

This course is an examination of presidential nominations and elections, with a focus on the 2008 election. Topics include voter decision making, media coverage, campaign finance, delegate selection rules, the Electoral College, and kindred concerns.

In general, each of the first five exams constitutes just over 10 percent of your course grade. The sixth exam counts for just over 20 percent of the course grade. The research papers count for just over 5 and 15 percent. Class participation (in part, unscheduled quizzes on the assigned reading to reward those who do and understand the readings) constitutes roughly 5 percent of your course grade. You will be evaluated primarily on your familiarity with and understanding of the assigned readings but also in part on your knowledge and understanding of the current presidential campaign.

Ultimately your grade turns on my impression of how well you have done in this course. What impresses me? Think of this course as your job and approach it with professionalism. Take this course seriously and let me know that. How? Attend class; be prepared for class—read the assignments for understanding, be ready to ask and answer questions, take an informed role in discussions; arrive early to class; remain for the entire class; be attentive in class without distracting me or your classmates with cell phones, text messages, side conversations, bathroom trips or any other reason for coming-and-going, and so forth; take exams when scheduled and complete assignments when due; demonstrate your understanding on the exams, quizzes, and research paper assignments. Gadgets of mass distraction—Blackberries, laptops, cell phones, iPhones, etc.—are not for class use—not even for note-taking.

Come prepared and ready to participate. An unexcused absence will adversely affect your course grade, as will being present but

unprepared to participate, or participating without being prepared.

After three unexcused absences I drop you from the course. An excused absence is almost exclusively restricted to religious reasons, certain university activities, documented medical conditions, or documented family emergencies. Absences for religious reasons or for university extracurricular activities require communication with me in advance.

If you have a disability that requires an accommodation, see me in advance.

Each of you must meet with me for 15 minutes in the first weeks of the semester. Sign up for an appointment time during the first day in class. Be punctual.

This course is frontloaded in terms of the reading. You will be required and expected to read more early in the course than later when you will be reading more extensively for your research paper. Most readings should eventually be on reserve in Fondren. The books ordered through the bookstore include Wayne, *The Road to the White House 2008*, 8th ed (abbreviated W,WH in readings below); Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, *Change and Continuity in the 2004 and 2006 Elections* (AAR); and Wayne, *Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?* 3rd ed. (W,AW?) Also required but not listed below: you are expected to supplement the listed readings (including MSNBC First Read) with media accounts of the ongoing 2008 presidential election. Understand that assigned readings listed here for specific pages in AAR; W, WH; and W, AW? should be understood to include the endnotes associated with those pages—the endnotes are not always appropriately referenced in the page number.

There may be changes in the readings and assignments below. This course requires use of Blackboard at <https://cmsbb2.systems.smu.edu/webapps/login/>

Readings provide background on topics covered in class lectures and discussions, so read the assigned readings before the class day on which they are assigned.

Throughout the semester: read MSNBC "First Read: First Thoughts" each day that it appears [<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/>]; also follow other media coverage to become and remain informed about the 2008 presidential selection process

W, 8/27 * Introduction: The '08 Presidential Election and the National Nominating Conventions * W,AW? 1-6 and 174-177; W,WH 8-12, 183-202, 205-211 and "The 2008 Presidential Nomination Process" supplement, 29 pages * 8/25-29, *Democratic National Convention, Denver*

F, 8/29 * no class due to the American Political Science Association annual convention in Boston; read news accounts of the Democratic National Convention and get up to speed on the 2008 presidential campaign to date by reading extensively in different news sources beyond MSNBC First Read

W, 9/3 * The State of the 2008 Presidential Election; 9/1-9/4 *Republican National Convention, Minneapolis-St. Paul*; assignment to be handed in during class: syllabus quiz on Blackboard; extensive reading from news accounts (beyond MSNBC First Read)

F, 9/5 * What does it take to win? * W,WH 137-183; W,WH, 224-253

W, 9/10 * Voters: groups and the New Deal coalition * AAR 73-78; W,WH 95-114; AAR 107-133

F, 9/12 * Exam 1 (40 minutes) * Voters: candidate characteristics * W, WH, 202-205; AAR, 135-137; Pew Research Center for the People & the Press poll to be assigned

W, 9/17 * Voters: prospective issues * W,WH 312-314; AAR 134-135 and 137-159

F, 9/19 * Voters: retrospective issues * AAR 160-181

W, 9/24 * Voters: partisanship * W,WH, 88-94; AAR, 182-206

F, 9/26 * Who votes? * W,WH 75-88; W,AW? 21-49; AAR, 79-106 * *presidential debate, Ole Miss, Oxford*

W, 10/1 * Media * W,WH 254-297; W,AW? 108-137, 186-212

Th, 10/2 *vice-presidential Debate, Washington University, St. Louis*

F, 10/3 * Exam 2 (40 minutes) * Political ads * Wisconsin Advertising Project studies to be assigned

T, 10/7 *Presidential Debate, Belmont University, Nashville*

W, 10/8 * The 2004 Election * AAR, 1-72

F, 10/10 * Presidential nominations reform * W,AW? 162-185; W,WH 116-136 * 500 word paper due on the Electoral College outcome in 2008, calling, to the best of your ability, each state in the presidential election; explain the sources used, your reasoning, and your method for allocating toss-up states

W, 10/15 * Campaign finance, I * W,WH 32-74; W,AW? 79-107 * *Presidential debate, Hofstra University, Hempstead*

F, 10/17 * Exam 3 (40 minutes) * Campaign finance, II * CFI Analyses of FEC Reports of Campaign Finance Activity to be assigned

W, 10/22 * Reforming the presidential selection process, I * W,WH 1-31

F, 10/24 * Reforming the presidential selection process, II * W,WH 343-375

W, 10/29 * Reforming the presidential selection process, III * W,AW? 61-67

F, 10/31 * Exam 4 (40 minutes) * Previewing the 2008 presidential election * W,WH 300-312

T, 11/4 *Election Day, 2008*

W, 11/5 * Election review, I * extensive reading from news accounts (beyond MSNBC First Read)

F, 11/7 * Election review, II * extensive reading from news accounts (beyond MSNBC First Read)

W, 11/12 * The meanings of presidential elections * W,AW? 213-239; W,WH 314-342

F, 11/14 * Exam 5 (40 minutes) * 2008 Hispanic Vote * reading to be assigned from post-election news coverage

W, 11/19 * 2008 in light of PLSC 4326 * reading to be assigned from post-election news coverage

F, 11/21 * Possible Lessons to Learn from 2008 * reading to be assigned from post-election news coverage

T, 11/25 * 1,500 word paper due explaining who won and why in the 2008 presidential election, drawing on extensive reading of news coverage

W, 12/3 * Where Do We Go from Here? * review W,WH 343-375

F, 12/5 * No class meeting; prepare for exam 6

T, 12/9 * Exam 6, 8:00-9:30 a.m.