The Course
How does political advertising influence the electorate? Do “negative ads” turn voters off? Can advertising be used strategically to influence turnout, decreasing the participation of one of the major parties, while increasing the likelihood that others will vote? Election ads along with the 6 second “sound bite” are now among the major forms of political communication in modern democracies. We will study how ads are created and “work” from the standpoint of political psychology and film analysis.

The course includes a research component and students enrolled in the 203 version of the class will work in teams to design experimental research, recruit research subjects, participate in data collection, and conduct extensive analysis and presentation of our experiment data in an individual research report and team-designed infographic, displayed at our public presentation of results.

Readings
The readings for the course have been drawn from a number of books and journal articles available on e-reserve at the library. Password is POSC

Assignments
In addition to reading about how advertising may influence voters and change the composition of the electorate, we have an exciting opportunity to study these effects through an experiment asking how gender/sex of voice over and gender/sex of research subject influence the perceptions of TV and radio ad content. Our experiments will become part of the Carleton election study, which now spans nearly 15 years and five elections. In this study we have content analyzed TV, radio, and Internet ads used in Election 2008, 2010, and 2012; local and national news coverage of Election 2000, 2008, and 2012; three national surveys of citizens perceptions of ad claims; as well as other experiments, focus group studies, and depth interviews taking place from 1998 until 2012. You have access to these data as well as the research done by other scholars on election ads.

Our experiments involve several steps. I have given you a basic outline for research on gendered effects of political advertising. You will work in five-person teams to design the specific plan, choose the appropriate measures, determine the number of subjects and recruitment plan, recruit the subjects, run your team’s experiment, and analyze your data.

Each research team will design and print an infographic that we will display in a public show on the final day of class (Nov 19).
Each student writes an individual research report ranging from five to seven pages in length. You must be present for the display of your work. You will present your work to the class and you will present your work in the public show (we will have decent treats for both events). There are several steps in a research process and it is important to coordinate work within the group and to meet the scheduled times for handing in work for each part of the process. Your individual contributions to team work will be evaluated by your peers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades will be computed as follows:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiment Project Design/Execution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal: appropriate lit, subject selection, variables &amp; measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Execution: subject recruitment, running experiment, preparing data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Research Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infographic Design and Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A Word about experiments and research findings**

In a perfect world well-designed experiments turn up interesting patterns in data that tell us something wonderfully enlightening about cause and effect. But science also is a matter of trial and error. In the real world we find that our measures (measurement instruments) may be too blunt to demonstrate the patterns (sometimes we can use sophisticated stats to reveal more—but sometimes our sophisticated thinking makes the pattern disappear). Sometimes we cannot control the experiment in the way that we hope. And often we do everything well, but we simply get a null result (lack of statistical significance) for our trouble. A null result isn’t a mistake. In fact, new social science journals have been starting up to publish well-designed studies that net no statistically significant results. In this class, whatever knowledge we gain—even if it is the knowledge that we should design the study differently—is important. What matters is the thought, care, and effort that goes into the attempt and the accurate portrayal of the results and suggestions for improvement.

**A Word about participation and our schedule**

This class is designed as a “hands-on” experience in visual analysis and experimental methods in political science research. Research in the social sciences increasingly involves teamwork as well as individual effort. You may have a specific part of a bigger research question that interests you. But having data on which you will write an individual research paper depends on the team. The infographic assignment specifically asks you to integrate your question/work with other members of the team. The 50% of your grade that relies directly on teamwork (the experiment design and execution and the infographic design and presentation) is the subject peer evaluation as well as my evaluation. Your peers will evaluate your work on the team. If there are difficulties on the team that you cannot resolve, please let me know. Problem-solving, productive contestation and collaboration are important skills. I won’t know if you need help unless you talk with me.
The following schedule of readings and other activities includes several “Workshop” sessions in which you and your team will learn and do many of the tasks required to produce results. Some of the Workshop and specific assignments require preparation outside class to make class time/Workshop time productive. Preparation and sticking to the schedule is very important. I evaluate your effort in the participation score that is 10% of your grade. “Good,” the absolutely minimal acceptable effort, is generally an 85 or 8.5 percent; you can each do better than “good.” In sum, sticking to the schedule that the class and your team set is important; not only will my evaluation matter—peer grading and self-evaluation will be important factors in determining your scores for group work and your overall grade.

Part 1: Studying Political Advertising

Tues Sept 17  An Overview of Ads and Ad Research—Surveys, Experiments, Focus Groups, Content Analysis

Thurs Sept 19 Experimental Designs and Early Findings on Effects of Negative Ads

Tues Sept 24 Topic 1: Physiological Measures in Social Science Experimentation
Topic 2: Ad Construction, Placement, and Content


****Research Topic Description Due*****

**Tues Sept 29**  Workshop: Self-report Measures, Physiological Measures
Read:

**Self-Assigned Preparation PRIOR TO CLASS MEETING:** Each team looks at the initial readings for its experiment topic and assigns additional reading to each team member. Team members come prepared to discuss the reading: research question, theory that motivates the research question, method of study (type of study, definition of variables, measurement of variables). The presentations and discussions among team members will prepare you to design your research project.

**Wed Oct 2**  2:00-5:00 Group Sessions Designing Experiments and Recruitment Plans

**Thurs Oct 3**  I. Hurray for the Negative Ad?!  
[We will divide the readings below among teams]

**II. On Writing Lit Reviews, Research Reports, Research Papers**


Due in class: FROM YOUR TEAM: Research Question (restated as necessary), Experiment Design, Type and Number of Subjects, Recruitment Plan and “Plan B thoughts,” Operationalization (Definition) of Key Concepts, Measures, and Statement of Next Steps and Team Assignments.

Mon Oct 7  2:00-5:00 Group Sessions Finalizing Experiment Designs Creating Study Materials

**********Subject Recruitment Begins**********

Tues Oct 8  Revisiting Ansolabehere and Iyengar, Are We Asking the Right Questions? Motivated Information Processing I


Thurs Oct 10  Motivated Processing II and Partisan Responses to Negative Ads

Read: Dan Stevens, John Sullivan, Barbara Allen, and Dean Alger.


** Final Experiment Design Due in Class**

Tues Oct 15  Candidate Characteristics and Constructs


Chingching Chang and Jacqueline C. Bush Hitchon. 2004.” When Does Gender Count? Further Insights Into Gender

II. Hands-on Work with Physiological Measures
Wed Oct 15 2:00-5:00 Workshop Practice with Physiological measures

Part 2: Stepping Back—Ads Viewed within the Campaign Environment
Thurs Oct 17  The Larger Environment of Campaign Events and News Coverage of Ads


II. Present Experiment Research Designs to Class
Mon Oct 21  MIDTERM BREAK


Thursday Oct 24
Framing, Priming, Narrative, and Opinion Formation

Tuesday Oct 29
Who Frames What? How?

REC:

Friday Oct 31
Can Facts “Overcome” Feelings? Is there a Fact/Feeling Divide?

********** Experiments Conclude **********

Tuesday Nov 5
Visual Representation of Quantitative and Qualitative Information

***** Session on Visual Design Elements *****

Thursday Nov 7
State of the Art and Science of Political Advertising: Your Assessment

***********Infographic/Poster Concept Due in Class***********
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon Nov 11</td>
<td>3:30-6:00 Individual Group Discussions of Infographic Concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues Nov 12</td>
<td>Hands On Infographics Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs Nov 14</td>
<td>Hands On Infographics Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon Nov 18</td>
<td>2:00-4:00 Finish and deliver infographics to printing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues Nov 19</td>
<td>Pick Up Infographics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class meeting (prior to infographic session):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present Infographics to Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Write-Up Due in Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>********** Infographic Presentation Common Time **********</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>