About the Course: POSC 204-02-f16

Political Communication: Media and Politics Election 2016

POSC 204                  Prof. Barbara Allen
Tues Thurs 10:10–11:55      Willis 414
WCC 230                  Office hours M Tu W Th
                          by appt. (sign-up on Moodle)

Please note: Resources will appear on the Meta Moodle page for this course throughout the term. Please see the Meta Moodle POSC 100 & 204 Media and Electoral Politics 2016 for updated daily assignments and resources.

The Course

This research seminar will introduce you to some of the methods used by social scientist who study “political” relationships and events. We will look at the arguments that political scientists make about media influences and electoral politics using data collected in the Carleton College Media and Elections Study. Our Media and Elections Study has analyzed political communication in every presidential election of the twenty-first century. Your insights, hypotheses, and analysis will enhance the work to which more than 200 Carls have already contributed!

Our emphasis in this year’s part of the study will be on comparative analysis of our fantastic store of a decade of data collection, while adding a sample of election news coverage and ad analysis from our current historic election.

Election 2016

Our 2016 Election Study, conducted by students in POSC 100 and POSC 204, Media and Electoral Politics, will include: an analysis of selected 2016 political advertising, content analysis of a sample of broadcast and print election news coverage, and an Election Day exit poll project coordinated with students from the St. Olaf course, Media and Politics, taught by Political Science Professor Christopher Chapp and POSC 202 and POSC 230 (Professor Freeze). Our 2016 data will be compared with content analyses of election news and ads collected during the 2008 election.

Data from 2000-2012 Elections

The data with which you may work include our content analysis of the 2000, 2004, and 2008 election news coverage by the local television affiliates in the Minneapolis Metro Media Market. Added to these local news data sets is the content analysis of recorded film captures of national news coverage of elections 2008 and the content analysis of all radio and television ads broadcast in the United States in the 2008 presidential election and all radio and television ads broadcast in Minnesota for the state’s US Senate and House races. We also have detailed content analysis of the mini-documentaries, web ads, and candidate bio films shown at the RNC and DNC 2008 conventions. We have analyzed a sample of network election news transcripts from broadcast Election 2012 and content analysis of a selection of
prominent ads broadcast in the 2012 presidential race. We have most recently added an analysis of 2012 Spanish language ads to our data set of 2008 Spanish language ads. We've been busy!

To these data we will add our analysis of a sample of 2016 presidential and Minnesota ads and news coverage of those ads (e.g. fact checks). The analysis of news stories considers elements such as tone, topic, and information framing. Our study of the 2016 campaign ads includes analyzing ad scripts, visual texts and sound, focusing on the accuracy of their claims and messages.

We celebrate our data collection work with a field trip to the Election Night Parties of the two major Minnesota political parties (Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party and Republican Party of Minnesota) in the Twin Cities.

We have the opportunity to present our research findings in a unique venue: the Two Small Weitz White Spaces. You and your team will display your research results with a written explanation (a headline and a caption) and present your display during Common Time on the last day of our course.

Political communication takes place in myriad media: billboards, TV and radio advertising, speech and debate, graffiti art, photography, film, museum exhibits, public monuments, interpretive trails and public parks, public art… a long list. In addition to working on skills like writing and oral presentation, you will have a chance to THINK ABOUT such diverse media and their potential for getting political information across to a variety of audiences. Your research projects and findings may be represented in a medium of your choice, including: audio broadcasts (e.g. a scripted radio story); a film; a slide show using movie and/or sound files (e.g. PowerPoint or Keynote); a Prezi; an item/exhibit that you curate from our election news and ads artifacts; an info-graphic…there are many possibilities. We will build our exhibits over the course of the election, working in the large White Space beginning the week of October 17.

Much of your work will be undertaken in small groups. Your evaluation of your efforts and those of your peers will be factored into your grade for group projects.

In addition to discussing questions raised by our readings in each class session, we will use a portion of our class meetings as workshops to learn more about how to: work as a team; ask questions that can be addressed by specific kinds of data; use methods such as content analysis for studying political communication; write questions to be answered by voters; and exhibit information, including research findings to different audiences. To tell the story of your research and this decade-long research program you will learn a great deal about the research literature and public thinking to which your work contributes.

We will study how media influence campaign spending and organization, consider the methods candidates use to package their messages, and the overall influence of media on electoral politics. We will learn about public opinion analysis and other ideas from the fields of political behavior and political psychology in our study of political communication.

Research in political science, political psychology, and mass communications shows that campaign ad presentations use a number of cinematic and advertising techniques to sell candidates to voters. Depending on the truthfulness and tone of the ad, such mass market effects can be negative or positive from the point of view of democratic theory: How do campaign ads influence political participation? Cynicism? Political Efficacy? Researchers worry about the distortions of factual information occurring when visual images produce a powerful, affective subtext for political communication. We know that political ads increase anxiety and enthusiasm, stimulating several predictable behaviors among voter/viewers. Do the images and sounds of political ads raise anxieties to an excessive extent? Or, increase enthusiasm to a cult-like degree? Do political ads make it less likely that voters will think rationally about the information they receive about a candidate? Furthermore, we have a debate raging on the effects of “negative” ads—do they motivate or dampen participation? What is a negative ad? Add to all of this
the news coverage of the campaign and the “ad watches” that go along with it. How do the various news formats convey, limit, or even distort political learning in a democratic electorate?

We also know that the methods used by news media organizations in framing information influence how information is understood and used in decision making. One phenomenon that our Carleton studies have documented is the increase in political ad fact checking and discussion of ads in horserace or strategy discourses. We know that voters learn less about policy and issue stands from horserace coverage than they do (and wish to have) from coverage of issues. When news coverage focuses on the strategy of ad messages rather than on ad claims (and their truthfulness) voters get the ad strategy of the message without much help in thinking about the claims. Even more concerning may be the phenomenon of simply posting the ad on news outlet blogs so that news now acts as a conduit for the ad message: free media without analysis. News framing and content play a huge role in campaign strategy and thus what voters do and do not know about the candidates, parties, politics, issues, and world events.

A Word About Projects for Comps

Several of you plan to work on a comps project from this class. Great! Where I see common interests, I will be attempting to help you coordinate teamwork that will benefit all. To this end, I have a particular Hand-In for Comps Project Proposals on our Moodle page. Please submit your plans by the posted date (see Moodle).

Course Requirements

Below are the readings and topics for each of our meetings. Readings should be done for discussions on the day on which they are assigned (appear on the syllabus) unless otherwise noted. In addition to coming to class prepared to discuss the readings, you will take part in workshops to learn our methods of content analysis, contribute to the District 2 election exit poll project, and attend the class field trip on election night. We will have several opportunities to talk with leaders of the major party presidential campaigns (ad makers, speech writers, strategists) via Skype, watch the presidential and vice presidential debates, and attend one of the debates for the District 2 (your district) Congressional Election. These events will be noted on the Moodle when they occur outside our scheduled class time. Participation is generally expected, but we can of course discuss schedule conflicts and attempt to make alternative arrangements as necessary. Attendance at two events is, however, required: Election Night Field Trip and Common Time Project Exhibit Presentation.

Your graded work includes:

Content analysis of campaign ads; content analysis of election news coverage; research report of the ad content analysis; research report of the news content analysis; a project creating or collecting one “artifact” for exhibit in “Carleton College Election Study 2000-2012 to be based on our Election Study Resources; oral presentation of your exhibit; the written caption for your exhibit; attendance at the November13 Exhibit Presentation. Activities involving working in pairs or in groups will include peer evaluations of your participation, which will affect your score.

Grades will be computed as follows
Content Analysis: Campaign Ad and Report on Campaign Ad 20

Content Analysis: News and Report on News Analysis 20

Exhibit Caption 10

Exhibit Creation/Collection (includes proposal, research, creation) 30

Oral Presentation of Exhibit Artifact 10

Class & Project Participation (includes exit poll project) 10

Total 100%

Readings can be found on e-reserve and are listed on Moodle on the day that we plan to discuss each topic

Tues Sept 13  Introduction to the course Communication and Self-Government
I. Course Overview
II. Writing Awesome Interview Questions
AND

Thurs Sept 15  Media as an Institution and Campaign Advertising


Mon Sept 19  An Evening with Journalists  Covering Election 2016
John Harris moderates a panel comprised of Ana Palmer, Politico, James Hohmann, the Washington Post, and Jonathan Martin, NYTimes Concert Hall 7:00-8:30 pm

**POSC 204 Students planning on comps from this class during 2016-2017 Upload Comps Project Ideas**

**Tues Sept 20**

Content Analysis of News and Ads—Our Project

**POSC 100 COMMON TIME **Pizza and Content Analysis Workshop 1**


Find on Moodle Appendix to McCain Out of Touch/ Too Old and Obama Not Ready to Lead

EVERYONE Please also take a look at the ABC News Transcript, pp 9-10 and the PDF below on Obama's English, which is also found at:

See the two examples of "Controversial English" [Who Let the Dogs Out? and "Naw, We Straight" 9at 1:10 on video 2)] below.

Obama's "Controversial English"

Obama's "Controversial English" Example 2 Statement "Naw, We Straight" at 1:10

**Thurs Sept 22**

Candidate Communication and Campaign Strategy 1:
Advertising Strategy and Effects—Journalists’ Responses


AND


MONDAY SEPT 26 FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE 8:00-9:30 pm

Tues Sept 27 Candidate Communication and Campaign Strategy 2: Speeches and Debates


AND


**POSC 204 COMMON TIME **Pizza and Content Analysis Workshop 1**

Matt Lauer Interview with Hillary Clinton

Matt Luauer Interview with Donald Trump

Thurs Sept 29 Public Opinion 1: Definitions, Measurement, and Candidate Construction


POSC 204 ALSO READS:


TENTATIVE, STAY TUNED:
ATTEND DEBATE Angie Craig (DFL), Jason Lewis (GOPMN), and other candidates in the MN District 2 Congressional Race
7:00 pm St. Olaf College, Buntrock Commons

TUESDAY OCTOBER 4 VICE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE 8:00-9:30 pm

Tues Oct 4 Public Opinion 2: Agenda Setting—Framing, Priming, and Persuasion


AND


******AD CONTENT ANALYSIS DUE, PLEASE SEE HAND-IN ICON BELOW*****

Thurs Oct 6 Public Opinion 3:
I. Narrative and Symbolism in News Reporting

II. Fact Check or Spin? Compare Expert Discourse 2012 and 2016 Elections

Rec Great Background:
Fact Check.org 09/06/2012, “Our Clinton Nightmare,”
http://www.factcheck.org/2012/09/our-clinton-nightmare/
Fact Check.org 09/07/2012, “Fact Checking Obama and Biden”
http://factcheck.org/2012/09/factchecking-obama-and-biden/
Fact Check.org 08/31/2012, “Romney’s Big Night”
http://factcheck.org/2012/08/romneys-big-night/
Evan Thomas “Peddling Influence” Time Magazine March 3, 1986
http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,960801,00.html

**********AD Content Analysis Assignment Due **********

******Joint Session Common Time 100 & 204 Pizza and News Analysis Workshop****

SUNDAY OCTOBER 9 TOWN HALL PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE (SECOND DEBATE) 8:00-9:30 pm

Tues Oct 11 Public Opinion 4: News Content and Priming Effects


Political Scientist Daniel Stevens, Exeter University UK speaks to class.

**Answers to Project Proposal Prompt (Above) Due; Use Hand-In Above "Project Proposals Here"***


Mon Oct 17 MIDTERM BREAK

Tues Oct 18 I. Discuss Our Brand Is Crisis and the debates
II. Public Opinion 5: Framing Effects in News and Policy Making


WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 19 THIRD PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE 8:00-9:30 pm

Thurs Oct 20

I. Information Processing and Citizens’ Understanding of Politica: I. Political Knowledge


II. Race and Gender I: Candidate Construction and Electorate Responses

EVERYONE Reads:

POSC 204 ALSO READS:

AND


************NEWS Content Analysis Assignment Due See Hand-In Icon Below ************
**Tues Oct 25**  
**Information Processing and Citizens’ Understanding of Politics 2:**

**Assessing Issues and Candidates**


AND


***********Joint Session Common Time 100 & 204 Exit Poll Survey Workshop***********

**Thurs Oct 27**  
**The Profession of Journalism: Norms, Production Values, and Audience Response**


**************Draft Exit Poll Questions Due**************

Mon Oct 31 Exit Poll Survey Questions Due 5 pm FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS

Tues Nov 1 I. Candidate Communication and Campaign Strategy 3: Tailoring the Message, Creating the Persona


II. Workshop on Projects

**************Project Contents Assembled **************

Thurs Nov 3 New Journalism, New Media, New Campaign?

   I. Strategy and Response


II. Workshop on Projects

Monday Nov 7 **************Project Captions Due **************

Tues Nov 8 Exit Poll Project
**********VOTE****Leave Campus 5:00 for Election Night Party**********

Thurs Nov 9 Interpreting Messages and Voting —

Assessing the Election— Prospects for Change

    Working session on Presentation of Results

    No additional reading

Tues Nov 15 Class Time Presentation of Your Work

*******Common Time Public Presentation of your work in our exhibit*******