Introduction to American Politics: Elections

Course Description
In this course, we’ll examine the American political system through the lens of the elections. We will analyze them from a political science as well as political junkie perspectives, paying particular, though not exclusive attention to the 2012 elections. In addition to discussing, analyzing, and debating the 2012 presidential and congressional elections, we will develop a framework to understand the critical link between voters and candidates. We will also explore the dynamics among citizens, elected officials, and the policymaking world. The first half of the course will focus on the campaigns and the second half of the course will deal with election outcomes and their consequences on policy making. There will also be a semester project that focuses on a particular state during this election cycle.

Special Needs
The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To determine if you qualify, please contact the Dean of Students at 471-6259; 471-4641 TTY. If they certify your needs, I will work with you to make appropriate arrangements.

Grades
Grades will be determined according to the following formula:

- 20% Attendance and Class Participation. Throughout the class you will have random attendance quizzes. There will be no excuses for missing attendance quizzes.
- 20% Midterm Exam I (September 28)
- 20% Midterm Exam II (October 26)
- 20% Midterm Exam III (November 30)
- 20% Course Project. Each student will follow a state that has an interesting House race and an interesting Senate race. The project’s assessment will take the form of various papers, comprising around 8 total pages of written material, throughout the semester.

Because of the demand for this class, I will not give a Q-drop to a student unless he or she is passing the course. I frown on issues of academic dishonesty and will severely punish any student caught plagiarizing, cheating, or engaged in unethical classroom practices. I will not accept late assignments. I will not accept excuses for missing pop quizzes. I do not offer make-up exams. All grade disputes must be type written and turned in within 1 week of receiving the grade. I will use plusses and minuses in this class, with the 0.7 and 0.3 at cutoffs. So, an 82.9 is a B- and an 83.1 is B; an 86.9 is a B and an 87.1 is a B+.

Course Readings
The course readings consist of the following:
- A course packet available at Speedway Copy and Printing (in Dobie Mall). All readings in the Course Packet are designated as a hollow circle.
Course Outline and Reading List

Aug. 29 and 31: Course Introduction and The Basics
• Kollman, Chapters 1 and 2
  o The Constitution of the United States, Articles I and II
  o Federalists 10 and 51

Sept. 5 and 7: Civic Engagement

Sept. 10, 12, and 14: The Current Context

Sept. 17, 19, and 21: The Congress
• Kollman, Chapter 5

Sept. 24 and 26: The Presidency and the Courts
• Kollman, Chapters 6, 7, and 8

Sept. 28: Midterm I

Oct. 1, 3, and 5: Texas Government
• TBD

Oct. 8, 10, and 12: Candidates and Campaigns
• Kollman, Chapter 13

Oct. 15, 17, and 19: The Voters
• Kollman, Chapters 9 and 10

Oct. 22 and 24: Political Parties and Interest Groups
• Kollman, Chapters 11 and 12

Oct. 26: Midterm II

Oct. 29, 31, and Nov. 2: Elections in a Historical Context
• Sides, Chapter 3

Nov. 5, 7, and 9: 2012 Elections

Nov. 12 – 28: The Polarization of Politics
  ➢ Theriault, all

Nov. 30: Midterm III

Dec. 3, 5, and 7: Wrapping it Up
• TBD