Syllabus, the U.S. Presidency, Spring 2013

people

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the basics

There are two major components to this course. The first is a series of lectures and readings that provide a basic overview of three major aspects of the presidency: domestic policymaking, foreign policymaking, and presidential campaigns. The second is an in-class simulation that we will operate throughout the semester. This simulation is meant to give you direct experience with some of the basic strategic problems that participants in presidential policymaking and campaigns face. Our classtime will be broken up evenly between these two activities. In each week, we will "play" the simulation during the class meeting on Tuesday. The Thursday meeting will then be devoted to lecture and (time permitting) discussion.

required books

There is one required book. The bookstore is not stocking it, so make sure that you go ahead and order it from amazon asap.

Cohen, Karol, Noel and Zaller (2008) **The Party Decides**. University of Chicago Press.

course requirements and grading

Your grade in this course is based on three midterm examinations, your contribution to a discussion board regarding the simulation, and a small amount of "extra credit" meant to entice you to participate in the simulation with vigour. You will be given a grade on a four point scale for each midterm, and a grade on a four point scale for you participation on the discussion board. Your final grade will then be given by the (unweighted) average of these four point scores, plus any extra credit earned from the simulation. You will then be assigned a letter grade according to the following rules:

overall 4 point score	final letter grade
at or above 3.85	A
at or above 3.5, less than 3.85	A-

overall 4 point score	final letter grade
at or above 3.15, less than 3.5	B+
at or above 2.85, less than 3.15	B
at or above 2.5, less than 2.85	B-
at or above 2.15, less than 2.5	C+
at or above 1.85, less than 2.15	C
at or above 1.5, less than 1.85	C-
at or above 1, less than 1.5	D
less than 1	E

The midterm exams will be short-answer and essay based, and will focus on both the content of the assigned reading and the material covered in lecture. At this point, I am not sure whether they will be held in class or on a take-home basis, but this will be decided within the first couple of weeks. I'll discuss how the grading of your discussion board participation works in a seperate section below. For now, here is the schedule of topics, along with the readings for which you are responsible.

schedule

week	dates	topic	reading
1	1/17	intro to course	none
2	1/22,24	philosophical background	john locke "two treatises on government". Book II, chapters IX, XI, XII, XIII, XIV
3	1/29,31	domestic policymaking institutions	tba
4	2/5,7	case study: "the disability review"	excerpts from Derthick **Agency Under Stress**
6	2/12,14	case study: "the disability review"	
7	2/19,21	midterm 1	
8	2/26,28	foreign policy overview	
8	3/5,7	case study: nicaraguan intervention	reading packet on nicaragua

week	dates	topic	reading
9	3/19,21	case study: nicaraguan intervention	
10	3/26,28	midterm 2	
10	4/2,4	electoral institutions	tba
11	4/9,11	nominations	carol cohen noel and zahler, chapters 1, 3, 4, 6 and 8
12	4/16,18	"ground strategy"	tba
13	4/23,25	permanent campaign	tba
14	4/30	midterm 3	

discussion board participation

The simulation we run in this class is designed to let you discover and comprehend by direct experience the strategies political actors adopt in policymaking and presidential campaigns. To fully benefit, you need to do more than participate – you also need to reflect on your experience and what you observe. This is the purpose of the discussion board.

To complete the class, you must make a minimum of 5 postings to the board by the end of the semester. However, there is no upper limit to the number of posts you may offer, and your grade will only be based on your 5 highest-scoring posts. Each post will be given only one of three possible grades: 0 (less than satisfactory), 3 (satisfactory), and 4 (satisfactory+).

So what makes a post "satisfactory." First of all, each post you make should be based on something that you or another poster to the board has **observed** in the simulation. Second, you should be either **posing a question** about or raised by that observation or **offering an interpretation or explanation** of that observation. Beyond these basic requirements, satisfactory posts demonstrate that you are truly engaged in the process – i.e. that you are watching what is happening in the simulation, trying to understand what you see, and trying to connect what you see to the material you are reading for the class and hearing in lecture.

In any event, the TA's and I will occassionally post to the discussion board as well, to demonstrate the kind of posts that we are looking for. We will also take time to single out posts that are "satisfactory+" and to give you some explanation of what makes those posts especially valuable to the discussion.

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