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.

We are undertaking a new experiment using M-Turk survey capabilities. Our study will use three survey ways to look at the effects of inaccurate advertising claims on voters’ knowledge of candidate issue positions. We will look at these effects over time (the decay of any effects); whether partisanship, gender of voice over, candidate gender, and participant gender influence effects; and how claim accuracy may influence perceptions of ad fairness and ad negativity. These data will be among the resources you may use in your studies.

Our research involves several steps. Our research involves several steps. We will study gender of voiceover, perceptions of fairness, perception of negativity, and influence of false claims on political knowledge, including candidate issue stand. Our readings will show you why the
feelings that people already have when the ad comes on TV (or radio) changes the way they feel about ad claims about issues and candidate traits and why ads may change an affective state to influence attitudes and learning. You will work in five-person teams to design the specific plan; select the appropriate literature, measures, and data for your study; analyze your data; and report your findings in writing and in the form of an infographic.

Each research team will design and print an infographic that we will display in a public show on the final day of class (March 8, 2016).

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.

Grades will be computed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Experiment Project Design/Execution</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal: appropriate lit, subject selection, variables &amp; measures</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Execution: preparing data</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written Research Report</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infographic Design and Presentation</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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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 Jan 5  
An Overview of Ads and Ad Research—Surveys, Experiments, Focus Groups, Content Analysis

Thurs Jan 7  
Experimental Designs and Early Findings on Effects of Negative Ads

Tues Jan 12  
Ad Construction, Placement, and Content

Thurs Jan 14  
Defining and Measuring Concepts and Causality: What Are Negative Ads? (What are Attack Ads? What are Issue Ads?)


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


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


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

**Tues Jan 26** Revisiting Ansolabehere and Iyengar, Are We Asking the Right Questions? Motivated Information Processing I


Rec:

Seth J. Hill, et. al. 2015. “How Quickly We Forget: The Duration of Persuasion Effects from Mass Communication.” Paper Presented at the


Thurs Jan 28  Motivated Processing II and Partisan Responses to Negative Ads


[We will divide the following readings among team members]


****** Final Team Write-up on Your Use of the Experiment as Designed Due in Class******

Tues Feb 2  Candidate Characteristics and Constructs


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

Part 2: Stepping Back—Ads Viewed within the Campaign Environment
Thurs Feb 4  The Larger Environment of Campaign Events and News Coverage of Ads

II. Present Experiment Research Designs to Class
Mon Feb 8  MIDTERM BREAK
Tues Feb 9  Methods and Question in Cognitive Neuroscience

Thurs Feb 11  Framing, Priming, Narrative, and Opinion Formation

**Tues Feb 16**  
Who Frames What? How?  
REC:  

**** Draft Statement of Research Question and Relationship to Readings ****

**Part 3: Stepping Back—Ads and Voter Cognition**

**Thurs Feb 18**  
Can Facts “Overcome” Feelings? Is there a Fact/Feeling Divide?  

**Tues Feb 23**  
Visual Representation of Quantitative and Qualitative Information  
&  
***** Session on Visual Design Elements *****

**Thurs Feb 25**  
State of the Art and Science of Political Advertising: Your Assessment  
******** Infographic/Poster Concept Due in Class ********

**Tues Mar 1**  
Infographics Workshop

**Thurs Mar 3**  
Infographics Workshop

**Mon Mar 7**  
2:00–4:00 Finish and deliver infographics to printing

**Tues Mar 8**  
Pick Up Infographics

Class meeting (prior to infographic session):  
**Present Infographics to Class**  
**Research Write-Up Due in Class**

******** Infographic Presentation Common Time ********