Master of Science in Political Analytics
POAN 5110 Fundraising Analytics & Campaign Finance

Scheduled Meeting Times: TBD

3 credits, In person, Selective course

Instructor:
Office Hours:
Response Policy:

Facilitator/Teaching Assistant, if applicable:
Office Hours:
Response Policy:

Course Overview

Billions of dollars are raised and spent during U.S. presidential and congressional races each election cycle. Campaign expenditures play a critical role in election outcomes and political donations are used by corporations, unions, advocacy groups, and individuals to influence elected officials and public policy. Whether they are working for campaigns, advocacy groups, or consultants, political analysts need to have a sound understanding of campaign finance law and regulations, the chief strategies that contributors and recipients use to pursue their interests, and the incredibly rich data that is available to analyze and study campaign giving in the United States.

In this course, students will learn about the history and current state of campaign finance regulation, what motivates donors to give and what they may (or may not) receive in return, and how campaigns themselves fundraise and spend their billions. Students will become familiar with the ways data analytics have influenced how modern campaigns approach fundraising and the strategies used by candidates to finance a run for office. Finally, students will engage with the potential benefits and pitfalls of campaign finance reforms which, along with technological change, promise to keep political fundraising in a state of flux.

This course is a selective course for students in the Political Analytics program; students in other programs may enroll with the instructor’s permission. This course will be delivered in person and will meet once per week for the whole semester. It is useful for students to have taken an introductory-level course in statistics or econometrics before taking this course, but it is not required. Political Analytics students who are enrolled concurrently in Introduction to Political Analytics will have sufficient preparation.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course students should be able to:

L1: Explain the historical evolution of campaign finance in the United States, the legal frameworks that regulate campaign contributions, and the philosophical arguments underpinning them.

L2: Evaluate the arguments and evidence that political scholars put forward about why individuals and groups make contributions.

L3: Assess the impact of campaign spending on elections and public policy.

L4: Explain the connections between campaign giving and interest group lobbying.

L5: Analyze campaign contributions data in order to present insights and recommendations about interest group and political campaign strategies.

Readings

Books


Other Required Readings (available through Canvas course site or web link)

*Articles and Reports:*


Gerber, Alan S. "Does campaign spending work? Field experiments provide evidence and suggest new theory." *American Behavioral Scientist* 47.5 (2004): 541-574.


Legal Cases:


Speechnow.org v. FEC, No. 08-5223 (D.C. Cir. 2010)
Supplemental Readings (not required)


Important Data Sources

The instructor will provide detailed guidance for using these data sources on the course website and in class.


Center for Responsive Politics: https://www.opensecrets.org/bulk-data/downloads

Follow the Money (state-level data): https://www.followthemoney.org/

Database on Ideology, Money in Politics, and Elections (DIME): https://data.stanford.edu/dime

Lobbying Disclosure Reports and Data:
- Senate: https://lda.senate.gov/system/public/
- House: https://lobbyingdisclosure.house.gov/
- Lobby View (3rd party data aggregator): https://www.lobbyview.org/

Assignments and Assessments

The following assignments will be required for students to complete throughout the course. Submission and grading information will be listed in Canvas.

Class Participation (15%) [L1, L2, L3, L4, L5] You are expected to attend all class sessions, come to class on time, complete all assigned readings, and engage in class discussions. Please be prepared to discuss the readings every week. Relevant, respectful dialogue, thoughtful comments and active listening are all required as important elements of learning in a graduate environment. If you need to miss a class for any reason, please discuss the absence with the instructor in advance.

Response Papers (20%) [L1, L2, L3, L4] Students will be required to write 4 response papers during weeks 2-12 of the course. The instructor will post a sign up sheet to ensure that response papers are evenly distributed across the whole course. Response papers must address every required reading for a particular week. Response papers should briefly explain each author’s basic argument and evidence before moving on to the student’s reaction. Response papers should be approximately 4-5 pages double-spaced and must be uploaded to the course site by the end of each week’s module, so by Sunday night at 11:59pm Eastern. The instructor will post additional details about the requirements for response papers on the course website.
**Reading Presentation** (10%) [L1, L2, L3, L4] Students will be required to complete one reading presentation during weeks 2-12, explaining a required reading to the class in approximately 5-10 minutes. The instructor will post a sign up sheet to ensure that reading presentations are distributed across the whole course. The instructor will also provide an overview of what the presentation should cover on the course website. Students should not make any slides, but should prepare notes from which to present.

**Data analysis of an interest group or candidate campaign** (15%) [L5] Students will be required to conduct a structured data analysis of the donations from an interest group or to a candidate campaign. This exercise is intended to give students experience with conducting specific types of analyses using campaign finance data (for example, examining the ideology or seniority of donation recipients or the geographical distribution of donors) as a way to understand donation and fundraising strategies. The instructor will provide detailed instructions, examples, and model code for this exercise on the course website. Unlike the final paper, the instructor will put more limits and structure on this exercise to ensure that students get experience with particular types of analysis. Students may use the group or candidate whose donations they analyze as the subject of their final paper (though this is not required). This assignment will be due at the end of week 7 (by Sunday night at 11:59pm Eastern).

**Final Research Project** [L1, L2, L3, L4, L5] (40%) Each student will produce a final paper that analyzes how a particular interest group seeks to influence some aspect of American politics through giving or how a particular campaign raises money. Students may choose their own topic, but must write a short proposal first about their choice and obtain the instructor’s approval before proceeding (it is also highly recommended that students speak with the instructor about their topic before submitting the proposal). The paper proposal is due by the end of week 9, but students should start thinking about it earlier. Students must incorporate concepts from the class in their paper. The paper must incorporate some quantitative analysis of campaign finance data. Students will also present on their research projects in the final two weeks of the class. The instructor will post detailed instructions on the course website about the requirements for the research paper proposal, the research presentation, and the research paper. Papers should be 10-15 pages double-spaced and are due by the end of the final class week (by Sunday night at 11:59pm Eastern).

The final research project has three components which will contribute to a student’s final grade as follows.

- Research project proposal (5%)
- Research presentation (15%)
- Research paper with data analytics (20%)

**Grading**

The final grade will be calculated as described below:
**FINAL GRADING SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98–100 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93–97.9 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90–92.9 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87–89.9 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83–86.9 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80–82.9 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77–79.9 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73–76.9 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70–72.9 %</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60–69.9 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59.9% and below</td>
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**Assignment/Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment/Assessment</th>
<th>% Weight</th>
<th>Individual or Group/Team Grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Papers (4)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Presentation (1)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Research Project: Proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Research Project: Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Research Project: Research Paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Individual</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Course Schedule/Course Calendar**

[Note: The class date and time are not yet known, so exact dates will be filled in once that information is available]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics and Activities</th>
<th>Readings (due on this day)</th>
<th>Assignments (due on this date)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Course introductions</td>
<td>Madison, James, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay. &quot;The Federalist Papers.&quot; 10, 51 (6 pages)</td>
<td>Questionnaire about student background and interests due by end of week, 11:59pm ET on Sunday.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background on Campaign Finance, Interest Groups, and Lobbying</td>
<td>Sorauf, Frank J. <em>Inside Campaign Finance: Myths and Realities</em>. Yale</td>
<td>No Response Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Speechnow.org v. FEC, No. 08-5223 (D.C. Cir. 2010)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Response paper if it’s one of your weeks</td>
<td>Reading presentation if it’s your week</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Reading presentation if it’s your week</td>
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<td>Response paper if it’s one of your weeks</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Who gives and why? - Part II</td>
<td>Reading presentation if it’s your week</td>
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<th>Week 6</th>
<th>What does money buy? - Part I</th>
<th>Response paper if it’s one of your weeks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hall, Richard L., and Frank W. Wayman. &quot;Buying time: Moneyed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Response paper if it’s one of your weeks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reading presentation if it’s your week</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Sources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gerber, Alan S.</td>
<td>&quot;Does campaign spending work? Field experiments provide evidence and suggest new theory.&quot; <em>American Behavioral Scientist</em> 47.5 (2004): 541-574. (33 pages)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Drutman, Lee</td>
<td><em>The business of America is lobbying: How corporations became politicized and politics became more</em></td>
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<td>Response paper if it’s one of your weeks</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading presentation if it’s your week</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Data analysis project due by 11:59pm ET on Sunday</td>
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Supplemental (optional) reading:  
Reading presentation if it’s your week  
Research project proposal due by 11:59pm ET on Sunday |
|---|---|---|---|
Reading presentation if it’s your week |
| --- | --- | --- |
Schwam-Baird, Michael, et al. "Do public matching funds and tax credits | Response paper if it’s one of your weeks  
Reading presentation if it’s your week |

Week 13
Research Project Presentations
No Response Papers
No Reading Presentations
Research Presentation due in class

Week 14
Research Project Presentations
No Response Papers
No Reading Presentations
Research Presentation due in class
Research paper due by 11:59pm ET on Sunday

Course Policies

Participation and Attendance
I expect you to come to class on time and thoroughly prepared. I will keep track of attendance and look forward to an interesting, lively and confidential discussion. If you miss an experience in class, you miss an important learning moment and the class misses your contribution. More than one absence will affect your grade.

Late work
Work that is not submitted on the due date noted in the course syllabus without advance notice and permission from the instructor will be graded down 1/3 of a grade for every day it is late (e.g., from a B+ to a B).

Citation & Submission
All written assignments must use standard citation format (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago), cite sources, and be submitted to the course website (not via email).

**School and University Policies and Resources**

*Copyright Policy*

Please note—Due to copyright restrictions, online access to this material is limited to instructors and students currently registered for this course. Please be advised that by clicking the link to the electronic materials in this course, you have read and accept the following:

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

*Academic Integrity*

Columbia University expects its students to act with honesty and propriety at all times and to respect the rights of others. It is fundamental University policy that academic dishonesty in any guise or personal conduct of any sort that disrupts the life of the University or denigrates or endangers members of the University community is unacceptable and will be dealt with severely. It is essential to the academic integrity and vitality of this community that individuals do their own work and properly acknowledge the circumstances, ideas, sources, and assistance upon which that work is based. Academic honesty in class assignments and exams is expected of all students at all times.

SPS holds each member of its community responsible for understanding and abiding by the SPS Academic Integrity and Community Standards posted at [https://sps.columbia.edu/students/student-support/academic-integrity-community-standards](https://sps.columbia.edu/students/student-support/academic-integrity-community-standards). You are required to read these standards within the first few days of class. Ignorance of the School's policy concerning academic dishonesty shall not be a defense in any disciplinary proceedings.

*Diversity Statement*

It is our intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students’ learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is our intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture.

*Accessibility*

Columbia is committed to providing equal access to qualified students with documented disabilities. A student’s disability status and reasonable accommodations are individually determined based upon disability documentation and related information gathered through the intake process. For more information regarding this service, please visit the University's Health Services website: [https://health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services](https://health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services).

*Class Recordings*

All or portions of the class may be recorded at the discretion of the Instructor to support your learning. At any point, the Instructor has the right to discontinue the recording if it is deemed to be obstructive to the learning process.

If the recording is posted, it is confidential and it is prohibited to share the recording outside of the class.

**SPS Academic Resources**
The Division of Student Affairs provides students with academic counseling and support services such as online tutoring and career coaching: [https://spscolumbia.edu/students/student-support/student-support-resources](https://spscolumbia.edu/students/student-support/student-support-resources).

**Columbia University Information Technology**
*Columbia University Information Technology* (CUIT) provides Columbia University students, faculty and staff with central computing and communications services. Students, faculty and staff may access [University-provided and discounted software downloads](https://spscolumbia.edu/students/student-support/student-support-resources).

**Columbia University Library**
*Columbia's extensive library system* ranks in the top five academic libraries in the nation, with many of its services and resources available online.

**The Writing Center**
The Writing Center provides writing support to undergraduate and graduate students through one-on-one consultations and workshops. They provide support at every stage of your writing, from brainstorming to final drafts. If you would like writing support, please visit the following site to learn about services offered and steps for scheduling an appointment. This resource is open to Columbia graduate students at no additional charge. Visit [http://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center](http://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center).

**Career Design Lab**
The Career Design Lab supports current students and alumni with individualized career coaching including career assessment, resume & cover letter writing, agile internship job search strategy, personal branding, interview skills, career transitions, salary negotiations, and much more. Wherever you are in your career journey, the Career Design Lab team is here to support you. Visit [https://careerdesignlab.spuscolumbia.edu/](https://careerdesignlab.spuscolumbia.edu/)

**Netiquette**
*Only applies to courses using online platforms*

Online sessions in this course will be offered through Zoom, accessible through Canvas. A reliable Internet connection and functioning webcam and microphone are required. It is your responsibility to resolve any known technical issues prior to class. Your webcam should remain turned on for the duration of each class, and you should expect to be present the entire time. Avoid distractions and maintain professional etiquette.

**Please note:** Instructors may use Canvas or Zoom analytics in evaluating your online participation.

More guidance can be found at: [https://jolt.merlot.org/vol6no1/mintu-wimsatt_0310.htm](https://jolt.merlot.org/vol6no1/mintu-wimsatt_0310.htm)
Netiquette is a way of defining professionalism for collaborations and communication that take place in online environments. Here are some Student Guidelines for this class:

- Avoid using offensive language or language that is not appropriate for a professional setting.
- Do not criticize or mock someone’s abilities or skills.
- Communicate in a way that is clear, accurate and easy for others to understand.
- Balance collegiality with academic honesty.
- Keep an open-mind and be willing to express your opinion.
- Reflect on your statements and how they might impact others.
- Do not hesitate to ask for feedback.
- When in doubt, always check with your instructor for clarification.