 2011, when I am revising my earlier draft syllabus, subsequent communications from Professor Mayer had lifted my hopes once again. Availability TBD.

(?) Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President 1960* (New York: Atheneum, 1961)

*The New York Times*

Details of readings for the course will be provided in a separate set of course materials. 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.

Information about how students can inexpensively subscribe to the hard-copy daily *New York Times* will be provided in class.

IV. GUEST SPEAKERS/TELEVISED EVENTS/FILMS

During the semester, guest speakers addressing topics relating to the subject matter of POLS 390C will likely 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 Republican presidential candidates, a presidential fund-raising or campaign speech, 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 possible 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,* and *The Making of the President 1968 (*all Wolper Productions), and *Primary* (Robert Drew, 1960)

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.

Since this is a Topics course on a fairly 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 tentativeness of what appears below.

1. Contributions to class discussions, including attend-

ance, evidence of preparation for class, etc. about 20%?

1. A mid-term test (perhaps traditional in-class, perhaps oral, perhaps take-home) about 25%?
2. A final examination (perhaps traditional in-class\*, perhaps oral, perhaps take-home) about 25%?
3. “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 might be called “Nuggets.” (Examples of Nuggets that might be called for might address (1) Why do New Hampshire and Iowa have chronological primacy in the delegate selection process? (2) Why do some states use caucuses and some states use primaries to choose delegates? Are their consequences? (3) What is the impact of televised debates in the PNP? (4) From the perspective of 2011, what were the contributions of Theodore H. White to understanding the PSP and (perhaps?) to changes in the PNP that occurred after 1960.)

about 15%??

E. Short to medium-length paper on some topic(s) to be determined about

15%??

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\*If a traditional in-class exam is given, the Final Exam will be given in the time period specified i

in the University’s Final Exam Schedule. Please CAREFULLY bear this in mind when making

plans to leave campus at the end of the semester.

END