POLS 3150-01 **Dr. Kenneth Warren**

American Presidential Elections McGannon Hall, Room 135
Fall, 2020 977-3036 (O); 963-0451 (H)
Tuesday/Thursday: 11-!2:15 McGannon Hall, Room 260

Reoccurring Zoom link for this class:

https://slu.zoom.us/j/93828929096?pwd=M3F4YWoyUlhoZWtEQ00yc2F5S1Rkdz09

Meeting ID: 938 2892 9096 (meeting ID probably not needed)

Below are required statements for this syllabus mandated by SLU

Students must wear masks and observe social distancing while on campus and in this class. Students will not be permitted to attend class without masks. This is SLU policy, as well as policy set by St. Louis City. For complete information on required face masks, see below.

Mandatory Statement on Face Masks (Fall 2020)

The required syllabus statement requiring face masks, which can be found here, reminds students about the University's *Interim Policy on Face Masks*, as well as ADA accommodation information.

TEMPORARY Mandatory Syllabus Statement on In-Class Attendance & Participation

SLU's current *University Attendance Policy* does not address challenges related to in-class attendance (and in-person participation in class-related activities) raised in the COVID-19 era. Acordingly, this temporary syllabus statement is required for all syllabi for all courses at all locations (except the Madrid Campus) offered by the colleges/schools and other academic units reporting to the University Provost.

STATEMENT ABOUT THE COURSE: The subject of presidential elections is inherently exciting to any person interested in politics. I want to make this course as informative, interesting, and exciting as possible. You have the special advantage of taking this course during the height of the 2020 presidential campaign. How could the timing of this course be better? Consequently, we are going to follow and discuss the day to day progress of this campaign as it progresses.

You will be responsible for reading half of the chapters for the mid-term and the other half of the chapters for the final. I will cover much of the material in these chapters, but I am not going to bore you with tedious lectures, covering systematically practically all of the materials covered

in these chapters by our authors, Nelson Polsby, Aaron Wildavsky, Steven Schier, and David Hopkins. I will definitely cover the highlights in these chapters and make certain what I expect from you for the mid-term and final, but I want to spend much of our time presenting and critiquing developments (breaking news) in the 2020 presidential election and placing them into historical perspective.

To do this, I will be forwarding to you the most current articles, editorials, columns, blogs, polls, etc. that will provide insights into what is happening in this presidential campaign. Often, the articles, poll results,, etc. will be only hours old. I will comment on most of these materials and we will discuss their significance in class. Obviously, some of the articles may offend your partisan beliefs since some will slam Republicans, while others will slam Democrats. Please understand that, although most of us are partisans, we should act as political science scholars in our search for understanding presidential campaign politics, not as sensitive, not-so-open-minded partisans. Frankly, this may not be so easy for many of you not very comfortable with having your partisan beliefs challenged and even shaken by, yes, I am going to say it, facts. What we will learn is that both Republicans and Democrats lie and distort in their campaign speeches, debates, and political ads, saying about anything to get elected. In fact, we will consult fact checkers from time to time to check the truthfulness of what Trump and Biden will say during the course of their campaign. Presidential campaigns have been rather dirty since active campaigning for the presidency first began. The U.S. presidential election constitutes the most important electoral contest in the world because the President of the United States is the most powerful office holder in the world. Consequently, since the stakes are high, it is understandable that the presidential candidates play hardball to win.

COURSE OUTLINE

I. Introductory Comments: Understanding Presidential Elections

A. American Presidential Elections Are Like No Other!
B. Biden v Trump: A very rogue president fights for re-election
C. What Internet sites are the best for insights into presidential elections?
D. Why poll data are so important to understand through careful scrutiny
E. We are a product of "the funnel of causality" (chill out and abandon your partisan blinders and think like a political scientist while still retaining your partisanship – it can be done)
F. Let's look at the early odds: Nate Silver's 538 -- http://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2016-election-forecast/
G. https://www.reddit.com/r/fivethirtyeight/comments/hfp4c6/comparison_of_support_trends_in_the_2016_and_2020/
H. Political scientists and analysts were almost universally wrong last time in predicting that Clinton would win. How wrong were they? Let's take a close look.
I. Why the Electoral College is so inherently undemocratic, while even defying common sense. Let's take a close look at how it is designed to elect presidents
J. Incumbent presidents usually win reelection, but the Trump presidency has been like no other. His strategy has been to play his base and his base has been steadfast in their support for Trump, but will this be enough?

K. Trying to understand the Trump base. What voters constitute the Trump base? Why do they unequivocally support Trump, no matter what he does?
L. What apparent support has Trump lost 2016 going into the 2020 election?

II. Presidential Elections: An Historical Overview

A. Introduction: the situation today in historical perspective
B. Creation of the Electoral College
C. Why third party candidates cannot win
D. A look back to all presidential elections
E. Early presidential elections to 1824
F. Presidential elections from 1828
G. Electoral College Politics and the Vote
H. Presidential election types: classic descriptions of types of presidential elections allowing us to better understand presidential election cycles
I. Summary

III. The American Electorate: An Analysis of Voters and Non-Voters

A. Typical turnout rates
B. Why people vote or do not vote
C. Partisanship: how it affects party loyalty, political attitudes, and voting behavior
D. Are voters ignorant about politics and American democracy?
E. Is ignorance about politics dangerous? Some electoral behavior scholars think so.
F. Summary

IV. Presidential Elections and Interest Group Politics

A. Interest groups and their support for our political parties and presidential candidates
B. What are special interests and are they a threat to our democratic processes (e.g., presidential elections)
C. How do they affect campaign spending and election outcomes?
D. Are third party candidates excluded in part by special interests/interest group politics?
E. Third party politics and the politics of futility
F. Summary

V. Presidential Campaigns, Rules, and Resources

A. Playing the Electoral College game: trying to win 270 electoral votes
B. The role of money in presidential campaigns: can presidential candidates with more money simply "buy" the election victory?
C. What is *Citizens United* and why all the fuss?
D. Information as a resource: controlling the information
E. Incumbency as an advantage and disadvantage
F. Summary

VI. Presidential Campaigns: From the Early Stages to Capturing the Nomination

A. Deciding whether or not to run for president: why do people decide to run and what factors do they consider before tossing their hat into the ring?
B. What are primaries? What strategies are employed to win a primary?
C. Why is the New Hampshire primary considered so important to win?
D. What are caucuses? What strategies are employed to win a caucus?
E. Why is the Iowa Caucus considered so important to win?
F. Looking back on the role primaries and caucuses have played in the presidential nomination process
G. What has the Pandemic meant to the nomination process?
H. Summary

VII. National Nomination Conventions

A. What role have they played historically in nominating their party's presidential nominee?
B. What role do national nominating conventions play today?
C. The Coronavirus and holing National Party Nominating Conventions
D. National Nominations as "non-newsworthy," sheer propaganda
E. The meaning of party platforms and planks: ideally and realistically
F. The declining role of the status of nominating conventions and their likely future as important presidential elections events
G. Summary

VIII. The General Campaign

A. Developing a campaign plan and sticking to it
B. Building your organization
C. Who are your key players in a presidential campaign organization?
D. Building a campaign war chest: having a lot of money is key to winning, but money is more important in winning the nomination than general election only in the sense that both party nominees normally have enough money to compete
E. Appealing to voters on the basis of issues, but how much to issue stands really matter? What are the true determinants of vote choice?
F. Trying to control the media to get good press and a lot of press coverage
G. The importance of polling, focus groups, advertising, the Internet, and social media play in modern presidential campaigns
H. How effective are political ads in changing a voter's mind on who to vote for?
I. GOTV drives: their importance and effectiveness
J. Campaign blunders and their impact; Trump has caused political scientists to reassess what is means to "blunder"
K. Summary

IX. Explaining Various Presidential Election Forecasting Models

A. Introducing various forecasting models
B. Looking at their success

C. Explaining and critiquing forecasting models, especially stressing the assumptions of each
D. Why I think that Nate Silver's poll-based forecasting model is probably the best kind of model to use to predict presidential election results, despite missing the call in 2016, as did almost every forecasting model
E. What we can learn from studying forecasting models
F. Following forecasting models during this presidential election
G. Summary

X. The Impact Presidential Elections Have On American Democracy, Public Policies, the American People, and the Future Well Being of America

A. Election outcomes do make a difference, but how much of a difference given our checks and balances system, especially in an era of polarized, party politics?
B. Don't forget the purpose of a presidential election/. It is to choose a leader who will lead America for at least the next four years on the domestic and foreign fronts. What sort of public policy differences would you expect to see from electing a Democrat (Biden) or a Republican (Trump) to the presidency? How much would it matter to the immediate and long-range future of America?
C. Summary

XI. Assessing American Presidential Elections and Suggestions for Reform

A. Open discussion: what is wrong with the present presidential election process?
B. What reforms would correct these shortcomings in the presidential election process?
C. Specifically, would you recommend reforms for the nomination process, the national party nominating conventions, the Electoral College, the way presidential candidates are financed, media coverage, political advertising, voter targeting strategies, the role interest groups play in the campaigns, registration and voting practices by election boards from state to state, and the like
D. All things considered, how democratic and fair are American presidential elections today?
E. Summary

Required Readings

Nelson Polsby, Aron Wildavsky, Steven Schier, and David Hopkins, Presidential *Elections: Strategies and Structures of American Politics*, 15th ed. (Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 2020). ISBN 978 -1-5381-2511-3

Handouts and online articles "hot off the press"

Attendance Policy: Under normal conditions, students are expected to attend class regularly since lectures are an important source of information, especially since topics discussed in lectures are frequently not covered in the book or in the hand-outs. This is because I will be lecturing on breaking news regarding the 2020 presidential campaign and political news in general that cannot be covered in previously published materials. I want to frequently comment

on what is happening in the presidential campaign as it develops, putting the breaking events into an historical perspective. I also want to convey my personal insights into my lectures. After all, I have lived through many presidential elections and have seen them evolve over the decades. If you must miss a class, please notify me at least an hour before class, if possible.

The reality is that because of Covid-19, we do not know what will evolve during this fall semester. I hope for the best, but I must plan for the worst. Will we continue to have in-person classes? I do not know. I do know that I will have to develop hybrid classes to accommodate all students since some students have conveyed that they feel uncomfortable coming to in-person-classes. SLU understands this and will not force any student to risk their health this semester. We will all get through this Pandemic together.

Class presentations: If required, class presentations will be presented in class or via Zoom if the student has selected to not attend in-person classes. Specific instructions will be given before the student is scheduled to present. The reality is that class presentations might be impractical this semester because of Covid realities, some technical issues, and the large class size. I will keep you posted on this.

What will happen if I become unable to teach in-person classes, but well enough to teach online?
SLU has required students to be notified as to how the class will continue. I will send to you the Zoom link for the classes. If I cannot continue to teach online, we have a backup instructor scheduled to teach the remainder of the course and you will be notified at that time about the specifics of the backup instructor taking over the class. I hope that such a situation does not occur.

The possibility of hybrid classes. At this time I have only tentative plans for developing a hybrid class. However, if I believe that a hybrid class would need to be developed (e.g., half the class meeting in-person on Tuesday with the other half meeting via Zoom on that day, and vice versa for Thursday) to protect student health, as well as my own, I will notify you about the specifics.

Grading Policy

Mid-Term		150 points
Final		150 points
Project /Paper		70 points
Class Participation		30 points
	Total	400 points

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The numerical equivalents of letter grades are:

94-100 = A	91-93 = A-	88-90 = B+	82-87 = B	80-81 = B-
77-79 = C+	73-76 = C	70-72 = C-	65-69 = D	Below 65 = F

Course Learning Objectives and Assessment of Student Learning

The purpose of this course is twofold: (1) to teach students comprehensively about the presidential election process from an historical and modern perspective; and (2) to make students think critically about American presidential elections in the context of political science research on the subject. Students will be assessed on their general knowledge about various aspects of presidential elections as taught in this class through a midterm and final exam and in-class discussions, as well as in their ability to apply what they have learned in this class about presidential elections to critique the strengths and weaknesses of the presidential election process.

COURSE EVALUATION

During the last day of the semester, students will complete a confidential course evaluation in class rather than an on-line evaluation. This is because too many students fail to complete online course evaluations, reducing the value of the course evaluation.

Student Success Center Syllabus Statement:
In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. The Student Success Center assists students with academic and career related services, is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331) and the School of Nursing (Suite, 114). Students can visit www.slu.edu/success to learn more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.

- University-level support (e.g., tutoring services, university writing services, disability services, academic coaching, career services, and/or facets of curriculum planning).

Disability Services Academic Accommodations Syllabus Statement
Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations **must** contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Once successfully registered, the student also **must** notify the course instructor that they wish to access accommodations in the course.

Please contact Disability Services, located within the Student Success Center, at Disability_services@slu.edu or 314.977.3484 to schedule an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about the student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services and viewed within Banner via the instructor's course roster.

Note: Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one are encouraged to contact to Disability Services.

Title IX Syllabus Statement

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX coordinator, Anna R. Kratky (DuBourg Hall, room 36;akratky@slu.edu; 314-977-3886) and share the basic facts of your experience with her. The Title IX coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK. To view SLU's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web addresses:

http://www.slu.edu/general-counsel-home/office-of-institutional-equity-and-diversity/sexual-misconduct-policy

www.slu.edu/here4you .

Academic Integrity Syllabus Statement

Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of

falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy was adopted in Spring 2015, and can be accessed on the Provost's Office website at:http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic_affairs/University-wide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%206-26-15.pdf.

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has adopted its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites. All SLU students are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions, and appeals. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the Dean/Director of the College, School or Center in which your program is housed.

Students with Special Needs - Disability Services

Any student who feels that he/she may need academic accommodations in order to meet the requirements of this course -- as outlined in the syllabus -- due to presence of a disability, should contact the Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action. Please telephone the office at 314-977-8885, or visit DuBourg Hall Room 36. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Americans With Disabilities Act

All provisions are honored by this instructor.

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COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES
POLICY ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic Integrity and Honesty

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student's own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an

assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

Any clear violation of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. Possible sanctions for violation of academic integrity may include, but are not limited to, assignment of a failing grade in a course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University. Students should review the College of Arts and Sciences policy on Academic Honesty, which can be accessed on-line at http://www.slu.edu/colleges/AS/ under "Quicklinks for Students" or in hard copy form in the Arts and Sciences Policy Binder in each departmental or College office.