

POS3444: Parties, Campaigns and Elections

Professor Sean Freeder (sean.freeder@unf.edu)
University of North Florida, Fall 2021

Class Meetings: T/Th, 6:00–7:15 Social Sciences Building (#51), Room #1104

Office Hours: T/Th, 1:45–2:45, 4:30–5:30, Social Science Building (#51), Room #2418

- **Sign up for 15 minute slots using Canvas > Calendar > Find Appointments**
- I may be available for in-person and Zoom meetings on Friday afternoons by request.

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to focus on its three namesake elements – parties, campaigns, and elections. First, students will be provided with a better understanding of how political parties operate within the American political system, and the larger functions that parties serve within our system. Second, students will be shown how political campaigns function, and get a sense for the various elements of managing a successful campaign for office. Finally, students will learn what political scientists have figured out about elections in the United States over the past several decades, in terms of both citizen participation and elite administration. Throughout this course, students will explore a variety of articles and films to enhance their grounding in these topics, and will be graded on a variety of short- and long-term writing assignments designed to encourage exploration of real world politics.

Learning Outcomes

Content

- Understanding the function of parties in the United States, and why they are integral to the functioning of a democratic system overall.
- Understanding how partisanship has evolved over time, and the impact this has had on the American political process.
- Understanding how the modern campaign is successfully run, and how candidates seek reelection in actual practice.
- Understanding how the mass public interacts with the political process in terms of knowledge, attentiveness and participation.

Critical Thinking

- Analyzing the quality of political campaigns for office, and whether candidates are effectively maximizing their odds of reelection.
- Utilizing media reports to speculate about partisan strategies.

Course Content

Class Time

Class time will be spent on lectures with Q&A and whole class discussion. **Class attendance is mandatory and will be enforced (see below).**

Readings/Materials

There are two required books for this class: *Winning Elections in the 21st Century* (Simpson and O'Shaughnessy) and *Unbelievable: My Front-Row Seat to the Craziest Campaign in American History* (Tur). In addition, you will be expected to watch several documentaries and films throughout the course of the semester, and read a variety of short articles. The latter will be provided directly to you at no cost. The total cost of these two books and all movies over the semester should not exceed \$40-50 (*Winning Elections* is usually available for \$7-20; *Unbelievable* from \$7-10; and the movies anywhere from \$5-20). Several of the movies are free, and many others are free if you are already signed up for various popular subscription services (Netflix and especially HBO Max).

Despite the fact that this is not an election year, you are expected to generally keep up with the news (also, you should do this because you are a breathing human being). You will want to focus somewhat more on news related to upcoming 2022 national and state races (at this point, probably early movement in key primaries). At the same time, virtually every aspect of American politics is dominated by our party structure, so all political news is relevant to the class regarding partisanship – that said, pay attention to key signals of party strategy (presidential speeches, leadership-backed major legislation being introduced; messaging campaigns in media; etc).

You should know that UNF makes several of the most popular American "newspapers of record" available for free or heavily discounted based on your status as a UNF student:

- **New York Times:** UNF offers a **free** subscription to the Times and its associated apps! You can gain access to this resource for free for your entire time as a student. [Click here to sign-up.](#)
- **Wall Street Journal:** Students can get an [academic rate of \\$2-4/mo.](#)
- **Washington Post:** Students get a [full subscription for \\$1/mo](#), 90% off.

Assignments

In this course, your grade will be assessed across a total of 800 possible points that you can earn over the next several months. These points are earned across three Modules, each corresponding to one of the three elements of this course (parties; campaigns; elections). Use the Modules Page to guide yourself through the course. Some assignments recur weekly (supplemental reflections, discussion posts).

- **Attendance (56 points, 2 points per class meeting, 7% of total grade):**
 - Attendance "Quizzes" will activate on Canvas starting at 5:55pm on each lecture day. If the quiz is completed successfully by 6:25pm, you will earn 2 points. You are allowed to turn in the quiz late until 7:15pm, when class ends, for 1 point.
 - Points are earned by simply entering the correct number, 0-9, into the multiple choice quiz. This number will be featured prominently at the front of the classroom on the whiteboard and/or lecture slides. If you enter the correct number, you will receive full credit. If you enter the wrong number, you will receive zero credit.
 - If you know you will be unable to attend, please let me know in advance and I may be willing to waive your attendance on a given day depending on the reason. If something significant arises just prior to lecture (illness, emergency, etc.), please email me and I may be willing to work with you regarding that day's attendance.
 - If you do not have access to Canvas during the period in which the quiz opens, there will be a physical sign-in sheet provided at the front of class that you can use to give your first and last name.
 - *It is strictly against the rules to share the "password" with someone who is not in attendance, or sign in someone who is not there.* If someone is caught using a password remotely, any parties involved will lose their entire attendance grade for the semester.

- **Media Reflection (84 points, 6 points per assignment, ~10% of total grade)**
 - Each week, you will be expected to read the news and identify a story of partisan significance. You will track this story over the week, and then write a short (about 2 paragraphs) reflection on what you learned.
 - See online syllabus for full details.

- **Supplemental Reflections (90 points, 6 points per assignment, ~10% of grade):**
 - In these assignments, you will read/watch outside materials that are related to the topics covered in that module's lectures. Once you have engaged with these materials, you will then write a short (about 2 paragraphs) reflection on what you learned from the material.
 - A new set of materials will open each Tuesday at noon. Your reflection will be due one week later, Tuesday by 11:59pm.
 - See online syllabus for full details.

- **Discussion Posts (90 points, 6 points per assignment, 9% of total grade):**
 - Each week, you will be asked to make a public post on Canvas addressing a topic related to the lecture material for a given week. Sometimes, these posts will ask you to argue briefly for a position on a political topic. Other times, you will be asked to write an expressive post in which you describe your personal experiences and/or background.

- The length of each post is roughly a long paragraph. Posts are due each Tuesday by midnight.
 - You will not be required to respond to other students' posts, but you will be allowed to do so if you choose, and everyone will generally be able to see what everyone else has written. These forums are a platform for safe expression of thoughts about difficult subjects, and hostility and/or harassment simply will not be tolerated.
- **Essays (200 points, 100 points each, 25% of total grade):**
 - For Essay 1, you will identify two candidates who won (and lost) close races in the 2020 election, and write an analysis on what explains their victory/defeat. Due October 26. [Click here for details.](#)
 - For Essay 2, you will choose a political party and advocate for a set of strategies you think will maximize its chances of victory in the 2022 Midterm. Due December 12. [Click here for details.](#)
 - To help you improve your writing at the college level (and especially in the social sciences), I have developed a short Writing Guide with tips that will help you to do better on your essays.
 - Plagiarism will be taken extremely seriously. Consult this [Plagiarism Guide](#) if you have any concerns about what will be considered plagiarism.
- **Midterm Exam (100 points, ~13% of total grade):**
 - This exam will cover Lectures 1-11, and take place in our lecture hall on Thursday, September 30. You will have the length of our class time (75 minutes) to complete the handwritten exam and turn it in.
 - The exam will exclusively cover material found on the Midterm Study Guide. It will consist of a variety of short answer questions and at least one long question.
 - See online syllabus for study guides, lecture slides, etc.
- **Final Exam (150 points, ~20% of total grade):**
 - This exam will cover Lectures 12-28, and take place in our regular lecture hall on Tuesday, December 14 at 6p. You will have 110 minutes to complete the handwritten exam and turn it in.
 - The exam will exclusively cover material found on the Final Study Guide. It will consist of a variety of short answer questions, and at least one longer question.
 - See online syllabus for study guides, lecture slides, etc.
- **Participation (30 points, ~4% of total grade):** Assessed at the end of semester on the following:
 - How often you participated in class discussions
 - Any efforts you may have made to contact me for help (email, office hours especially)
 - Any type of extra effort that you showed throughout the course of the class.

Grading

Based on the above assignments, your overall grade in the class will be determined as follows:

- 744-800 points = A
- 720-743 points = A-
- 696-719 points = B+
- 664-695 points = B
- 640-663 points = B-
- 616-639 points = C+
- 560-615 points = C
- 480-559 points = D
- Below 480 points = F

Some other important policies regarding grading:

- I plan to maintain a goal of a median grade of 86-87 in this course. To do so, I plan to curve the exams to meet that median target if necessary. If student scores, for whatever reason, are still below the target goal, I may curve everyone's final grade upward to meet the desired median. I will *not*, however, curve class grades *downward* to achieve that median.
- If you are very close to one of the above cutoff points (say, 5 points off), I will consider the possibility of moving you up to the next highest grade level. In doing so, I will take into other aspects of your performance in the class, such as whether your performance has improved over the course of the semester, the degree to which you have participated in class and communicated with me, whether you sought help when you needed it, etc.
- In the interest of fairness to all students, and to prevent undue burden on my graders, I almost never offer any extra credit. I do, however, offer my time to students who want to learn how to do better in the future!
- Turning in an assignment late will generally result in a 20% penalty for every 24 hours it is not turned in, resulting in a zero after the fifth day. If you know in advance you are unlikely to meet a deadline, let me know, and I may be willing to work with you.
- If you believe you have received a grade in error, or wish to dispute a grade you received, I am happy to have those conversations, but require that you wait at least 24 hours after receiving the grade to talk with me. I will then review the grade in question. Please note that your grade could go higher *or* lower.

COVID-19 Policy

As we are still mid-pandemic, we will be relying on the following related guidelines throughout this semester:

- **If I am exposed to COVID-19:** Exposed faculty members must self-quarantine for two weeks. Upon learning this, I will send out a formal announcement outlining the temporary shift in the schedule. Most likely, this will mean relying on a combination of pre-recorded lectures (while I am still ill) and remote instruction via Zoom (the remaining quarantine period). All other deadlines will proceed as normal.
- **If you are exposed to COVID-19:**
 - Do not come to campus! Showing up will risk exposing others. Begin self-quarantine.
 - Fill out the [self-reporting form](#) so that UNF can engage in contact tracing.
 - Email me and let me know about your situation. I will try to work with you so that the impact on your grade is minimal.
- **You are encouraged to wear masks during class, and distance as much as possible.** While perhaps inconvenient, this will help us to limit potential transmission. I don't want face-to-face classes to be canceled by rising caseloads, and neither do you.
- **You are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated.** The consensus of the medical community around this recommendation is overwhelming, but you can see reality in the emerging data itself:
 - [Vaccination leads to a significant reduction in your odds of contracting COVID...](#)
 - [...and dramatically reduces your odds of serious illness and/or death.](#)
- **Long-term disruptions:** In any period during which we may not be able to meet face-to-face, lectures will shift synchronously to Zoom at their scheduled day and time, and various class policies may be revised thereafter.

Most of class time will be spent on lectures with Q&A and whole class discussion. Throughout the semester, some days will be spent on student-run debates over key controversies regarding Congress (see below). **Class attendance is mandatory and will be enforced (see below).**

Module Schedule

Module 1: American Political Parties

- **Week 1**
 - **August 24: Lecture 1 – Introduction** (*preface; class syllabus and organization; introductions; purposes of parties*)
 - **August 26: Lecture 2 – The Modern Partisan Landscape** (*major parties and party systems; parties, ideologies, and identities; client groups and constituencies; third parties, fringe actors*)

- **Week 2**
 - **August 31: Lecture 3 – History of Parties I, 1790-1896** (*the founders and parties; party systems 1-3*)
 - **September 2: Lecture 4 – History of Parties II, 1896-Present** (*the New Deal coalition; Second Reconstruction and realignment; the present and sixth system*)

- **Week 3**
 - **September 7: Lecture 5 – Parties in the Electorate I - Logical or Social?** (*Parties as heuristics; identity-based vs. choice-based accounts; evolutionary and social psychology*)
 - **September 9: Lecture 6 – Parties in the Electorate II - Partisan Identity** (*Commonality of partisan identity; development of PID; stability of PID; attitudes and PID; voting and PID*)

- **Week 4**
 - **September 14: Lecture 7 – Intense Policy Demanders I - Coalition Maintenance** (*Intense policy demanders; periphery vs. core; maintaining the coalition; notable examples*)
 - **September 16: Lecture 8 – Intense Policy Demanders II - Group Incorporation and Expansion** (*coalition group incorporation; expansion and partisan entrepreneurship*)

- **Week 5**
 - **September 21: Lecture 9 – Parties in Government** (*Congress as a collective action problem; long coalitions; conditional party government; inter-branch partisanship; federalism and partisanship*)
 - **September 23: Lecture 10 – Polarization I** (*types of polarization; evidence of elite polarization; asymmetric polarization; consequences*)

- **Week 6**
 - **September 28: Lecture 11 – Polarization II** (*causes and solutions*)
 - **September 30: MIDTERM EXAM**

Module 2: Party Organization – Campaigns and Elections

- **Week 7**
 - **October 5: Lecture 12 – Campaigns I: Organization** (organizational structure of the campaign; the campaign calendar; history of campaign innovation)
 - **October 7: Lecture 13 – Campaigns II: Candidate Recruitment** (who runs for office; what the parties are looking for; conditions; political careers)
- **Week 8**
 - **October 12: Lecture 14 – Campaigns III: Campaign Finance** (history of campaign finance; Citizens United & Super PACs; raising and spending money)
 - **October 14: Lecture 15 – Campaigns IV: Advertising & Messaging** (creating a brand; positive vs. negative campaigning; case studies; timing; effects)
- **Week 9**
 - **October 19: Lecture 16 – Campaigns V: The Role of the Media** (history of partisan media development; impact and influence; social and online media)
 - **October 21: Lecture 17 – Campaigns VI: Polling** (accuracy and methodology)
- **Week 10**
 - **October 26: Lecture 18 – Campaigns VII: Events and Primaries** (convention formats; history of primaries ; format of modern primaries; “the party decides”)
 - **October 28: Lecture 19 – Case Studies: Primary Elections** (1992, 2008/2012)
- **Week 11**
 - **November 2: Lecture 20 – Case Studies: General Elections** (case studies)
 - **November 4: Lecture 21 – Case Studies: 2016 Election** (primaries/general)
- **Week 12**
 - **November 9: Lecture 22 – Case Studies: 2020 Election** (primary/general)
 - **November 11: No Classes (Veterans Day)**

Module 3: Elections and Voter Behavior

- **Week 13**
 - **November 16: Lecture 23 – Voter Turnout** (the rational choice model of voting; costs and benefits of voting; empirics; effects on voter turnout)
 - **November 18: Lecture 24 – Vote Choice I** (the impact of partisanship; ideology and issue-specific effects; the influence of social identity; retrospective voting)
- **Week 14**
 - **November 30: Lecture 25 – Vote Choice II** (candidate appearance; personality; scandals; race and gender effects; turnout vs. persuasion as a campaign tactic)
 - **December 2: Lecture 26 – State & Local Elections** (Types of state and local offices; direct democracy; differences from national elections)
- **Week 15**
 - **December 7: Lecture 27 – Election Administration** (election processes; Voting Rights Act; voter suppression and voter fraud)
 - **December 9: Lecture 28 – Rethinking American Elections** (the electoral college; campaign finance reform; term limits; alternative voting formats)
- **December 14th, 6:00 – 7:50p, same room: FINAL EXAM**

Other Course Policies

- I will generally be available throughout the semester via email (sean.freeder@unf.edu). You can also contact me via the Canvas messaging system for our class, which will go directly to my main email. I typically should respond within 24 hours, and will usually be able to give you a response far more quickly. If you are facing a particularly difficult problem and wish to speak with me directly about it, we can talk about it in my office hours, or set up a remote Zoom meeting if that is not possible.
- If you qualify as a student for accommodations, you will receive them. However, I need to receive a letter from [Student Accessibility Services](#) outlining the accommodations you receive. You may wish to contact me to confirm that I have received this letter. Also, if you have not received accommodations, and regularly struggle with timed assignments, please know that you may qualify for extended time, reduced distraction environments, and other services. Speak with SAS to determine if you may qualify.
- Plagiarism, defined as passing off someone else's ideas or words as your own, is a very serious offense. If a student is caught plagiarizing in this class, they will be subject to academic disciplinary measures. At minimum, they will fail the assignment. More egregious cases may result in failing the class, and/or expulsion from UNF entirely. If you have any concerns as to what constitutes plagiarism, see the Plagiarism Guide or please simply ask me!

About Your Professor

My name is Sean Freeder, and I'm an Assistant Professor of Political Science here at University of North Florida, specializing in American Politics and Political Psychology. I just arrived here as a new faculty member last summer (yes, during the pandemic).

I teach a variety of courses on politics within the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, including Introduction to American Politics; Congress; Parties, Campaigns, and Elections; The American Presidency; and Controversial Political Issues.

My research focuses on the contemporary aspects of American politics, particularly voting decisions (both turnout and choice), how people use political information, the effects of partisanship and polarization, political correctness, and how citizens think about and interact with one another politically.

I spent my childhood in Phoenix, AZ and Seattle, WA. Upon graduating high school, I enrolled in audio engineering school, and spent the next couple years working in recording studios and playing in a band in Seattle. To this day, I have deep interests in music, and continue to play guitar/bass and record music.

I received my Bachelor's in Political Science from University of Washington in 2011, while also managing a Congressional campaign for the 7th Congressional District of Washington. I then

attended the University of California, Berkeley from 2012-2019, where I received my Master's and PhD in Political Science. This is the first time I have called the East Coast home!

In addition to my interests in politics and music, I enjoy exploring a variety of other interests including science fiction, video games, comedy, history, sports (go Seahawks, Suns and Warriors!), and art. I live with my eclectic parrot Joey (who will likely make a number of appearances in my videos), and my two cats Pepper and KitKat.

I welcome you all to introduce yourselves to me at any point during the semester, and am happy to chat with you about the class, politics, or any aforementioned topics of interest. Hope you enjoy the class!

Student Resources

- **General Academic Support**
 - [Student Academic Support Services](#)
 - [Supplemental Instruction](#): Get help with specific classes in a collaborative peer setting with a leader who has previously excelled in the class!
 - [Academic Coaching](#): Learn key skills in organization, note-taking, public speaking, and test preparation!
 - [Persistence Advocacy](#): If you are struggling, these folks can help you create a plan to keep you on track, or get you back on it!
 - [UNF Writing Center](#): Consultation and workshops meant to help improve your writing skills as a student across a variety of disciplines.
 - [Student Accessibility Services](#): Talk to these folks if you feel you may qualify for accommodations, or need assistance with a disability.
 - [English Language Program](#): Resources for students who may be using English as a secondary language, and wish to improve their skills.
 - [Library](#): Explore online student resources, online learning services, schedule a research consultation, reserve a study room, and more.
 - [Ombudsman](#): Provides clarification on UNF policies and procedures.
 - [Resources on Plagiarism](#): Learn more about UNF's plagiarism policies.
 - [First Year Advising](#): A neutral place to get advice and support on planning out your educational career at UNF.
- **Student Life Support Resources:**
 - [Career Services](#): Learn about how different majors on campus can help you get the job you want, or talk with people who can help you figure out what you want!
 - [Counseling Services](#): Struggling? The Counseling Center provides both group and individual counseling sessions to help you manage your life.
 - [Wellness Services](#): This provides a wealth of links to resources for health management, assessment and training.
 - [Health Services](#): Provides check-ups, testing, immunizations, and other services.

- [Dottie Dorion Fitness Center](#): Explore ways to improve your physical health through group fitness classes, challenges, and other resources.
- [Lend a Wing](#): Anonymous and free food pantry and resource for active students.
- [Interfaith Center](#): Build relationships and explore religious and worldview diversity.
- [Military and Veterans Resource Center](#): Support for military-affiliated students and their family.
- [LGBTQ Resource Center](#): Advocacy, support, community for LGBTQ students.
- [Women's Center](#): Connect with others to eliminate gender inequities and foster a supportive environment conducive for academic and personal success.
- **Getting Active:**
 - **At UNF**
 - [Osprey Life](#): Check this page for a constantly updating list of UNF community activities. Get engaged, meet new friends!
 - [Student Government](#): This is an opportunity to work on issues that affect you and your fellow students. Vote and run for office!
 - [Spinnaker Media](#): Learn about local issues via text and radio sources, and develop skills in journalism, writing and media content creation!
 - [Student Clubs](#): Check out the various student organizations on campus!
 - **Outside UNF**
 - [Community Engagement](#): Learn about the ways you can connect with the local Jacksonville community!
 - [Global Engagement and Study Abroad](#): Learn about study abroad opportunities and other global initiatives!
 - [Voter Registration](#): Use this website to see whether you are registered to vote in the state of Florida. If you are not...get registered now!
 - **In Academics**
 - [Hicks Honors College](#): Many opportunities for high achieving students including Honors in the Major, scholarships and opportunities, and more.
 - [UNF Public Opinion Research Lab](#) Want to help political scientists conduct surveys and learn more about political opinions in the US in Florida? Come work for our lab as a researcher!
 - [Office of Undergraduate Research](#): The OUR provides services and support to UNF undergraduates who are interested in conducting research or creative research projects in any discipline and across all colleges, departments, and majors.
 - [Taylor Leadership Institute](#): Attend leadership events, participate in mentoring, explore the Leadership Minor, and all things leadership!
 - [Institute of Environmental Research and Education](#): Join the KAO Environmental Honor Society, apply for the year-long, merit-based Environmental Leadership Program and scholarships, participate in day-long or week Conservation Field School, explore the Environmental Studies minor, attend environmental events, and all things environment!