

GVPT 423

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Congressional Elections

Spring 2015  
MW 2:00-3:15p.m.

This is a course on Congressional elections. It is not a manual on how to get elected, but it should be of considerable help if that is your goal, either directly or indirectly—or if you just want to know what motivates candidates and voters.

Each student will also pick a Congressional campaign (*either House or Senate*) from the 2014 elections. Using the background gained in the course, students will write a paper of approximately 10 pages examining why your candidate won or lost. Your choice of a candidate must receive my approval--or your paper will not be accepted. You must select a race and hand in a short paper (one page will do) describing the race. You must hand in the short paper by March 3. You may hand it in any time before that date. The paper itself is due on April 27. Each student will make a brief (no more than 10 minutes) presentation about his/her paper beginning on April 22. Following each presentation, there will be about five minutes for other students to ask questions. The presentations are not meant to be summaries of final products. They are designed to give others an idea of the race you picked, the key issues, and to give you feedback about issues that others in the class believe to be interesting or important. ***Students who are working on the same race will make joint presentations.***

Your paper should include the following:

- (1) a brief description of the candidates; describe the incumbent's record and the challenger's qualifications. Is the challenger a "quality challenger"? Has the challenger run for the seat before? Did either candidate face a primary challenge? How might this affect the November race?
- (2) a description of the district, including its demographics and electoral history. How long has the incumbent served? Has (s)he faced strong challengers in the past? Has the incumbent generally won by big or small margins? How did the Presidential candidates do in the district in 2012? Describe the two candidates' campaigns. Which candidate ran the stronger campaign? Did both candidates conduct negative campaigns--or did either?
- (3) an analysis of campaign spending. How much did the incumbent and challenger spend? Was the challenger competitive in spending? Why or why not?
- (4) an analysis of the issues in the race. What were the key issues? Did they benefit the incumbent or the challenger?
- (5) an analysis of the incumbent's record. Was the incumbent a strong supporter or opponent of the President? On what committees did the incumbent sit? How might the incumbent's record affect the primary and general election voting?

As with the final examination, you must integrate course readings into your paper. ***A paper that does not have substantial references to the course reading will receive a grade no higher than a C. To receive a C, your answer must have at least 3 citations from the reading. To receive a grade higher than a C, your answer must have substantially more citations from the reading.***

There is no “quota” or automatic criteria for the number of citations: Three references do not guarantee a C, 50 citations don’t guarantee an A. All depends upon the quality of your paper.

You can find information on the candidates and the campaigns from the following sources:

A comprehensive list of sources is at the UM Library’s Guide to Voting and Elections at:

<http://www.lib.umd.edu/MCK/GUIDES/elections.html>

Among the best are:

Congressional Quarterly Weekly: THE place for coverage of Congress and of specific races; CQ rates each race by how competitive it is for each party. From on campus only:

<http://library2.cqpress.com/cqweekly/>

Congressional Quarterly Voting and Elections: Almost a one-stop shop for information about elections. From on campus only: <http://library2.cqpress.com/elections/>

Local newspapers: All you ever wanted at [http://dir.yahoo.com/News\\_and\\_Media/Newspapers/](http://dir.yahoo.com/News_and_Media/Newspapers/)

Almanac of American Politics: biographies of incumbents, their electoral and political histories, demographics of districts—focusing more on districts than on members. Available in hard copy at McKeldin Reference Room or at <http://nationaljournal.com/pubs/almanac/> (on campus only) Published by National Journal.

Politics in America: Similar to the Almanac, but more of a focus on the member than on the district; in McKeldin Reference Room.

Lexis-Nexis: tons of information (on campus only) maybe more than you need. or by “googling” the names of the candidates.

You can get complete data on campaign finance for any race at the Federal Election Commission’s web site, <http://www.fec.gov>. Even easier is <http://www.opensecrets.org>. Candidate issue positions are available at <http://www.vote-smart.org> (for those candidates who have filled out the surveys from this organization).

The course requirements include: (1) a midterm examination, to be held in-class on March 11, covering material through Topic 6 (20 percent of your grade); (2) the ten page paper on a Congressional race (30 percent of your grade); (3) a take-home final examination of approximately 10 pages (40 percent of your grade); and class participation (10 percent of your grade). The one page paper required by March 6 will not receive a grade. It is required. If you do not hand in this one-page paper on March 6, I shall deduct half a grade from your final paper.

The Student Honor Council—and I strongly concur—asks that all students recognize the Honor Council and its work and pledge to follow it, as follows:

The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit <http://www.shc.umd.edu>.

The term paper will be due IN CLASS (not later) on April 27, 2015. The final examination will be due in my office (Chincoteague) by 1:30 p.m. on May 18. Papers that are late without a verified emergency will be downgraded one grade. The only exceptions are medical emergencies verified by a note from a doctor. If for any reason you cannot take an examination or I shall make exceptions for truly exceptional circumstances, but you must be able to demonstrate to me that you were unable to contact me. If you do miss an examination, you need a statement from your doctor verifying your illness. If you must miss a deadline, you need to contact me *before the assignment is due, not afterward, unless you can show that it was impossible to contact me.*

Please also note: the course paper is due *in class* on April 27, 2015 and the take home final is due in my office at 1:30 p.m. on May 18, 2015. The Department of Government and Politics does not take responsibility for papers so you cannot leave it with the office staff. You must be sure to get it to me personally (or leave it under my office door)

### **IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:**

- \* **MARCH 3: ONE-PAGE STATEMENT OF YOUR PAPER TOPIC**
- \* **MARCH 11: MID-TERM EXAMINATION**
- \* **APRIL 27: COURSE PAPER DUE (IN CLASS)**
- \* **MAY 18: TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE (1:30 PM IN MY OFFICE).**

All papers must be turned in on time and with hard copies. I cannot download your papers. And, sorry, I do not discuss grades over e-mail. E-mails requesting your grades or to discuss your grades will not be answered. You can make an appointment by e-mail, but I shall not answer any other grade-related questions by e-mail. If you want to see the comments on any assignment, you must either pick up the assignment directly from us or you must give me a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Please do not send me a paper or final by e-mail—even “just in case” I didn’t receive it. I automatically delete any e-mails with attachments without reading them. If you want to send me something other than an assignment with an attachment, please contact me first. There are absolutely no exceptions to this no e-mail policy, regardless of your reason.

The mid-term examination will consist of essay questions drawn from the assigned reading and the class lectures and discussions. All assigned reading is required and may be the subject of examination questions. The take-home final is attached to the end of the syllabus. It will not be due until the day of the regularly scheduled examination, but you may, of course, begin thinking about it at any time. All assignments are to be typed, double-spaced and with reasonable margins.

All written work must be your own. Copying the work of others, whether that of fellow students or anyone else, constitutes plagiarism. You need not copy a work in its entirety to plagiarize. The university defines plagiarism as using the works of others without attribution. I also include the use of others' words with attribution **if your use of others' words are excessive.** If you have any questions about what constitutes excessive use of other people's words, please ask me. The paper is an exercise in research, not retyping others' words. Should anyone have **any** questions, please feel free to consult me. **All cases of plagiarism will be referred to the University Honors Court.**

I expect you to take care with your writing. An excessive number of spelling and/or grammatical errors will lead to a reduction in your grade on both the paper and essay questions

on examinations.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FROM THE BSOS DEAN'S OFFICE.

These are university policies that you need to know with amendments as noted.:

- The university permits students to present one note per semester for a medical excuse for a regular class session (not classes when assignments are due or tests are given). However, I do not require attendance. However, you can't do well in participation if you do not come to class.
- Any student with a disability should speak to me as soon as possible. I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Service (DSS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form which has been updated for the Fall 2011 semester. Only written DSS documentation of the accommodation will be considered. This form must be presented to me no later than March 4, 2015. I am not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who provide me with documentation which has not been reviewed and approved by UM's DSS Office after March 4, 2015.
- The university's policies on illness and religious holidays can be found at: More detail on documenting an illness of a student can be found at <http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/v100g.html>. More detail on excused absences for religious observances and participation in university activities at the request of University authorities can be found below under the "Assessment" heading at this link <http://www.testudo.umd.edu/soc/atedasse.html>.
- On the date for the midterm examination:: "On exam day, students should arrive to class with no more in their hands than UM Student I.D, paper and pen. If students must bring items to class, students must deposit items in a box at the front of the class. Student will receive a zero on the exam if during the exam a student is caught with anything more than a writing implement and paper."
- "Students are expected to treat each other with respect. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Students who are unable to demonstrate civility with one another, the teaching assistants, or me will be subject to referral to the Office of Student Conduct or to the University Campus Police. You are expected to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct."
- Students may bring their laptops to class to take notes only. If a student is found to be using a lap top for any other reason than taking notes, then, that student will lose the privilege of bringing their computer to class. All technological devices, except a laptop computer are prohibited in this class including MP3 devices, smart phones, phones, calculators, gaming devices, etc. If these devices are seen and/or used during the class, the student will be asked to leave the class immediately. If these devices are seen and/or used during an exam, the exam will be collected from the student and the student will no longer be allowed to continue taking the exam. The exam score will be noted as 0".
- **Very critically, the university policy on missed assignments is:** "For a major assignment/exam, I will require a Health Center or medical doctor's health excuse. If you do not inform me or if you do not present me with timely documentation, you will receive an F for the assignment/exam/paper. Note: In the case that you are unable to get a written medical excuse, you may ask your provider for a copy of your medical notes for

the specific visit(s) in question.

- If you have a medical excuse for a major assignment, you need to contact me prior to missing the assignment, paper, or examination. If you have a legitimate excuse, you may take a make-up examination at the first date that your doctor tells me (in writing) that you are able to complete the assignment, but no later than one week after the due date (unless there are extenuating circumstances). If you miss an assignment or an examination without a certified medical excuse, I will deduct a full grade. If the assignment is not made up by the next class (or within two days for the final examination), the grade will automatically turn into an F. **Papers must be handed in by hard copy in class the day the assignment is due. Grade deductions begin at the end of the class when the assignment is due.**

In the list of readings below, the following abbreviations will be used for journal citations:

<u>APSR</u>	<u>American Political Science Review</u>
<u>AJPS</u>	<u>American Journal of Political Science</u>
<u>LSQ</u>	<u>Legislative Studies Quarterly</u>
<u>JOP</u>	<u>Journal of Politics</u>

The topics below are listed roughly by week. The following books should be purchased at any of the local bookstores:

Gary C. Jacobson, The Politics of Congressional Elections, eighth edition  
Richard F. Fenno, Jr., Home Style  
Kim Fridkin Kahn and Patrick Kenny, No Holds Barred  
Richard F. Fenno, Jr., The United States Senate

All readings other than the assigned books are available on Canvas.

Topic/Date

- 1 (1/26)                    Introductory meeting
- 2 (1/28-2/4)    House Members in Their Constituencies  
  
                                 Fenno, Home Style, entire
- 3 (2/9-2/16)    Why Incumbents Run Better in House Elections than in Senate Elections  
  
                                 Jacobson, chs. 2, 3, 5.  
                                 George Serra and David Moon, "Casework, Issue Positions, and Voting in Congressional Elections," JOP, v. 56 (February 1994), pp. 200-213.  
                                 Stephen Ansolabehere and James M. Snyder, Jr., "The Effects of Redistricting on Incumbents," Election Law Journal, 11 (2012), pp. 490-502.  
                                 Alan I. Abramowitz, "Explaining Senate Election Outcomes," APSR, v. 82 (June 1988), pp. 385-404.  
                                 Gerald Wright and Michael Berkman, "Candidates and Policy in U.S. Senate Elections," APSR, v. 80 (June 1986), pp. 567-587.  
                                 Gary C. Jacobson, "Strategic Politicians and the Dynamics of U.S. House Elections, 1946-86," APSR, v. 83 (September 1989), pp. 773-794.  
                                 L. Sandy Maisel, Kara E. Falkenstein, and Alexander M. Quigley, "Senate Retirements and Progressive Ambition among House Members in 1996," Congress and the Presidency, v. 24 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 131-148.  
                                 Fenno, The United States Senate, entire
- 4 (2/18-23)    Congressional Elections, the Media, and Negative Advertising  
  
                                 Fridkin and Kahn, No Holds Barred, entire  
                                 Jacobson, pp. 103-114.  
                                 James Campbell et al., "Television Markets and Congressional Elections," LSQ, v. 9 (November 1984), pp. 665-678.
- 5 (2/25)        Videos on Best and Worst Ads of 2012

3/9 **ONE-PAGE STATEMENT OF PAPER DUE IN CLASS**

6 (3/2-9) The Role of Money in Congressional Elections

Jacobson, pp. 66-102.

R. Sam Garrett, "Campaign Finance Policy After Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission: Issues and Options for Congress," Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress

Tojaki and Strause, "The New Soft Money"

Dawood, "Campaign Finance and American Democracy"

Matt Miller, "Mr. Smith Doesn't Go to Washington"

**March 11: Midterm Examination**

3/16-18 NO CLASS SPRING BREAK

7 (3/23-25) Does Money Corrupt?

Video: "Big Sky, Big Money"

8 (3/30) Discussion of "Big Sky, Big Money" and Campaign Spending

4/6 NO CLASS

9 (4/8-4/13) Campaign Video and Discussion

April 8: Video, "Taking on the Kennedys"

Matt Bai, "Running from Office: Why Max Kennedy's Congressional Run Never Took Off"

Alexander Bolton, "Endangered Rep. Kennedy Gets \$90 million in pork," The Hill (December 12, 2001)

10 (4/15-20) The Nationalization of Congressional Elections: Retrospective Voting and Issues in Congressional Elections

Jacobson, chs. 6, 7.

Donald Kinder and D.R. Kiewiet, "Economic Discontent and Political Behavior in the 1980 and 1982 Congressional Elections," AJPS, v. 23 (August 1979), pp. 495-527.

Alan Abramowitz, "Partisan Polarization and the Tea Party Movement"

Gary C. Jacobson, "The Republican resurgence in 2010," Political Science Quarterly, v. 126 (2011), pp. 27-52.

Matthew T. Pietryka, "The Roles of District and National Opinion in 2010 Congressional Campaign Agendas," American Politics Research, 2012:1-39

Bond et al., "A 61-Million-Person Experiment in Social Influence and Political Mobilization," Nature (2012), on Canvas

Issenberg, "Why It Matters" on Canvas

4/22, 4/27, 5/4, 5/6, 5/11 Student Reports

**4/27 COURSE PAPER DUE IN CLASS**

## TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAMINATION

The consulting firm of Victory, Inc. has learned that you have taken a course in Congressional Elections at the University of Maryland and has engaged you to write a report in which you recommend a strategy for the first-term Democratic Representative Penny Lane, who defeated the two-term Republican Representative Earl Grey in one of the biggest upsets of the 2014 election. Lane is contemplating running for reelection or taking on a veteran Republican Senator who will be running for reelection.

Grey was a strong supporter of the Tea Party, while Lane has compiled a moderate voting record in his brief tenure in the House. Grey himself scored an upset over six-term Democratic Representative Harvey Cliffhanger, who was one of the most prominent—and vocal-liberal members of the Democratic party House contingent. In 2010 Republicans picked up 63 seats in the House and Cliffhanger was one of the victims of that wave election. Grey kept the seat in 2012 and was widely expected to cruise to victory in 2014—another good year for Republicans. However, Lane charged that Grey was too conservative for the Fourth District of Transylvania, which had voted Democratic in most other elections. Lane won a close election with 52 percent of the vote—similar to Grey’s 51 percent in 2010 but lower than Grey’s 56 percent against a weak Democratic opponent, Warren Elizabeth, in 2012. Elizabeth ran a populist campaign against the “big corporations that dominate American politics.” He raised little money and Democratic leaders gave him only lukewarm support.

Lane will either run for reelection or for the Senate in 2016. Grey has already announced his intention to reclaim his House seat. Lane has established herself as a supporter of business rather than labor and has been willing to defy Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi on issues such as lower taxes and free trade.

While Grey had strong Tea Party credentials in 2010, he moderated some of his positions after winning his first term and supported Speaker John Boehner’s attempts to work out budget compromises with the Democrats. Republicans have mostly rallied around Grey.

What worries Republican leaders is that Transylvania has been a Democratic state in most elections, the 4<sup>th</sup> district even more so. Lane has been a strong supporter of Hillary Clinton for the 2016 Democratic nomination for President in 2016. Bill Clinton carried the 4<sup>th</sup> district by margins of 10 percent in both 1992 and 1996. Lane’s sister Lois is a founding member of the “Ready for Hillary” movement and Lane’s husband Frank directed Bill Clinton’s campaign in Transylvania in 1996.

Lane has served on the Veterans’ Affairs Committee and the Small Business Committee in the House. Grey was on the more powerful Appropriations Committee and Boehner has promised Grey that he could rejoin this committee if he wins the election.

But Democrats are worried that Cliffhanger might challenge Lane in the Democratic party. He has criticized many of her votes and he has indicated that he wants to get back into public life. He is closer to party leaders than is Lane, and they worry that a primary would create an opportunity for Grey to win his old seat back. Instead, they are encouraging Lane to run against one of the last of the Republican moderates, Senator Frank N. Stein, who is up for reelection to his sixth term in 2016. Stein will be 80 years old and Democratic leaders think that he could be vulnerable to a strong candidate. Lane is concerned that this would be a difficult race since Stein has not received less than 60 percent of the vote since his first election. He has also voted with the Democrats on some controversial issues—including opposition to repealing the Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”). Many Republicans call Stein a “RINO” (Republican in Name Only) and believe that the conservative base of today’s Transylvania Republican party will not turn out to support the veteran Senator. Lane could gather some of these votes since she has



supported some traditionally Republican positions. Some Tea Party leaders have argued that they would prefer a Democratic Senator to the “heathen” Stein and yard signs promoting “Lane - Grey” have begun to appear in the district.

Grey quickly rose to become the leader of the Tea Party Caucus in the House of Representatives and has been touted as a rising star in the Republican party. In his second term, Grey has turned more to the center. “The Republicans lost the 2012 election. We need to learn a lesson. We need to cut the budget, to get fiscal sanity, but we can’t do it if we are voted out of office. I am willing to seek some new revenue. I don’t like doing this, but I’d rather be in power and fight for what I believe than shout from the outside. I’ll work with the Speaker to find a bipartisan solution, as long as we get the budget cuts we promised the American people as Tea Party representatives.” Many see these moves as signs that Grey wants to take on a greater role in the national party.

In the House Cliffhanger voted strongly with the Democratic party and rose to become Chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee from 2004-2008. In 2007 he also became Chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee and played a key role in expanding the government regulation of business practices. He calls himself a “practical progressive,” but Republicans said that he was “a far out liberal, worse than Obama.” But he developed a very loyal base among the groups that form the basis of the Democratic party.

A fight between Lane and Stein could be close, although Lane admonishes party leaders that Cliffhanger has been out of public life since he lost his seat in 2010. He has been the Executive Director of the environmentalist group, the League of Conservation Voters, and his wife is the Executive Director of the pro-choice PAC Emily’s List. They have divided their time between Washington and Transylvania –and Lane has argued that they have truly “gone Washington.” She wonders whether party leaders have overestimated Cliffhanger’s support and underestimated Stein, who won many elections even as Democrats dominated the state.

Transylvania and the 4<sup>th</sup> district have been Democratic strongholds (except for Stein) for most of the past 25 years. The state had elected liberal Democrats and moderate Republicans in equal numbers before Clinton carried the state by large margins in 1992 and 1996 and Democrats took control of almost all statewide offices. But both the state and the district swung to the right with the rest of the country in 2010, when Grey won his House seat and Phineas Fogg won the Governorship for the GOP. Fogg won a close race for reelection in 2014 but Grey fell to Lane. Local observers were divided over whether Grey lost because he was too conservative for the district or because some Tea Party activists were upset by his willingness to work with the Republican leadership.

Your task, then, is to advise Lane on whether she should run against Grey or Stein in 2016 and then to suggest, based upon what you have learned from this course, how he should plan his campaign.

You are to prepare this memorandum, of approximately 10 pages (typewritten and double-spaced), based upon the knowledge you have gained in this course. Victory, Inc. does not want a “game plan” as to how to run a campaign. Lane and Grey (as well as Cliffhanger and Stein) have plenty of knowledge on that score. Rather, the firm wants you to relate what broader knowledge you have gained in this course, drawing on the lectures and in particular on the reading. Indeed, your compensation for this assignment (reflected in your grade for the final examination) will bear a direct relationship to the way in which you integrate the course readings.

There is no such thing as a satisfactory answer that does not dwell heavily on course

readings. ***An essay that does not have substantial references to the course reading will receive a grade no higher than a C. To receive a C, your answer must have at least 3 citations from the reading. To receive a grade higher than a C, your answer must have substantially more citations from the reading.*** Three references do not guarantee a C. There is no “quota” or automatic criteria for the number of citations: Three references do not guarantee a C, 50 citations don’t guarantee an A. All depends upon the quality of your paper.

***You must also make a concrete recommendation for Lane: Either she runs for the Senate or for reelection to the House. She will respect your decision but you must tell him what you think he should do.***

The report will be delivered to my office (Chincoteague 4121) no later than 1:30 p.m., Monday, May 18, 2015. I leave for home to grade the exams at precisely 1:30. The Government and Politics department does not accept papers from students. So you must hand in your paper on time. You may leave the paper under my office door if you bring it earlier and I am not there.

In analyzing Lane’s options, consider the various aspects of the course relating to both House and Senate elections. You MAY NOT assume that anything of a scandalous nature (or the like, such as a candidate dying or getting a divorce in the middle of the campaign). Good luck (to both you and Lane).