

POL 3041: CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS (4 units)
MWF 8:30-9:35 am, Fermanian 114
Fall 2026

Dr. Linda Beail

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Office Hours: MW 2:45-4:30 pm, Tuesdays 1-2:30 pm

PLNU Mission: To Teach – To Shape – To Send.

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Course Description:

This course is designed to help you understand and analyze the American electoral process from the perspective of parties, candidates, campaign professionals, the media and voters. Through readings, podcasts, group projects and class discussions, you will become familiar with the structure of American presidential elections, the history and evolution of campaigning & voting, recent trends in partisanship and vote choice, basic techniques of political advertising, and the role of media and popular culture in the electoral process.

Course Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, you will be able to

- Situate this year's national elections in the context of U.S. elections historically.
- Explain the changes in partisan alignment over the past 80 years, and how this affects the get-out-the-vote and electoral college strategies of each party.
- Analyze the evolution of media coverage of politics, and explain how voters find and use political information via news and social media.
- Reflect on how campaigns and elections are evolving from firsthand observation/experience, and appreciate the constraints and opportunities facing campaign professionals, political strategists, candidates and journalists as they do their work.
- Predict and evaluate the success of this year's congressional campaigns.
- Evaluate the polarization and health of our democratic electoral system.
- Write and communicate more clearly, persuasively and insightfully.

Program Learning Outcomes:

- Students will develop an appreciation of the field of politics (campaign volunteer experiences and reflection).
- Understand and critically assess the processes, theories, and outcomes of political institutions and political behavior (essays/exams).
- Demonstrate oral communication abilities, particularly to convey complex ideas, recognize diverse viewpoints, and offer empirical evidence of an argument (Race to Watch presentations, final project/presentation).

Spiritual Care

Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If students have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact the [Office of Spiritual Development](#).

PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

PLNU Recording Notification

In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel.

Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures in the University Catalog. Please consult the [Academic Honesty Policy](#) in the [University Catalog](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

PLNU Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g. ChatGPT, iA Writer, Marmot, Botowski, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc.) is prohibited in this course for any aspect of your work, including idea generation, drafting, editing, or final submissions. This course is designed to assess your independent critical thinking, writing, and research skills without the assistance of AI technologies. Violations of this policy will be treated as breaches of academic integrity.

PLNU Academic Behavior Policy

Both faculty and students at Point Loma Nazarene University have the right to expect a safe and ordered environment for learning. Students are expected to take the initiative to learn and conduct themselves in a mature and civil manner in the classroom environment. Any student behavior that is disruptive or threatening is a serious affront to Point Loma Nazarene University as a learning community. Students who fail to adhere to these behavioral standards may be subject to disciplinary action, including removal from class or further university sanctions. For a full definition of disruptive behavior, response procedures, and the appeal process, please consult the [Academic Behavior Policy](#) in the [University Catalog](#).

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center, [by email](#) or phone at 619-849-2533. Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines approved accommodations. Professors are able to view a student's approved accommodations through Accommodate.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their approved accommodations in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive; as such, clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability-related need should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. In accordance with ADA, accommodations cannot constitute a fundamental alteration to course outcomes; therefore, planning ahead is vital in establishing appropriate accommodations for equal access to this course. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC eligibility process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any accommodations.

Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice-free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) has experienced other forms of discrimination, you can find more information on reporting and resources via the [Nondiscrimination and Anti-harassment Policy](#).

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the [Title IX Office](#). Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, it is required to disclose information about such

misconduct to the Title IX Office. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact [Counseling Services](#) or [consult the list of campus pastors](#).

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.

LomaBooks Instructions

This course is part of our course material delivery program, [LomaBooks](#). The bookstore will provide each student with a convenient package containing all required physical materials; all digitally delivered materials will be integrated into Canvas.

You should have received an email from the bookstore confirming the list of materials that will be provided for each of your courses and asking you to select how you would like to receive any printed components (in-store pick up or home delivery). If you have not done so already, please confirm your fulfillment preference so the bookstore can prepare your [LomaBooks](#) materials.

Loma Writing Center

Getting feedback from the Loma Writing Center while you’re in the process of working on an assignment is a great way to improve the quality of your writing and develop as a writer. You are encouraged to talk with a trained writing consultant about getting started on an assignment, organizing your ideas, finding and citing sources, revising, editing for grammar, and polishing final drafts, and more.

Walk-ins are welcome, but we recommend making an appointment in advance. For information about how to make in-person or online appointments, see [Loma Writing Center webpage](#) or visit the Loma Writer Center on the first floor of the Ryan Library, room 221.

- [Appointment Calendar](#)
- [Website](#)
- [Email](#)

Campus Resources

The PLNU [Tutoring Center](#) offers support with everything you need to succeed — whether it’s learning study strategies and test-taking techniques, getting help from a tutor, using technology to read and write, or editing a research paper. They also offer individual or small group tutorial sessions and special review sessions before exams for several courses. These services are **free** for PLNU undergraduate students. Some helpful **study strategies** that may assist you in this course can be found [here](#).

Research librarians are available to help you with your research papers and projects in Ryan Library. You can reach them by phone at (619) 849-2337, by text at (619)592-8884, or by [email](#). To search the library’s databases for books and articles, or to find quick and easy reference to our citation style guide and resources in political science, please visit our department’s [research guide](#) from Ryan Library.

[The Wellness Center](#) is available for medical, counseling and nutrition services to students. Many college students experience strained relationships, stress, anxiety, depression, physical health

challenges, and other barriers to learning. The Wellness Center offers help and resources to deal with these kind of issues.

Style Guidelines

In political science, the most common form of citations is the “author-date” format from the [Chicago Manual of Style](#). Please use this style for citations in any work for this class.

Please remember that the names of political parties are proper nouns and thus always capitalized (Democratic Party and Democrats, Republican Party and Republicans – NOT democrats and republicans).

Final Exam Policy

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination **on its scheduled day**. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Traditional Undergraduate Records: Final Exam Schedules](#) site. If you find yourself scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams. However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted.

Class Expectations

Class time is precious. It is our opportunity to interact, discuss, and create knowledge together. It is not a passive experience, but one that you should be ready to participate actively in. Please do not use technology and personal devices to distract yourself or other students from the focus that we need in this class to examine electoral data and evidence, actively listen and converse with one another, and hone our critical thinking skills. Please be ready to put away your phones and laptops and be fully present with one another, without leaving the classroom during class time.

The American electorate is polarized and partisan conflict is at a high pitch all around us. I know there will be differences of opinion in the class as we move through this election season. Please keep in mind that we are not here to debate each other’s vote choice, nor to doubt the intelligence and good faith of our colleagues who have a different perspective. My aim is for each of you to learn a tremendous amount of context, political history, scholarly research, and current political praxis in order to better understand, analyze, and explain how & why we have the processes and outcomes that we do in American elections. You will have a richer experience of the course and its material if you do not treat it as a “team sport,” simply rooting for your partisans to win; but attempt to understand why candidates, parties and voters of all different persuasions act & think the way they do, and the socio-political forces that have shaped us with different attitudes and experiences. This is not to dampen your political enthusiasm as we get into the thick of campaign season – many of you study politics because you are passionate about issues, candidates and values, and will spend your careers pursuing those things! Just remember that this course is not a place to debate which party or ideology is “right” or “wrong,” but a place to learn more about the evolution and function of our democratic system, and how to make it best represent and respond to us. Each and every one of you have valuable insights, experiences, perspectives and questions to share. I don’t want any of you to feel silenced – or to dominate the conversation – but to collaborate in gaining knowledge and insight. There is much to learn by wrestling with ideas, but not from attacking or belittling one another on a personal level. My expectation is that we will all strive to treat one another with respect, kindness and professionalism, which includes listening carefully and responding thoughtfully and with grace to the thoughts and opinions of our colleagues, which will lead to a more fruitful learning environment for all of us.

Graded Course Requirements

Exam and due dates are noted on the syllabus. All papers and assignments should be submitted via our course's Canvas site and are generally due at 11:59 pm unless specified otherwise. Any late assignments will lose 5% from total possible score per each 24 hours past the deadline.

Class attendance & participation, including one electoral race presentation	15%
Three in-class essays/exams, @15%	45%
Campaign volunteer work and reflection (minimum 12 hours volunteering)	15%
Final electoral research project & presentation	25%

Grading Scale

A	93-100%	C	73-76%
A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	83-86%	D	63-66%
B-	80-82%	D-	60-62%
C+	77-79%	F	0-59%

Required Course Texts

John Sides, Daron Shaw, Matt Grossman & Keena Lipsitz, *Campaigns and Elections*, 5th edition, WW Norton, 2026.

Erin Geiger Smith, *Thank You for Voting: The Maddening, Enlightening, Inspiring Truth About Voting in America - An Essential Primer on Your Ballot Rights and Civic Participation*, Harper Collins, 2020.

Liliana Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*, University of Chicago Press, 2018.

The New York Times and/or *The Wall Street Journal* as national papers of record that will be covering this fall's elections. Free student access is available to both of these online, without paywall, via your PLNU login. Instructions on how to access your subscription are posted in our Canvas course site. Articles and podcasts as assigned.

Course Outline (subject to revision as the semester – and electoral campaigns – unfold. See Canvas modules for specific readings and assignments each week):

WEEK AND TOPICS	DATE	PREPARATION FOR CLASS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
WEEK 1 Why Elections? Evaluating Democracy	Monday August 31	Introduction to the course and each other	
	Wednesday September 2	Please read Sides, Shaw, Grossman and Lipsitz chapter 1 Please watch Pew Research Center, Do Americans Trust Their Elections? (4 minute video), Jan. 5, 2022 Please watch 2026 Midterm Election Scenarios , Harry Enten, CNN News, August 16, 2026 (15 minutes)	

	Friday September 4	<i>Thank You For Voting</i> chapters 1 and 2	
WEEK 2	Monday September 7	Labor Day Holiday – No Class Meeting	
American Electoral Process: Rules, Representation, Access	Wednesday September 9	<i>Thank You For Voting</i> chapter 3 Sides, Shaw, Grossman and Lipsitz chapter 2 (pp. 26-36) “Voter Identification,” The MIT Elections Lab, June 24, 2026.	
	Friday September 11	Sides, Shaw, Grossman and Lipsitz chapter 2 (pp. 37-47) Schraufnagel, Pomante II and Li, "Cost of Voting in the American States 2024," Election Law Journal vol. 21, no. 3, 2022 (7 pages – use PLNU ID login)	
WEEK 3	Monday September 14	<i>Thank You For Voting</i> chapter 7 Sides, Shaw, Grossman and Lipsitz chapter 2 (pp. 48-62) Listen to Episode One, The Gerrymandering Project podcast	
Transformation of American Campaigns: Historical Evolution of Elections	Wednesday September 16	Sides, Shaw, Grossman and Lipsitz chapter 3 Jill Lepore, “Rock, Paper, Scissors: How We Used To Vote,” <i>New Yorker</i> , October 13, 2008	
	Friday September 18	Social Media, Visual Design – Hunter Schwarz	Race to Watch: Maine Senate Presentation Due
WEEK 4	Monday September 21	Sides, Shaw, Grossman and Lipsitz chapter 12 Asma Khalid, “On the Sidelines of Democracy: Exploring Why So Many Americans Don’t Vote,” read or listen (7 minutes)	
Who Votes? Political Participation			

	Wednesday September 23	<i>Thank You For Voting</i> chapter 4 Laura Brill, " Made, Not Born: Young Voters and the Policies that Make Them ," LA Review of Books, September 3, 2020	
	Friday September 25	<i>Thank You For Voting</i> chapters 5 and 6	Race to Watch: Georgia Governor Presentation Due
WEEK 5 Financing Campaigns	Monday September 28	Sides, Shaw, Grossman and Lipsitz chapter 4 Watch "Can You Buy An Election?," Netflix, Whose Vote Counts Explained (25 minutes)	
	Wednesday September 30	Data at Open Secrets website Watch Campaign Legal Center, What is Dark Money? (3 minutes)	
	Friday October 2	In-Class Exam One	
WEEK 6 Campaign Strategies and Public Opinion	Monday October 5	Sides, Shaw, Grossman and Lipsitz chapter 5 "How to Win an Election" (8 minutes) Excerpt of Frontline documentary online, The Persuaders . Please watch minute 39:15 - 51: 45 (12 minutes). This is a film about marketing, but this final segment profiles Republican pollster Frank Luntz and the way that marketing/microtargeting get used in politics, and how issues get framed.	Race to Watch: Texas US Senate Presentation Due
	Wednesday October 7	<i>Thank You For Voting</i> chapter 9 Dave Roos, " How Political Polling Works " Courtney Kennedy, Pew Research, Key things to know about election polling in the US	
Political Parties	Friday October 9	Sides, Shaw, Grossman and Lipsitz chapter 6 Lee Drutman on two-party system	

WEEK 7 Media and Elections: News and Political Ads	Monday October 12	Sides, Shaw, Grossman and Lipsitz chapter 8 <i>Thank You For Voting</i> chapter 8	Race to Watch: Michigan Senate Presentation Due
	Wednesday October 14	Ted Brader, "Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions," <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> , vol 49 no. 2 (April 2005), 388-405. (You may need to be logged in to your Loma account to access the link.) This New Science Peeks Inside Voters' Brains As They Watch Political Ads , Joe Lauzauskas, February 1, 2020 Natasha Singer, "This Ad's for You (Not Your Neighbor)," NYTimes September 20, 2022	
	Friday October 16		
WEEK 8 Congressional Elections	Monday October 19	Sides, Shaw, Grossman and Lipsitz chapter 10	Race to Watch: CA 48 th , US House of Representatives Presentation Due
	Wednesday October 21	Midterm Election Assessments TBA	
	Friday October 23	FALL BREAK – No Class Meeting	
WEEK 9	Monday October 26	To round out all the reading we've been doing and data we've been analyzing -- let's watch (or listen to) some documentary-style footage that can give us a better sense of what it's like to be on the campaign trail in election season. Here are a few options: pick ONE that you have access to/find interesting, and watch/listen. Then write a short (2 page, 500-600 words) reflection on what you learned from seeing the campaign through these eyes -- what was new, or surprising, or confirmed something we learned in	

		class but brought it home to you, or challenged something we've read/discussed? What did you experience and learn that will be important to how you understand the upcoming midterm elections (or presidential cycle)? • "On the Trail," the 2020 Presidential primary campaign through the eyes of several women journalists, streaming on HBO Max • "Knock Down the House," following four congressional candidates in 2018, streaming on Netflix • Stranglehold podcast, episode 5: The Weekend (check out their website and listen to the episode on New Hampshire primary and its voters). • Street Fight (Cory Booker runs for mayor in Newark, NJ -- YouTube)	
	Wednesday October 28		
State and Local Elections	Friday October 30	Sides, Shaw, Grossman and Lipsitz chapter 11	Turn in topic for final project no later than Sunday, November 1, 11:59 pm
WEEK 10	Monday November 2	State and local elections (continued) Tomorrow – Tuesday November 3 – is ELECTION DAY!! Be sure to finish your campaign volunteer hours. Be sure to vote if you are eligible, and to encourage & help others to participate in our democracy!	
	Wednesday November 4	Debrief Election 2026 results together – follow election results Tuesday night and Wednesday morning in <i>Wall Street Journal</i> and <i>New York Times</i>	
	Friday November 6	In-Class Exam Two	
WEEK 11 Vote Choice	Monday November 9	Sides, Shaw, Grossman and Lipsitz chapter 13	Campaign Volunteering Reflection due

		Amy Walter, Economy and the Election (partisan gap on economic outlook)	no later than Tuesday, November 10, 11:59 pm in Canvas
	Wednesday November 11	Religion, Race and Gender: Social Influences The Real Origins of the Religious Right, Randall Balmer, Politico Voting Patterns in the 2024 Election, Hannah Hartig, Scott Keeter, Andrew Daniller and Ted Van Green, "Behind Trump's 2024 Victory, a more Racially and Ethnically Diverse Voter Coalition," Pew Research Center, June 26, 2025 Gender Gap Fact Sheet, stats on gender gap in presidential elections since 1980 from the Center for American Women & Politics Weiler and Hetherington on Preferences and Politics (alignment of worldview, culture and partisanship) -- watch, about 6 minutes	
	Friday November 13		
WEEK 12 Presidential Elections	Monday November 16	Sides, Shaw, Grossman and Lipsitz chapter 9	
	Wednesday November 18	<i>Thank You For Voting</i> chapter 10 Five Common Misconceptions About the Electoral College Proposal Calls for Popular Vote to Determine Winner Take a look at Electoral College maps visually adjusted for population and vote share.	Turn in annotated bibliography for final project no later than Wednesday, November 18, 11:59 pm

		And then check out maps of the Electoral College from 2016, 2020, and 2024. You can even use this tool to predict 2028's Electoral College map!	
	Friday November 20		
WEEK 13	Monday November 23	Working day for final projects/time to conference with Dr. Beail about your final projects (no regular class meeting)	
	Wednesday November 25 – Friday November 27	Thanksgiving Break – no class meeting	
WEEK 14	Monday November 30	Liliana Mason, <i>Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity</i> chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-44)	
Partisanship as Polarizing Identity	Wednesday December 2	Liliana Mason, <i>Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity</i> chapters 4-6 (pp. 45-101)	
	Friday December 4	Liliana Mason, <i>Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity</i> chapters 7-8 (pp. 102-141)	
WEEK 15 Future of Democratic Elections	Monday December 7	Evaluating American Electoral Democracy: Where Do We Go From Here? Readings TBD	
	Wednesday December 9	Readings TBD	
	Friday December 11	In-Class Exam Three	
FINAL EXAM	Wednesday December 16, 8 am -10 am	In-person summative activity/presentation of final projects at 8 am in our normal classroom Turn in written copy of final project in Canvas by 8 am	Final Projects due in Canvas no later than Wednesday December 16, 8 am