Welcome back! Congratulations on successfully completing your campaign internship! In this course, you’ll have the opportunity to consider and evaluate your experiences in light of the scholarly work on campaigns and elections. Your main assignment is to complete a rigorous and original research paper that investigates a particular aspect of campaign politics.

CLASS STRUCTURE
This class will be run as a research seminar. You are required to complete all readings and assignments before class. Your active and positive participation in class discussion is vitally important. This class requires significant independent research, and thus we will not meet every week. You are expected, however, to be working on class assignments during those weeks when there is no formal meeting.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING
Final grades will be based on class participation, an essay assessing “what you’ve learned about campaigns,” a research paper broken into three parts, and a final presentation. The relative weight and due date of each component is as follows:

- Class Participation: 10%
- “What I’ve Learned about Campaigns” Paper: 10% (due Monday, September 16th before 3:00 pm)
- Final Project Prospectus: 20% (due Friday, October 11th before 3:00 pm)
- Prospectus Reviews: 10% (due Monday, October 14th before 3:00 pm)
- Final Project Paper: 40% (due Monday, November 25th before 3:00 pm)
- Ted Talk: 10% (due in class Monday, December 9th)

Note on Deadlines: Please note that late assignments will not be accepted without prior arrangements and official documentation. You will receive 0 for any and all assignments that are submitted after the deadline unless you have made prior arrangements with me. You will be submitting all written work via Blackboard so I will be able to tell when things are handed in—yes, an assignment that comes in one minute past the deadline will be considered late. I use this policy to help you meet deadlines and to keep things organized—I’m not trying to be difficult. All deadlines are clearly marked in this syllabus; please take note of them and plan accordingly.

Note on Submissions: All written work is to be submitted via Blackboard as a single Microsoft Word file. Please do not email your assignment to me, and do not submit a paper copy of your work—let’s save some trees! Your work must come in as a Word file (i.e., .doc or .docx). I cannot accept PDFs or other word processing files because I will be grading your work using “track changes.” It also helps with organization if you submit your assignment as a single file, rather than multiple files (e.g., do not send your essay in one file and your bibliography in another). I will upload your graded paper to Blackboard, so please check there for comments and grades.
Participation: Class participation grades will be based on the quality, not the quantity, of your participation. Quality participation requires consistent attendance (at classes and OIEP events), thoughtful contributions, and a positive attitude toward the class and its activities—you will be well served by tempering your disdain for things that irk you. Your comments are expected to be reasonable, well-considered, and on-topic. You should come to class prepared to engage in discussion at any moment. You are also expected to actively participate in class exercises.

“What I’ve Learned about Campaigns” Paper: For your first writing assignment, you will consider what your internship taught you about campaigns and elections. Your paper should start with some basic background information on your campaign (e.g., your race, your candidate, your job title/position/duties). You should then list and discuss some of the major things you learned from your experience. These lessons should be put in the context of the literature on campaigns and elections, including readings from last semester. In other words, how does what you learned during your internship relate to the scholarship on campaigns and elections? You must post your 5 to 7 page (double-spaced) paper on Blackboard (under “What I’ve Learned…”) before 3:00 pm on Monday, September 16th. You will then have an opportunity to present your insights during our class later that evening.

Final Project Prospectus: A necessary first step in any major research project is to clarify your thinking with a prospectus. You will write a 5 to 7 page (double-spaced) paper that addresses the following questions:

- What is your research question? Why is it important?
- What do we know/not know about this question? (This should be a concise literature review.)
- What is your argument/thesis? What do you think will be the answer to your research question?
- How will you go about providing an answer to your research question? What is your research design? What is your outline for the paper?
- What are the implications of your research? What will your conclusions tell us about campaigns and elections more generally?

Your prospectus should also include a bibliography at the end or full citations in footnotes throughout the paper.

A written copy of your prospectus must be submitted via Blackboard under “Prospectus” before 3:00 pm on Friday, October 11th. Again, it must come in as a single MS Word file and it cannot be late given that it will be distributed to two of your classmates (see below)—you will receive 0 if it is late. You will then have 10 minutes to present your prospectus during class the following week. Your discussion should cover the key questions addressed in the prospectus while engaging your classmates in a lively exchange about your proposed project. Convince us that this is a great idea! (Additional pointers can be found in the attachment at the end of this document.)

Prospectus Reviews: Peer review is a major part of scholarly life. As such, you will review two prospectuses written by your classmates. You will receive your assigned prospectuses via email from me on Friday, October 11th. Once you receive the prospectuses, you will write a 2 to 3 page (double spaced) review of each prospectus. Your reviews should provide polite and constructive feedback on the following:

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1 There are many things that you may have learned from your experience. Maybe you learned that organization is the key (or not the key) to success in campaigns. Maybe you gained a sense that nice people finish first (or last) in campaign politics. You may have learned that “going negative” is never (or always) a good idea. Maybe money is (is not) the key to winning…
• Question: Is it clear? Does it seem important?
• Literature Review: How relevant is the cited literature? Does the review seem complete? What could be added to the review? Are parts of the review superfluous?
• Argument or Thesis: Does the argument/thesis seem logical and sound? Is it testable? Is it falsifiable? What alternative answers might the author consider?
• Research Design: Does the proposed research design adequately address the question? Is the research approach creative/clever? Does the outline have a logical flow? Is the outline missing anything?
• Conclusions: Do the proposed conclusions make sense? Have all of the implications been considered?

You will upload your reviews as two separate MS Word files to Blackboard before 3:00 pm on Monday, October 14th. Submit your reviews on time so that your classmates have a chance to assess your feedback in a timely manner. You will also be responsible for actively commenting on these prospectuses when they are presented in class.

Final Project Paper: Your final project should provide a rigorous and original analysis of an aspect of campaign politics. You will combine your real world knowledge with academic literature to investigate a particular topic of your choosing. Former Cole Scholars have written on a number of interesting topics including: the real benefits of incumbency; the difficulties of getting the working class vote with a millionaire candidate; the electoral importance of internal campaign organization; strategies for garnering positive media attention; how left-wing candidates win in moderate districts; the importance of a candidate’s personal narrative; and the effective use of campaign gimmicks. Your final project should be between 15 and 20 pages (double-spaced) and is due before Monday, November 25th at 3:00 pm.

Ted Talk: In most seminars, students get an opportunity to “workshop” their papers. In this seminar, we will do things a little differently. After writing your paper, you will reflect on its key points and lessons, and create a presentation for the rest of the class—something modeled after a “Ted Talk” in which you share knowledge and ideas that you’ve gained from writing your paper and being a Cole Scholar. The topic can be broad and reflective or it can focus on a specific lesson that you found particularly interesting. Your talk should not simply provide an overview of your paper; it should be reflective and creative. (Please watch some Ted talks to get a sense of what they usually entail: http://www.ted.com/talks.) You can either present your talk in class or, better yet, you can create a video that we will play in class. The presentation cannot exceed 10 minutes—this is a short presentation that should be highly polished and refined.

Final letter grades will be assigned in the following way:

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General Course Policies

Courtesy: Please exercise common courtesy (e.g., no talking at inappropriate times, cell phones, etc.) and come to class on time. You may bring your laptop, but please, no web surfing or other distracting behaviors. I will ask you to close your laptop if I think your use of it is distracting.
Honor Code: Oberlin College policy mandates that your performance in this class adhere to the honor code. In general terms, this means that you will be given significant freedoms in exchange for your promise to not cheat, plagiarize material, fabricate information, or participate in any other dishonest academic activity. If you have any questions about the honor code, you should visit: http://new.oberlin.edu/conservatory/academic-resources-and-support/honor-code.dot.

Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability should see me immediately so that we can make reasonable accommodations.

TOPICS AND READINGS

There are only a few required readings for this course. Don’t worry, you’ll still get to do lots of reading for your final project! There is one required book:


Please get a copy right away! We will be reading it early in the semester. All other required readings will be posted on Blackboard. You are also reminded that the course readings from Polt 421 may be particularly useful in completing your assignments. Some of them are also posted on Blackboard under “Readings”.

September 9: Introduction and War Stories
This class is obviously devoted to discussing the syllabus and providing a course overview. We’ll also spend some time sharing war stories. This will help you write your first paper and prepare for the more formal discussion the following week on what you learned from your internship. Also, if we have time, we will go over your expense reports. You should be ready to submit your completed report by the deadline next week.

Your paper on “What you learned...” is due on or before 3:00 pm on Monday, September 16th. Please upload via Blackboard as a single MS Word file.

September 16: “What I’ve Learned about Campaigns”
We will spend some time during this class talking about the major lessons that you’ve learned about campaigns and elections from your summer internship. I would like you to come prepared to tell the class about the top two or three lessons you took away from your summer experience. You should also be able to explain why you think these lessons are particularly important.

September 23: The Victory Lab
This class is devoted to a discussion of the book The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns. This book is intended to get us thinking about the new ways that campaigns are run and won. Hopefully, this will inspire some ideas for your final project. Please bring to class at least one, if not two or three, discussion questions that we can use to get our conversation going.

Required Reading:
September 30: Selecting a Final Project Topic and The Writing Process
This class will focus on the process of writing a good research paper. We will start with a discussion of how to pick an interesting and workable paper topic. We will then go over some information on how to write an effective prospectus before discussing how to conduct and write a literature review and other major steps in the research process.

Required Readings:

October 7: Individual Meetings about Your Final Project (no class meeting)
There is no formal class meeting this week; instead, you are required to meet with me individually to discuss your final project. Please arrange a time in advance. You should bring the following to our meeting: a concise statement of your research question; a bibliography of work relating to your research question; and an outline of how you plan to organize your paper. These will help you prepare the prospectus that is due on Friday afternoon.

Your Prospectus is due on or before 3:00 pm on Friday, October 11th.
Please upload via Blackboard as a single MS Word file.

Your Prospectus Reviews are due on or before 3:00 pm on Monday, October 14th.
Please upload via Blackboard as two single MS Word files.

October 14: Prospectus Presentations
You will present your final paper prospectus during this class. You will have 10 minutes to address the key questions of your research project. Your presentation should be lively and engaging. You do not have time to go into every detail, so plan to offer a concise overview of your project that will enable the class to evaluate its potential. You should expect to be interrupted by questions throughout your presentation. Please see the appendix at the end of this syllabus for more information. Also, please remember that you are required to submit your written reviews to Blackboard before 3:00 pm on Monday, October 14th.

October 21: Fall Break

October 28: Can Mr. Smith Get to Washington Anymore?
During this class, we will watch the documentary Can Mr. Smith Get to Washington Anymore? This movie provides a first-hand account of congressional campaign politics and the challenges that upstart candidates often face. I would like us to consider what this movie says about American campaigns and elections.

November 4: Returning to Your Internship Site (no class meeting)
There will be no formal class meeting this week as some of you may be visiting your internship sites. Have fun and good luck! You should also use this time to work on your final project.
November 11: **Checking In and Paper Progress**
This class will serve as an opportunity to check in concerning your final paper. We will talk about your progress and any issues that may have arisen. You are required to present a verbal status during this class. Please be prepared to talk about how your paper is coming along, any problems you are having, and how you are dealing with the issues raised by your reviewers.

November 18: **Work on Final Project** (no class meeting)
There is no class meeting this week. You should be focused on completing your paper as it is due next week! Be sure to see me during office hours if you are having any problems.

**Final Project Due Monday, November 25th before 3:00 pm**

November 25: **OIEP Discussion**
We will spend some time during this class talking about your experiences with the Oberlin Initiative in Electoral Politics. I’m interested in hearing any suggestions you might have for the future. We will also discuss the parameters for your Ted Talks—the final assignment in this course.

December 2: **Thanksgiving** (no class meeting)
Experience tells me that students sometimes have a difficult time making it back to campus for this class. Therefore, we will not have a class meeting on the Monday after Thanksgiving. You should, however, use the time to work on your Ted Talk.

December 9: **Ted Talks**
This class is devoted to your Ted Talks. You are required to either create a video or present your talk live during our class. As noted above, your Ted Talk should be creative and reflective; it should focus on an aspect of political campaigns that you believe is particularly interesting. Tell us something that will fascinate us! Last year’s class presented on topics ranging from: “How to be a Winner on a Losing Campaign” and “The Limits of Campaign Ethics” to “Washington State’s Weird Electoral Laws” and “What Campaigns Say about American Society.” Remember, your talk is expected to be highly polished and professional. This is another opportunity to practice your public speaking and presentation skills.
Conducting a Good Prospectus Workshop

There are a couple of things to remember when making any presentation. The following pointers (borrowed from Prof. Dawson) apply to your prospectus presentation. Follow them closely!

Your objective is to engage your classmates in a discussion of your research. This ought to be interesting to them so that they might offer suggestions that you can use when writing your paper. Here are some pointers on conducting a good workshop.

1. The biggest sin is to be boring. You should come to your presentation with a controlled level of excitement. You should be well prepared and, please, do not read anything aloud.

2. The second biggest sin is to make it up or to engage in a rant in which you vent your personal feelings in the absence of logic and evidence. Be prepared!

3. You must engage the members of the seminar in your research process. Make sure they understand the question (What is it you are trying to figure out?) and, from time to time, come back to it, reminding them what you are trying to do.

4. To engage them in the research process, realize that you are telling them how you will go about finding an answer to your research question. You want to show how your thinking on this topic has evolved, the steps you have already taken, and what lies ahead.

It is understood that your presentation is of research-in-progress. Still, it should address the questions listed on page 2 and provide a clear sense of where things are going. This requires a good deal of work before writing and presenting your prospectus—do not put it off for later!