

**PS 137:
American Campaigns
and Elections**

Prof. John Aldrich
Office Hours:
M: 9:30-11:00
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The 2008 elections were dramatic, historic, and exciting. But then, nearly every election provides excitement and drama, and the history of the U.S. is written, in part, in accord with electoral outcomes. The real purpose of elections are to allocate political power and, if all goes according to philosophic plan, to provide the central way in which citizens can express their sovereignty. The goal of this course is to give you the tools to understand elections, including their drama, history, and excitement.

Elections are also one of the most common and important sites for conducting political and social scientific research. If all goes well, we will share in the discovery of just what there is to learn from the most important major piece of social science instrumentation in the study of American politics, the National Election Studies. These data are planned on being released for use in the near future. If that happens, we will be sharing in the initial analysis of these data. Even more, I invite you to be direct participants in the creation of a different sort of electoral data, and we will examine the results of your participation before the semester ends.

Elections happen at two different but closely related levels. One is what is sometimes referred to as the “macro” level (akin to macroeconomics) which, in this case, is the level of candidate and campaign. This is the level of large, national perspectives. We begin at this level to examine the historical tectonics of electoral coalitions that have defined our national parties and policy making over the course of our history. We then turn to examine in some detail the “micro” level, in which we examine the voter and how she acquires and uses political information in reaching this seemingly simple act of voting. We complete the course by returning to the macro level to see how the micro forces come to shape the macro outcomes – why, in other words, Bush and Gore effectively tied in 2000, why Bush and Republicans won in 2004, and why Obama and so many Democrats did so in 2008.

Texts:

We will primarily be using books for the reading assignments. All articles and papers will be available on the class Blackboard page. The books are, in the order to be read:

Sundquist, James L., *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institute, 1983).

Abramson, Paul R., John H. Aldrich, and David W. Rohde, *Change and Continuity in the 2004 and 2006 Elections* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2007).

Jacobson, Gary C., *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (7th ed.) (New York: Pearson Longman, 2008).

Choose Either (or Both) of the Following

Erikson, Robert S., Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson, *The Macro Polity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Stimson, James A., *Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Others TBA

Assignments:

Mid-term examination 25%

Research paper 25% -- topic to be discussed in class

Final examination 35%

Course participation 15% -- 10% for overall participation, 5% for research participation, to be discussed in class.

Class Schedule and Readings

January 7	Overview
The Macro View of Elections: Electoral Coalitions and “Tectonics”	
January 12	From 1800 to the Era of Good Feelings
Readings:	Sundquist, Chapters 2 and 3 (also available on Blackboard) Aldrich, “The Election of 1800”
January 14	Jacksonian Democracy
Readings:	Sundquist, Chapter 4 (also available on Blackboard)
January 19	Holiday
January 21	The Civil War and Reconstruction
Readings:	Sundquist, Chapter 5
January 26	1896 and the Progressive Era
Readings:	Sundquist, Chapters 7, 8
January 28	The New Deal
Readings:	Sundquist, Chapters 10, 11, 15
February 2	The South under Jim Crow, 1896 - 1965
Readings:	Sundquist, Chapters 6, 13, 16
February 4	The Great Society
Readings:	Sundquist, Chapter 17
February 9	The Reagan Revolution
Readings:	Sundquist, chapter 18
February 11	The Republican Revolution, 1994 and after
Readings:	TBA

Micro-Foundations of Elections – Who Votes for Whom and Why

February 16 - 18	Presidential Nominations
Readings:	Abramson, Aldrich, Rohde (AAR), Chapter 1 Aldrich, Presidential Nominations, 2008 Aldrich and Pearson, Presidential Nomination
February 23	Midterm , in class
February 25	The Geography and Social Basis of the Vote
Readings:	AAR, Chapters 3, 5
March 2 - 4	Turnout
Readings:	AAR, Chapter 4
March 9 – 11	Spring Break
March 16	Candidate Evaluation
Readings:	AAR, 2000 version, Chapter 6 (to Concerns of Electorate) TBA
March 18	Retrospective Evaluations:
Readings:	AAR, Chapter 7
March 23	Issues
Readings:	AAR, Chapter 6, remainder.
March 25	Congress: Macro Forces
Readings:	Jacobson, Chapters 1-4 AAR, Chapters 9, 11
March 30	Congressional Voting
Readings:	Jacobson, Chapter 5 AAR, Chapter 10
April 1 - 8	Experimental social science and other special topics
Readings:	TBA

Putting the Pieces Together?

April 13 – 20 Integrating Micro Foundations and Macro Politics

Readings: **Either** Stimson, entire, **or** Erikson, et al., Chapters 3, 4, 7, 8, 10
Jacobson, Chapters 6, 7
AAR, Chapters 11, 12

April 22 Conclusions