**Political Science 230**

***Elections, Political Parties & Interest Groups***

**Fall, 2017**

Updated 10-2-2017

Class time: TR 12:30 – 1:45

Location: Oldfather 308

Instructor: Jonathan Andrew Jackson

Office: 517 Oldfather Hall

Office hours: MTR 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM or by appointment

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**Introduction**

The way in which Donald Trump plowed through a field of more conventional candidates to win the Republican Party nomination and then defeat someone who, on paper, was one of the most qualified candidates ever to run for president (and, for the second time in two decades, by winning the Electoral College while losing the popular vote), has raised many questions about our political system: How do nomination rules help create winners and losers? Why do we have the general election rules that we do? Do parties pick their nominees or has the process gone out of their control? Why do we have the party system that we do?

In addition, debates over the role of interest groups in American elections has raged with the 2010 Citizens United ruling allowing interest groups to independently spend unlimited sums of money for or against candidates. How has the influx of independent expenditures influenced our elections?

In short, this is an interesting time to be studying our electoral process and how parties and interest groups influence that process. It is my hope that you will complete those course with a better understanding (and perhaps a better appreciation) of the American election process.

There are two required texts for the class:

* Rozell, M. J., Wilcox, C., & Franz, M.. (2012). *Interest groups in American campaigns: The new face of electioneering*. Oxford University Press.
* Brewer, M. D., & Maisel, L. S. (2016). *Parties and Elections in America: The Electoral Process*. Rowman & Littlefield

There will also be several articles and book chapters posted on Canvas. See the schedule at the end of this syllabus for details.

This class satisfies UNL’s ACE 6 learning outcome objection: “Use knowledge, theories, and research methods appropriate to the social sciences to understand and evaluate social systems or human behaviors”.

**Course Requirements**

All students are expected to do the assigned readings and work, attend class, and participate in class discussions. The themes of those assignments will be a major part of our quizzes and the final exam. We will be moving fairly quickly and active participation in class discussions is expected, so keeping up with readings, attendance, and class participation are vital.

There will be a total of 1000 points for the course. Grades will be made up of class participation, a research paper, two reaction papers, 4 quizzes, and a final exam. They will be weighed as follows:

* Participation: 100 points
* Quizzes: 300 points (30 points each)
* Research paper: 200 points
* Midterm exam: 200 points
* Final exam: 200 points

The points for each assignment will added together and the decimal point shifted one to the left to get the final grade. For example, a total of 756 points for all assignments represents a final grade of 75.6. I round up to whole numbers when reporting final grades on MyRed. For example, 79.2 will be rounded up to an 80 (a B-).

**Participation**

The bulk of the participation grade will be for attendance. Every student starts the course with 100 participation points, but loses 10 points for each unexcused absence. An attendance sheet will be passed around at the beginning of each class. If you come to class late, it is your responsibility to sign in at the end of class. In addition, 5 points will be deducted from your participation grade if you do not take the practice quiz during the first week of class.

Lively discussions and engagement in the readings will greatly improve your ability to understand course content. It is assumed that students will do all assigned readings before class and come prepared to fully participate in class discussions. Substantial participation in class discussions will be periodically noted and points added to your participation grade. Since participation will be noted periodically, the only way to assure that your participation will be credited will be to participate consistently. Any participation points over 100 will be counted (up to 110 points). That is the only extra credit that will be given in the course. I know that some students are less comfortable speaking in class than others, so the class is designed in a way that speaking is means of improving your grade rather than avoiding a poor grade.

**Weekly Quizzes**

Most full weeks will have a 6-question quiz. The quizzes will be online, open-book, open note. However, since they will only be open for 30 minutes, you should not attempt to look up each answer. Instead, be sure to review your notes ahead of time so you can quickly answer most questions and then look up those for which you are less sure about your answer. All the questions will be objective and some will be application. They will be on that week’s readings only. The quizzes will open at 3:00 PM on Thursday. The deadline for complete each quiz will be 11:59 PM on Friday. I will grade the quizzes on Monday morning (which will include reviewing questions that more than a third of the students missed), so please do not contact me about the quizzes until after noon on Monday. The quizzes are worth 30 points each.

**Research paper**

*Option A: Case study*

The research paper will be 8-10 full pages (Times New Roman, 12-point font, double spaced, 1-inch margins). That page count does not include the required reference section. You do not need a title page. You are not required to follow a particular writing style (although I prefer APA) as long as you are consistent. Use parenthetic citations (not footnotes or endnotes).

You are to write a case study on the 2016 election activities of one interest group. While there is a great deal of flexibility about which group about which group you will research, it does have to be an organization that sought to influence federal elections (and was thus regulated by the Federal Election Commission).

You will be expected to use (and properly cite) at least ten sources to support your paper. Dictionaries and Wikipedia are not acceptable sources, although you are free to use a Wikipedia post to search for original sources.

You must choose your case study group by the start of class on October 12. The paper is due by 11:59 PM on Tuesday, November 21. You will submit your paper via Canvas.

*Option B: Form your own PAC*

Prepare (in a somewhat simplified form) most of the paperwork that you would need to form a political action committee. It may be a non-connected or separate segregated fund PAC. The paperwork includes:

* Articles of incorporation: To be filed with a state government (4-6 pages, single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman)
* Statement of Organization (Form 1): FEC (see Canvas for a link to the form)
  + Plus one-page memo if you want it to be a super PAC
* Form SS-4 (Application for Employer Identification Number): IRS (see Canvas for a link to the form
* Form 8871 (Notice of political organization formation): IRS (See Canvas for a link to the form)
* (Although the FEC requires that PACs have a bank account, we will skip that paperwork.)

In addition, you are to draft a two-page memo explaining the purpose of your PAC and the strategies you will use to fulfil that purpose for the 2018 elections. Write it as if you plan to send the memo to prospective donors to your PAC

You must chose the name of your PAC and be able to briefly explain its purpose by the start of class on October 12. You must combine all the documents into a single PDF file and submit it via Canvas by 11:59 PM on Tuesday, November 21

More details on the paper assignment will be provided on October 10.

**Midterm and Final Exams**

There will be two exams during the course. The midterm exam will primarily be on interest groups and elections. The final exam (which is not cumulative) will primarily be on political parties and elections. The exams will be a mixture of objective (ex: multiple-choice, true-false) and short answer (1-10 sentence) questions. They will be closed-book.

The exams will be taken online but in class. Please bring your **fully-charged** laptop computer or other device to class on the day of the exam. If you bring a tablet to take the exam, I recommend that you bring a keyboard attachment to facilitate typing. If you do not have a laptop or other device, please see your instructor well before the exam date so arrangements can be made. The time limit for the midterm exam will be 75 minutes. The time limit for the final exam will be 90 minutes.

The goals of the exams are to gauge the level of understanding the student has of the material covered. They are designed to encourage proper study skills, critical thinking, and analytical reasoning.

**Grade Scale**

The grade scale for this course will be:

A+ = 97-100 A = 93-100 A- = 90-92 B+ = 87-89

B = 83-86 B- = 80-82 C+ = 77-79 C = 73-76

C- = 70-72 D+ = 67-69 D = 63-66 D- = 60-62

F = 0-59

As noted previously, the points for each assignment will added together and the decimal point shifted one to the left to get the final grade. For example, a total of 756 points for all assignments represents a final grade of 75.6, rounded to 77: a C.

**Class Policies**

**Make-up** **assignments**

Should you miss a scheduled quiz or exam, you will be assigned zero points for that quiz unless you provide a valid excuse to the instructor. That would include a doctor’s note/bill or a cast on a newly broken arm. Non-valid reasons include, but are not limited to, being busy or forgetting to take the quiz. You are also expected to submit your paper on time.

**Incompletes and Withdrawals**

Students will only be given an “I” (incomplete) for valid reasons, such as verified military deployment or illness, and only if the student has made substantial satisfactory progress in the course. To withdraw from a course, follow UNL procedures; your instructor will not do it for you.

**Laptops and other electronic devices**:

Please put away all electronic devices at the beginning of class except those being used for the class. Turn your phone off or put it on silent (not vibrate) mode, and put it away. The inappropriate use of electronic devices is distracting to you and rude to the instructor and other students.

We will start with allowing the use of laptops, but the instructor reserves the right to later ban their use except for those students with a documented disability. Even when laptops are used exclusively to take class notes, they virtually eliminate eye contact and limit students’ mental engagement with the material. You are a student, not a stenographer.

Any student found to be inappropriately using a laptop or other electronic device, or who refuses to show or turn off their electronic device when requested, will be dropped a full letter grade for the class for each incident.

**Disability Policy**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodations to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration. Their phone number is 472-3787.

**Academic Honesty**

Academic honesty is expected throughout the course. Plagiarism and cheating, as defined by the UNL Student Code of Conduct, are not allowed. Plagiarism includes self-plagiarism (taking parts of a paper that you had previously written and using it in a current assignment without noting that it had come from the earlier work). The result of such acts may include a zero for the assignment or failure of the entire course. Major violations will also be reported to the student’s department chairperson and to the Judicial Office.

**Respect**

Please show respect for the opinions of your fellow students. Students should feel free to express their views without fear of condemnation or harassment inside or outside the classroom. Likewise, students should not seek to use the free and open exchange of ideas as a license to provoke or denigrate others. Clearly, there is a balancing act involved, but it can be achieved if students engage each other and the instructor in a spirit of goodwill.

**Schedule** (subject to change as needed)

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| **Dates** | **Topic** | **Readings & Notes** |
| 8-22 / 8-24 | Introduction | * Syllabus * Ten Things Political Scientists Know that You Don’t (Canvas) * QUIZ 1 |
| 8-29 / 8-31 | Interest groups and voters | * Rozell et al., Chapter 1 * Brewer & Maisel, Chapter 3 * QUIZ 2 |
| 9-5 /  9-7 | More on voting and political participation | * Downs, Chapter 12 (Canvas) * Rozell et al., Chapter 4 * QUIZ 3 |
| 9-12 / 9-14 | Interest groups, political parties, and campaigns | * Rozell et al., Chapter 2 * Rozell et al., Chapter 3 * QUIZ 4 |
| 9-19 / 9-21 | Interest groups and financing candidates | * Brewer & Maisel, Chapter 5 * Herrnson, A New Era off Interest Group Participation in Federal Elections (Canvas) * QUIZ 5 |
| 9-26 / 9-28 | Review of interest groups and elections | * Brewer & Maisel, Chapter 4 * Rozell et al., Chapter 5 * (no quiz) |
| **10-3 / 10-5** | **Midterm (bring your laptop to class)** | * Midterm preview, October 3 * **Midterm Exam, October 5** |
| 10-10 / 10-12 | Case studies & how to write one / Obam’s Deal video & discussion | * Boatright, The Voice of American Business (Canvas - skim) * Other readings TBA * **You must submit a top-three list of groups for your paper at the start of the October 12 class** |
| 10-17 / 10-19 | Mandatory writing workshop on October 19 **(bring your laptop to class)** | * **No class on October 17** * Work on paper research |
| 10-24 / 10-26 | The development and organization of American political parties | * Brewer & Maisel, Chapter 1 * Brewer & Maisel, Chapter 2 * QUIZ 6 |
| 10-31 / 11-2 | State & local politics | * Brewer & Maisel, Chapter 6 * Brewer & Maisel, Chapter 7 * QUIZ 7 |
| 11-7 / 11-9 | Presidential nominations | * Brewer & Maisel, Chapter 8 * Readings TBA * QUIZ 8 |
| 11-14 / 11-16 | Presidential elections | * Brewer & Maisel, Chapter 9 * Readings TBA * QUIZ 9 |
| 11-21 / 11-23 | Mandatory writing workshop on November 21 **(bring your laptop to class)** | * Case study papers due at 11:59 PM on November 21 * **No Class on November 23** |
| 11-28 / 11-30 | The media and elections / Parties in government | * Brewer & Maisel, Chapter 10 * Brewer & Maisel, Chapter 11 * QUIZ 10 |
| 12-5 / 12-7 | Review of political parties / Final exam preview | * Brewer & Maisel, Chapter 12 |
| Exam Week | * **POLS 230 final exam: 8:00 to 9:30 a.m., Friday, Dec. 15** (NOTE: While the official start time is 7:30, there will be a 90-minute time limit for the final exam, so we will not start until 8:00.). **(bring your laptop to class)** | |