

**POLI 102G SPECIAL TOPICS--the 2012 ELECTIONS**  
**MWF 2-2:50 Ledden Auditorium (HSS 2250)**

***Note: changes and additions (especially given still unpublished, new research on the 2010 elections and continuing commentaries on this election season/court decisions, etc.) will be made to this syllabus throughout the quarter. You are responsible for any changes mentioned in class, even if you are absent. They will be posted on the class TED page. If you are not comfortable with this "evolving" teaching method, then you might consider dropping this class.***

**Final: M 3PM, March 19**  
**Final Project due by Friday, March 16, 5PM**

**Peter F. Galderisi**

Office Hours: MW 4-6 SSB459

Email: all class related emails should be sent by way of the TED messages link--NOT email. Go to the TED site for this class, COURSE TOOLS, messages, and find my name or a grader's name by clicking TO.

**Graders: Saul Cunow, William Hobbs, Mona Vaklifathi** --follow messaging instructions above  
**Special Assistant: Mona Vaklifathi** (office hours TBA)

We recently went through a decade of electoral cycles seemingly unparalleled in U.S. history.

1. By the slimmest of margins in 2000, the electoral vote went to the loser of the popular vote. The 2004 and 2008 election could have easily turned out the same way (really). 2012?
2. Third party activity helped decide the presidential outcome, at least in 2000, but did little for third parties themselves.
3. The president's party twice gained seats in the midterm elections (1998 and 2002)—destroying a "truth" of U.S. politics. In 2010 that "truth" returned with a vengeance.
4. In the last presidential election, we elected the first African-American president, almost nominated the first major-party female candidate, and nominated the second major-party vice-presidential female candidate. All came at a cost that no one would have contemplated a decade ago and will most likely be surpassed this year.

In some respects, U.S. political institutions and practices have not changed much in the past 100+ plus years. On the other hand, politics, particularly electoral politics, is not a static but an ever-changing game. The personality and notoriety of individual candidates, for example, have always played a role in helping to form the electorate's vote choices. Yet the modern scenario of countless (yikes!) televised debates, campaign ads, and web sites is a far cry from the whistle stop campaigns of the 19th and early 20th Centuries. Parties, although not mentioned nor, most would argue, condoned by the Constitutional framers, have been an integral part of the electoral and policy process at least since the end of the Jacksonian era. Yet few would have predicted, even as late as the 1980s, the nationalization of the modern party organizations, or the role of interest groups, SuperPacs and web sites and bloggers as substitutes/complements to parties.

This course will predominantly examine the current state of elections, but, in order to do so in a methodologically sound way, we will need to address at least recent changes in the electoral universe. We'll discuss changes in voting turnout and partisanship (if they have changed at all), reasons for those changes, and their possible results. How does the citizenry divide itself—on what issues and on which demographics? Next, we'll move to the office-seeker and study how candidates get nominated and funded, and how changes in those mechanisms have altered the strategic calculations of candidates as well as voters, parties and electoral sponsors. We'll study the impact of voting rules, particularly those involved with carving up district boundaries and the Electoral College. We'll use our knowledge to investigate U.S. national elections, particularly 2008-2010. The class will finish off with an examination of modern campaigning, concentrating, but not limiting itself to an investigation of campaign ads. Which are more powerful—positive, negative, image promoting, issue promoting—and under what circumstances?

## REQUIREMENTS:

A. **Active Attendance**--in both body and mind. After the first few weeks, I will draw on the expertise of class members as they prepare for their final projects.

B. **Readings**--should be completed before class discussion (a prerequisite for the second condition in A). A tentative schedule of readings begins on the back of this handout. I'll mention the readings required *each week* as the lectures progress. I reserve the right to add/subtract readings as needed (e.g., a great new essay comes out, a new campaign ad, etc.).

One book is required for this class, available at the university bookstore or your favorite source. At least two copies of will be placed on library reserve:

Michael Nelson (ed.), *The Elections of 2008*

2. In addition, several other essays, journal pieces, etc. of various lengths will be required and will be available directly online (urls will be provided) or through the UCSD library server (access on campus or at home through a proxy server-- <http://webproxy.ucsd.edu/proxy.pl> ). Directions for different platforms/operating systems can be found at:

[blink.ucsd.edu/technology/network/connections/off-campus/proxy/](http://blink.ucsd.edu/technology/network/connections/off-campus/proxy/)

C. **Exams**--One take-home midterm (30%) and one in-class "final" midterm (30%) are scheduled for this course, each consisting of a choice of two short essays (I'll explain how that works later). All will be designed to test your ability to think about, integrate, and logically organize the course readings and lectures. The midterm is scheduled to be turned in Wednesday, Feb. 15, at the *beginning* of class and through the Turn-It-In facility in TED. The in-class "final" is scheduled for Monday, March 19, 3-5:59.

*Please note:* any requests to review exam grades must be made in writing (typed) to your grader with a full and detailed justification for the request. An appeal of that review can be made to the professor. Note that any review by either may result in a higher or lower grade (or no change).

D. **Congressional Election Project** (40%) -- Each student will complete a "short" (4-8 pages of text+tables/graphs/maps) paper detailing the elections for one U.S. House district from 2002-2012. We will discuss the details of that paper later in class, but expect to give detailed coverage to the following: the partisan dimension of the election, the effects of redistricting, the difference between presidential and midterm years, voting turnout, candidate quality, primary contests, campaign financing, the negative/positive nature of the campaigns, and others. You will be given mini-assignments throughout the quarter to prepare you for the final paper that will be due the last Friday of class (March 16!). You will receive a schedule within the next two weeks as we search for the proper CDs to analyze.

## **CLASS WEB PAGE**

Changes to this syllabus, as well as any review guides, assignments, informational emails, or date changes will be posted on the class web page (TED). Please check it on a daily basis. Go to [ted.ucsd.edu](http://ted.ucsd.edu). Your classes should be listed. If you are having trouble getting into TED (students visiting from other campuses are especially vulnerable to this problem), please let me know as soon as possible.

## **POLICY ON CHEATING:**

Failure--no exceptions. "Cheating" includes working together on the midterm or final exam questions or the paper. You can help each other with general questions about basic concepts, facts, readings, lectures, citation style, etc. In fact, I strongly suggest you do so on a regular basis. On the other hand, collaborating on the essays or project themselves, either in preparation or final production, is strictly forbidden. If you are not sure about the distinction, please ask me to clarify. Further information on violations of university academic integrity codes can be found at:

<http://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/ai-and-you.html>

## **PLAGIARISM:**

Plagiarism is the intentional use of another's words (by direct transcription) or ideas (by paraphrasing) without attribution. This includes citing from web sites. University prohibitions against plagiarism are rather clear. Again, if you are not sure about the meaning of plagiarism, please ask me to clarify or go to the link above.

## **CLASSROOM DECORUM:**

As this is an upper division class, I'm almost embarrassed to discuss this. Please respect the lecturer and your fellow students. All of us are trying to concentrate on the material. I will be especially ticked off if I notice anyone using their laptops for other than taking notes. Several law schools (believe it or not) have been forced to place internet blockers in their classrooms. Please don't force us to begin that policy.

## **INCOMPLETES**

The university grants me precious little discretion here. In order to qualify for an incomplete I must demonstrate that you have been doing passable work (so you have to have taken the midterm and/or turned in the initial project assignments and passed them) and you must demonstrate a reason for requesting an incomplete that conforms to university guidelines (documented illness, death or emergency in the family, unexpected military deployment, etc.). Again, the university makes this decision—not me nor the graders.

## **READINGS: Week 1**

Nelson, Chapter 1, 7, 9

[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/07/us/politics/democrats-see-signs-of-hope-in-election-battle-for-congress.html?pagewanted=2&\\_r=1&hp](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/07/us/politics/democrats-see-signs-of-hope-in-election-battle-for-congress.html?pagewanted=2&_r=1&hp)

I'll spend much of week 1 outlining and explaining the "project" and the difficulties that you will run into.