POL 303 Campaigns & Elections
Fall 2024

Instructor Information	Class Information
Zahra Ahmed, Professor, Justice, Community, & Leadership	Class Meetings: M, W 10:40-11:55 am Room: Gal 114
Email: zga1@stmarys-ca.edu	In person office hrs: Mondays 1:30-2:30 pm Zoom office hours by appointment https://stmarys-ca.zoom.us/j/99444468470?pwd=J6M7P186lisFwj4ooFbzeSKwrNyBvJ.1
Phone: 925-631-5002	Office: 211 Garaventa Hall

Course Description

The campaign and election process in the United States consists of multiple, interactional elements, but at its core, it is about power. The primary purpose of elections is to facilitate the peaceful transfer of power. The process is meant to first allow citizens to communicate with the government regarding who we want to serve as our elected officials, and then to transfer power accordingly. Politicians engage in political campaigns to try and convince us that they will use the power we give them to serve the best interests of our society. At the same time, community organizers and community based organizations mobilize campaigns to elevate the importance of social issues for both the public and the politicians and to demand that power be used to address them.

In this course, you will come to better understand the core elements of political campaigns and the factors that must be in place for elections to function properly. Topics will include: how legislative districts are made, the influential actions of political parties, the rules around voting and participation, the influence of media, and the role of money in campaigns and elections. We will also consider the importance of social action, guiding principles that help citizens organize community campaigns, and effective strategies and tactics that make campaigns most effective.

To facilitate your understanding of the campaign process, you will gain the experience of organizing your own, small-scale campaign to inform your community about political issues of importance to you.

Required Texts

- ✓ Campaigns, Elections, and the Threat to Democracy. 2nd edition. Dennis W. Johnson.
- ✓ Additional readings as assigned. All additional readings are listed in our syllabus and posted on our Moodle course page.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- ✓ Identify and articulate key concepts that are foundational to elections and campaigns in the United States. [Quizzes]
- ✓ Conduct your own original research and use it to inform political action via a grassroots political campaign. [Team Ballot Campaign, Final Paper]
- ✓ Synthesize course concepts and articulate them in the context of a grassroots political campaign. [Team Ballot Campaign; Final paper]
- ✓ Demonstrate knowledge of current events and their relevance to the creation and implementation of electoral campaigns. [Current Event Discussion Lead]

Course Expectations & Policies

- ✓ **Attend:** Your presence is vital for our classroom community. Therefore, you are expected to show up for class on time, ready to learn and contribute.
- ✓ **Participate:** This is a highly interactive course. You will be asked questions, and you are encouraged to ask questions of your own, express comments, and voice your opinions - always in a respectful manner.
- ✓ **Be Respectful**: Some topics covered in class may elicit strong emotions. Therefore, it is important that we hold ourselves accountable by considering not only the intent, but also the impact that our words may have on others.

- ✓ **E-mails:** I am available to you via e-mail up to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday.
- ✓ **Attendance / Absences:** You may have 2 unexcused absences from the course. Any class missed, for whatever reason, is considered an absence. Excused absences will not negatively impact your grade, but unexcused absences will. The impact will be decided on a case by case basis. If you have an excused absence, it is your responsibility to contact your professor ASAP, make up all work assigned during that absence and obtain any notes or information you missed from a classmate.
- ✓ **Assignment Submissions**: You must submit all assignments to Canvas in either Word, as a Google Doc or as a PDF. You may not submit any assignments in Pages.
- ✓ **Late Assignments:** Late assignments are not allowed without prior permission. Assignments will be closed after their due dates.
- ✓ **Differently-Abled Students:** Differently-abled students can be successful in this course. If you have not already done so, please communicate with me so we can make a plan for appropriate accommodations. You must also contact SDS at 925-631-4358 if you have questions about the procedure for utilizing your approved accommodations.
- ✓ **Academic Integrity:** Saint Mary's College has established an academic honor code that asks students to pledge to do their own work in their own words, without seeking inappropriate aid in preparing for exams or assignments. You will all receive a copy of the pledge. You will be asked to read it, ask questions about anything you don't understand, sign it, and return your copy to me. You can find the SMC honor code here: https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/academics/student-success/academic-honor-council/academic-honor-code#:~:text=To%20do%20my%20own%20work,uphold%20my%20community's%20academic%20integrity.

Assignments & Grading

- Attendance
- In-class Participation (oral and written)
- Current Event Discussion Lead
- Team Ballot Campaign
- Quizzes
- Final Paper

Grading Scale

A 93-100
A- 90-92
B+ 86-89
B 83-85
B- 80-82
C+ 76-79
C 70-75%
D 60-69
F 0-59

Hybrid Contract Grading

All course assignments will be graded using a contract grading system, except for your quizzes, which will be grading using standard grading methods. In a nutshell, your grade will be based on the amount of work you are willing to do in this course.

Each of you will receive a contract detailing what you must do to receive a B, an A, or a lower grade in this course. I will give you verbal comments regarding the quality of your writing and other aspects of your assignments and you are always invited to schedule a meeting with me so I can provide more feedback in conversation with you. Your assignments will be marked "Complete" if you clearly demonstrate high levels of effort, care, genuine engagement and deep learning. Otherwise, your assignment will be marked Incomplete. This system allows you to engage in learning for your own growth as a scholar, educator, activist, and citizen of the world.

Attendance:

See Course Expectations and Policies above. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class period. You may check in with the professor at any time for updates on your attendance grade.

In-class Participation (oral and written):

Participation will be documented each class period, and participation grades will be

given at midterm and at the end of the semester. While showing up to class is important, simply sitting in class does not constitute participation. Oral participation happens when you offer or respond to substantive questions and comments made in class. Written participation will take the form of brief, informal writing exercises that will be given throughout the semester. You will receive full credit for each assignment if they address all parts of the prompt, and write the required amount.

Current Event Discussion Lead:

During the semester, each student will lead an in-depth discussion of a current event related to American politics. You will need to analyze your chosen news item using specific critical media literacy questions. Excellent options for following national political developments include the AllSides News website, the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal. Reading the Cal-Matters website will be helpful for following state-level politics. Local news websites such as KRON4 or NBC Bay Area, etc. are useful for following local politics. See Appendix 1 for more information.

Team Ballot Campaigns & Presentations:

You will self-select into teams of 3-5, to develop a small-scale campaign either supporting or in opposition to a current California ballot measure. Your team may be as creative as possible in developing and implementing your campaign. Teams may work together and support for one another is strongly encouraged. However, while teams may choose to develop campaigns for the same ballot measure, your campaigns must be unique. During your in-class Team Time and during your out-of-class team meetings, you will complete several documents to help guide your planning and implementation process. These documents will be given to you throughout the semester. All campaigns must be completed between Weeks 3-10. See Appendix 2 for more information.

Quizzes:

You will be given several brief quizzes throughout the semester covering our assigned texts. Each quiz is worth 10 points. Quizzes are not cumulative, though they may ask you to connect current texts with previous ones. Each quiz will be completed in class,

on paper. They will take 10-15 minutes to complete and they will include true / false, short answer, and other types of critical thinking questions. You must complete each quiz using only blue or black ink. Failure to do so will result in a loss of points or your quiz may not be graded.

Final Paper:

Each student must individually write a paper responding to a prompt which will be assigned in class. Papers are expected to demonstrate your command of core themes from our course texts and speak to your experience creating and implementing your team ballot campaign.

- Length: min. 5 full pages. A grades: min. 8 full pages.
- Format: 12 pt. font, double spaced.
- References: min. 3 outside sources in addition to course texts. A grades: min. 5 outside sources in addition to course texts.
- Citation format: Chicago style.

Format for all written assignments:

- Times New Roman, 12 pt. Font
- Double-spaced

Schedule
***The professor reserves the right to modify this schedule as needed**

Date	Topic	Readings / Homework
Week 1		
M 8.26	• Class Overview	•
W 8.28	• Pre-test • Campus Rules of Engagement • Team Time: Compile ideas re: ballot propositions of interest.	• Ballotpedia propositions:https://ballotpedia.org/California_2024_ballot_propositions • Cal Matters: https://calmatters.org/explainers/california-ballot-measures-2024/ • H.W: Analysis of ballot initiatives due. • Sign up for Current Event Discussion Lead by Fri. 8.30.
Week 2		
M 9.2 TU 9.3	• **LABOR DAY!**	•
W 9.4	• Leadership & Building Power • Team Time: Complete self-selection into teams; establish meeting days / times. Finalize issue identification,brainstorm plan of action.	• Myers-Lipton, Ch. 4 Building Power • Abrams, Taking Power • Social Change Model of Leadership Development • H.W.: Leadership self-reflection assignment due.
Week 3		
M 9.9	• Quiz 8.28-9.4 • Research: Team Ballot Campaigns • Team Time: Discuss background research; Power Mapping Exercise	• Myers-Lipton, Ch. 5 Research • Bonner Institute, Power Mapping: A Tool for Strategy & Influence

		• H.W.: Background research assignment due.
W 9.11	• Organizing Strategy & Tactics • Team Time: Discuss campaign strategy & tactics; Complete Campaign Strategy and Tactics sheet.	• Myers-Lipton, Ch. 6 Strategy & Tactics • Boyd, Tactics - Modes of Action • Campaign Strategy and Tactics sheet due.
Week 4		
M 9.16	• Organizing Strategy & Tactics Contd. • Quiz 9.9-9.11 • Team Time: Integrate popular education into your campaign plan.	• Vincent and Fernandez, Popular Education Methodology - Roots to Power pgs. 321-322 • H.W.: Background research assignment part II due.
W 9.18	• Organizing Strategy: One-on-Ones • Team Time: One-on-Ones	• Finter, One-on-One Meetings To Find and Develop Leaders - Roots to Power pgs. 282-290
Week 5		
M 9.23	• Organizing Strategy: Social Media • Team Time: Social Media Practice; Discuss research findings	• Leyba, The Movement Will Be Social - Roots to Power pgs. 391-396 • Defining Critical Media Literacy
W 9.25	• Quiz 9.16-9.23 • Voting & Participation	• Johnson, Ch. 1 Voting & Participation • Brennan Center Report-The Challenge of Obtaining Voter ID
Week 6		
M 9.30	• Voting & Participation Contd. • Team Time	• Kanopy Film: Show Me Democracy: Student

		Activism Amidst the Uprising in Ferguson • H.W.: Review examples of social action student campaigns.
W 10.2	• Quiz 9.25-9.30 • Direct Democracy - Ballot Campaigns • Team Time: Discuss student campaign examples	• Johnson, Ch. 10 Direct Democracy - Ballot Campaigns • TBA News Article on CA Ballot Campaigns • Team Research Synopsis due
Week 7 - Midterms		
M 10.7	• Direct Democracy - Ballot Campaigns Contd. • Team Time: Discuss student campaign examples	• Wepman, Ch. 17 Political Football
W 10.9 TH 10.10	• Quiz 10.2-10.7 • Redistricting	• Johnson, Ch. 2 Carving Out Legislative Districts • Th. 10.10 Moraga Town Council Candidates Forum
Week 8		
M 10.14	• Redistricting Contd. • Team Time	• Brennan Center Report-Gerrymandering Explained
W 10.16 TH 10.17 SUN 10.20	• Quiz 10.9-10.14 • The Role of Political Parties • Team Time: Discuss relationship between the political parties and your campaignsThe Role of Political Parties Contd.	• Dulio & Klemanski, Ch. 4 The Role of Political Parties • Democratic & Republican Party Platforms • H.W.: Agree / Disagree with party platforms • Th. 10.17 7:30-9:00 pm Genesis Ballot Party

		(Zoom). Notify Professor to sign up. • Sun. 10.20 11:30 am - 1:30 pm In person Genesis Ballot Party. Notify Professor to sign up and get location info.
Week 9		
M 10.21	• Presidential Elections • Team Time	• Johnson, Ch. 5 Presidential Elections
W 10.23	• Presidential Elections Contd. • Team Time	• Johnson, Ch. 6 The 2020 Presidential Election • TBA: ARTICLE ON CURRENT ELECTION
Week 10		
M 10.28	• Presidential Elections Contd. • Quiz 10.16-10.23 • Team Time	•
W 10.30	• Campaign Management	• Caprara, Ch. 5 Campaign Management
Week 11		
M 11.4	• Campaign Management Contd. • Team Time	• Johnson, Ch. 11 How Campaigns Have Changed
T 11.5	• **ELECTION DAY**	
W 11.6	• Election Day Debrief	• Review election results
Week 12		
M 11.11	• **VETERANS DAY - No class**	•
W 11.13	• Campaigns & Media	• Green, Ch. 9 Paid Media
Week 13		
M 11.18	• Campaigns & Media Cont. • Quiz 10.28-11.13	• Science Daily, “Does negative political

	• Team Time	advertising actually work?”
W 11.20	• Money & Elections • Quiz 11.18-11.20	• Garrett, Ch. 3 Outside Money & Inside Policy • Vid: Dark Money Explained https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PT274vd9hu4
Week 14		
M 11.25	• **THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**	• Enjoy your break!
W 11.27	• **THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**	• Enjoy your break!
Week 15		
M 12.2	• Group A Presentations • Tailored course feedback survey	• Prepare for presentations
W 12.4	• **LAST DAY OF CLASSES** • Group B Presentations • Wrap up • General Student Feedback Survey	• Prepare for presentations
TH 12.5 5:00 pm	• **Team Presentations at the Summit on College Social Action**	
Finals Week		
W 12.11		• Final Paper Due
WINTER BREAK		

Appendix 1 Current Event Discussion Lead

1. Sign up to be a discussion lead for one class by Fri. 8.30 11:59 pm. No late sign-ups will be accepted.
2. Plan for your discussion to take **20 minutes**.
3. You will be graded on both your in-class facilitation and your written report.

Preparation for Facilitation

1. **Read / View:** Identify a relevant news item from an approved news source. You may not use blogs, facebook, or other social media as your news sources. See the professor if you have any questions. Research the issue so you are familiar with multiple perspectives. You may do this by reading relevant news articles or watching news videos. Read the course texts for that day so you can make connections.
2. **Create a plan:** Create prompts for either large or small group discussion of the issue as it relates to the day's course texts. Decide which articles / videos you will show to the class. Do you need handouts? Put that in your plan.
3. **Email**: Email the professor with a draft of your plan min. one day before you are scheduled to facilitate. Clearly state whether you need handouts printed and I will print them for you.

Day of: Facilitation

4. Explain your chosen issue.
5. Use the class projector to show relevant news articles, videos, etc. a
6. Lead a discussion of the prompts you created.
7. A note on facilitation: Leading a class discussion requires preparation, energy, and flexibility. You must be excited about your topic in order to lead a vibrant discussion. Come to class prepared to lead and excited to do so!

Written Report

8. Write a minimum of 1 paragraph explaining why you chose your particular current event. What is it about the issue that interests you?

9. Analyze your chosen piece of media by answering the following questions:
    a. Who created this media product?
    b. What assumptions or beliefs do its creators have that are reflected in the content?
    c. Who and what is shown in a positive light? In a negative light?
    d. Why might these people and things be shown this way?
    e. What conclusions might audiences draw based on these facts?
    f. What are the gaps in this piece of media? What aspects of the story are left out?
    g. What does the media product want you to feel or do?
    h. How do you feel after engaging with this media? Do you feel sympathetic, angry, confused, etc.?
10. Write a ½ page reflection on your experience researching your issue and facilitating the class. Include a detailed reflection on how you developed your prompts, how you think the discussion went, and key insights that you gained from facilitating the activity.
11. Length: Your total written assignment should be a minimum of 2 full pages.
12. Due Date: You must submit your assignment 2 days after you serve as Current Event Discussion Lead.

News Resources:

- Allsides News: https://www.allsides.com/unbiased-balanced-news
- Cal-Matters: https://calmatters.org/explainers/california-ballot-measures-2024/
- BBC News
- The New York Times
- The Washington Post
- The Wall Street Journal
- Local news websites, including KRON4 or NBC Bay Area

Appendix 2 Team Ballot Campaign

Your team will have a good deal of the semester to develop, implement, and reflect upon a campaign either supporting or in opposition to a 2024 California ballot initiative.

In order to complete the assignment, the team will work through several phases, including:

- Issue identification
    - Self-select into teams
    - Select a ballot initiative
    - Complete necessary documentation.
- Building power
    - Conduct background research
    - Submit a research synopsis (min. 2 pgs. per student) compiling your background research on the issue.
    - Create and finalize a power map.
- Develop strategy and identify tactics
    - Outline your plan
    - Decide which tactics you will use for your 2 actions.
    - Design and print outreach materials.
    - Complete necessary documentation.
- Campaign launch & implementation (min. 2 actions required between weeks 3-11).
    - Submit photos and videos to document your actions.
- Team reflection
    - Complete necessary documentation.
- Team presentation

Resources:

1. Ballotpedia propositions:https://ballotpedia.org/California_2024_ballot_propositions ,
2. Cal Matters: https://calmatters.org/explainers/california-ballot-measures-2024/
3. CA Sec of State: https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ballot-measures/qualified-ballot-measures

Team Presentations

Each team must offer an oral and visual presentation highlighting key aspects of your team ballot campaigns. All team members must play a substantive role in the oral presentation. Visual presentations must include slides and may also include photos, videos, zines, posters, or other visual artifacts. You will be graded on the quality and content of your slideshow and your oral presentation.

Presentations must be 10 minutes long. You should not go under time and, due to time constraints, you may not be allowed to go over your time. You will be randomly selected to deliver your presentations as part of Group A or Group B. You will find out your group during Week 13.

All students must attend class on all presentation days. An unexcused absence on any of these days will result in a 10 point deduction from your final course grade.

Optional Participation in the Summit on College Social Action

In addition to your in-class presentations, students may also participate in the Summit on college Social Action. This event brings students together from across the country and internationally. During the summit, students discuss their campaigns - what the experience was like and lessons learned. They present their work by showing the slides, videos and photos taken during their campaigns. Participation in this event counts as an approved campus-based democracy activity.