

POLITICAL SCIENCE 423

FALL 2012

Mondays 4:30-7:00 — PUP 354

N. MILLER

<http://userpages.umbc.edu/~nmiller/POLI423/index.htm>

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

This course examines the subject of U. S. Presidential selection from institutional, historical, and theoretical perspectives. We will first examine the problem of forecasting Presidential election outcomes and then take a look at the present bases of party support in Presidential politics. We then turn to examine the creation, evolution, and contemporary structure of the Presidential selection process and the strategic considerations that derive from this structure. Much of the course will focus on the design and evolution of the Electoral College, its contemporary function as a vote counting mechanism, and proposals for its reform or abolition. A variety of alternative institutions will be considered and compared with electoral methods in other countries and analyzed in light of concepts in the theory of voting and social choice. We will also consider the problem of multi-candidate elections, a problem that is relevant both to the major-party Presidential nominating process and to Presidential elections with significant third-party activity.

Readings to be Purchased

George C. Edwards, III, *WHY THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE IS BAD FOR AMERICA*, 2nd edition (paperback, Yale University Press, 2011)

Allan J. Lichtman, *PREDICTING THE NEXT PRESIDENT: THE KEYS TO THE WHITE HOUSE, 2012 EDITION* (paperback, Rowman & Littlefield, 2012)

Nelson W. Polsby, Aaron Wildasky, with Steven E. Schier and David A. Hopkins, *PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS*, 13th edition (paperback, Rowman & Littlefield, 2012)

Note: Used copies of earlier editions of these books are adequate substitutes for the current editions. Additional instructor-authored and other readings will be made available through the course website and/or distribution in class.

Reading Available on the Web

John R. Koza, et al., *EVERY VOTE EQUAL: A STATE-BASED PLAN FOR ELECTING THE PRESIDENT BY NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE* [<http://nationalpopularvote.com/>]

Expected Preparation for POLI 423

The normal prerequisite for this course is POLI 323 (The Presidency) or POLI 325 (Political Parties and Elections) *or* junior standing. Students certainly should have familiarity with the basic institutions and processes of American politics (such as is provided by a standard introductory course in American Government and Politics, e.g., POLI 100). A course in research methods (e.g., POLI 300 or 301) is certainly helpful. The course is open to non-Political Science majors without this course background, but such students are encouraged to consult with the instructor during the first week of classes.

Course Requirements:

- (1) Faithful class attendance, constructive participation in class discussions, and completion of several problem sets.
- (2) A short-answer in-class Midterm Test.
- (3) A Midterm Take-Home Essay Exam.
- (4) A short-answer Final Examination (in the final exam period).
- (5) A research report focusing on a particular Presidential election, which will be presented in class (time permitting) and/or posted on the course webpage and also submitted in written form at the end of the semester. Guidelines for the research reports are being distributed with this syllabus.

Make-up exams will be given only if you present a reasonable and timely excuse for not taking the exam at the regular time. Ordinarily, a “timely” excuse is one that reaches me prior to the regular exam time, and the make-up exam should be arranged and, if possible, completed prior to the next class meeting.

Course Grade:

Your course grade will be determined as follows:

(a)	Class participation and problem sets	10%
(b)	Midterm Test	20%
(c)	Midterm Take-Home Essay	20%
(d)	Final Exam	20%
(e)	Research Report	30%

Failure to complete any of the four requirements (b)-(e), or *submission of a plagiarized take-home essay or research report* will result in a grade of F for the course, regardless of other grades. No “extra credit” work will be accepted.

Academic Integrity

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UMBC’s scholarly community in which everyone’s academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty, and they are wrong. Academic misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include, but is not limited to, suspension or dismissal. To read the full Student Academic Conduct Policy, consult the UMBC Student Handbook, the UMBC Policies section of the UMBC Directory, or go to <http://www.umbc.edu/integrity>.

Office Hours and Messages

I will be available to students in this course in PUP 206 immediately before and after class to answer questions and deal with other problems. If you need to talk with me at more length or in private, my office is PUP 321. My official office hours for the Fall 2012 semester will be Mondays, 2:30-3:30, with other times readily available by arrangement. If it is important that you see me on a particular day (even during office hours), I recommend that you make a specific appointment. This can be arranged before or after class or I can be reached in any way listed below. (Communication by e-mail is encouraged for all purposes.)

E-mail:	<i>nmiller@umbc.edu</i>
Office phone (with 24-hour "voice mail")	(410) 455-2187
Political Science Department (to leave message)	(410) 455-2568
Home (emergency only)	(410) 381-3605

If you contact me by email, I will reply to whatever email address you use. However, if you ask about grades or other private information, you must use your UMBC email address. If I initiate email contact with you, I will use your UMBC email address. For this reason and, more importantly, because all official UMBC communications (from the Registrar's Office, Bursar's Office, Financial Aid, etc.) go to your UMBC email address, *you should check your UMBC email on a regular basis.*

Course Web Page:

There is a course web page at <http://userpages.umbc.edu/~nmiller/POLI423/index.htm> (or go to **UMBC => Academics => Degrees and Programs => Political Science => Faculty => N. R. Miller => POLI 423**). (Note this is *not* a Blackboard site.) Backup copies of the syllabus, class handouts, PowerPoint slides used in class, and other course material will be posted here, as well as announcements and some required readings and supplementary documents. In addition, this page provides links to a variety of relevant websites.

Course Outline:

During the few weeks of the semester, you should read the entire Polsby and Wildavsky textbook on *Presidential Elections*. Careful reading of this book will give you a solid foundation in the basic political science findings concerning public opinion, party identification, voting behavior, campaign finance, interest groups, political parties, and election campaigns needed to understand the present Presidential selection process — both the prenomination campaign that took place last Spring (and earlier) and the general election campaign that is now officially beginning. While I will certainly be willing and able to take time in class to discuss points that arise out of this book and to address any questions you have, I will not “go over” the book on a regular basis in class. Rather class time will be devoted largely to the topics as outlined below. *Assigned readings will be shown on Course Outline on the website.*

1. (September 10) Introduction / 2012 in Context / Forecasting Presidential Elections
2. (September 17) Forecasting (cont.) / Trends in Party Support

3. (September 24) How the Electoral College Works in Practice / Alternatives to the Electoral College
4. (October 1) Origins and Transformation of the Electoral College
5. (October 8) The Media and Presidential Elections [Guest Lecture]
6. (October 15) Constitution Foundations of Presidential Selections / Election Inversions
7. (October 22) Electoral College Deadlock
8. (October 29) IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM (1 hr.) / Voting Power under the Electoral College
9. (November 5) Election Eve Preview / Presidential Election Mechanics
10. (November 12) Post-Election Review / Two-Candidate vs. Multi-Candidate Elections
11. (November 19) The American Historical Party Systems
12. (November 26) Presidential Nominations
13. (December 3) Historical Presidential Elections: Student Presentations
14. (December 10) Historical Presidential Elections: Student Presentations (cont.)
15. (December 17) FINAL EXAM (75 minutes): 6:00-8:00PM

Wednesday, December 19, by 5:00 PM : Written Version of Research Report due