PO 325/IR 302: Campaigns and Elections
Around the World

Boston University, Fall 2021

Last revised: September 24, 2021

Professor: Taylor C. Boas
Email: tboas@bu.edu
Office location: 232 Bay State Rd., rm. 311B
Office phone: 617-353-4214
Office hours: Monday/Wednesday 10–11:30

Lecture location: CAS 216
Lecture time: Monday/Wednesday/Friday 9:05–9:55

1 Course Description

The media lavish vast amounts of attention on electoral campaigns in the United States, but how do
these events play out beyond our borders? This course will examine electoral campaigns in com-
parative perspective, with examples drawn from Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile,
Mexico, Peru), Western Europe (France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, U.K.), Eastern Europe (Russia and
Ukraine), Asia (Japan and the Philippines), and Africa (Kenya). In the first part of the course,
we examine how campaigns change over time, whether they are becoming more professionalized
or “Americanized,” and what role international political consultants play in this process. In the
second part, we examine how campaigns vary across countries according to party and electoral
systems, campaign finance regulations, the prevalence of vote buying, the nature of the mass me-
dia, the prevalence of violence, and use of the Internet and social media. The third part of the
course examines how campaigns affect voters. Here we will focus on news coverage, television
advertising, and get-out-the-vote campaigning. The course will take a multi-media approach to all
of these questions, supplementing course readings with documentary films and clips of televised
campaign advertising.

I assume that students enrolled in this course have some background in political science, but not
necessarily in comparative politics or campaigns. Those who are primarily interested in American
politics are as welcome as those who focus on other regions.
1.1 Course Objectives

This course teaches students to apply the comparative method to the study of electoral campaigns around the world. In doing so, it fulfills requirements for three BU Hub areas. The general description of each area and course-specific learning objectives are listed below.

1. **Social Inquiry II.** Students will apply principles and methods from the social sciences based on collecting new or analyzing existing data in order to address questions, solve problems, or deepen understanding. They will understand the nature of evidence employed in the social sciences and will demonstrate a capacity to differentiate competing claims in such fields. This includes reflecting on and critically evaluating how social scientists formulate hypotheses, gather empirical evidence of multiple sorts, and analyze and interpret this evidence.

   In this course, students will:

   - evaluate how the strategies and techniques of electoral campaigns have changed over time, whether this process supports hypotheses about “Americanization” or “modernization,” and what role international campaign consultants play in this process.
   - evaluate evidence of how campaign strategies and media coverage influence public opinion and voting behavior and assess the strengths and weaknesses of different research designs that social scientists use to address these questions.

2. **Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy.** Students will demonstrate, through comparative analysis, an understanding of global diversity as expressed in at least two different languages, cultures, religions, political systems or societies.

   In this course, students will:

   - learn about the nature of electoral campaigns in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, France, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.
   - assess how campaign strategies vary across countries in response to different party and electoral systems, levels of economic development, strengths or weaknesses in the rule of law, and media structures.

3. **Teamwork/Collaboration.** As a result of explicit training in teamwork and sustained experiences of collaborating with others, students will be able to identify the characteristics of a well-functioning team.

   Students will demonstrate an ability to use the tools and strategies of working successfully with a diverse group, such as assigning roles and responsibilities, giving and receiving feedback, and engaging in meaningful group reflection that inspires collective ownership of results.

   In this course, students will:
• read about and reflect on collaboration in political science in order to identify the characteristics of a well-functioning team prior to embarking on a group project.
• work collaboratively in teams of 3–4 students to take on the role of a political consulting firm, developing campaign advice for a candidate or party from a recent election in a country other than the United States and conveying this advice in the form of a group paper and in-class presentation.
• via short memos, report on how responsibilities were divided up within the team and reflect on the experience of collaboration, highlighting what worked well and what did not.

2 Instructional Format and Approach to Learning

This course is a medium-sized lecture course with some discussion and interactivity. Students should complete the readings on the syllabus prior to each class period, since we will often be talking about them explicitly. I use lecture slides which present a rough outline of major points; these are posted on Blackboard after the lecture. Slides are not a substitute for taking notes, as there are many important points that do not make it onto the slides. Lectures also feature a number of videos—primarily clips of campaign advertising—as well as a documentary film. Students should pay close attention to and take notes on these video features as well.

3 COVID Safety

Following BU guidelines for Fall 2021, this class will be taught only in person, not in a hybrid mode. Masks are required of everyone at all times. Students may only attend lecture if their Healthway status is “cleared” (green). The instructor reserves the right to ask students to hold up their phones or devices to demonstrate a green “cleared” badge. If you test positive and need to quarantine, or if you are feeling sick and decide to stay home one day, please inform the instructor as soon as possible (ideally in advance) so that we can work to come up with a solution for catching up on missed material.

4 Course Materials

For each week of the course, I have assigned about 60–80 pages of readings. Some reading selections are drawn from the following required book, which is available online through Mugar Library:


All other readings are available electronically. The easiest way to access these is via an electronic copy of this syllabus (on Blackboard, or at [http://people.bu.edu/tboas/campaigns_](http://people.bu.edu/tboas/campaigns_))
Click on the hyperlinks in the reading list below. If you are not on campus, you may need to connect via the VPN or enter your BU ID and password. A couple readings are available only through Blackboard; these are noted below.

5 Assignments and Grading Criteria

5.1 Grade Breakdown

Attendance and participation: 15%
Response paper 1: 15%
Response paper 2: 15%
Group presentation: 10%
Group paper: 15%
Final exam: 30%

Final numerical grades will be calculated according to the weights listed above, and they will be translated into letter grades using the following scale:

A: 93.333 and above
A-: 90–93.332
B+: 86.667–89.999
B: 83.333–86.666
B-: 80–83.332
C+: 76.667–79.999
C: 73.333–76.666
C-: 70–73.332
D: 60–69.999
F: 0–59.999

5.2 Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend class regularly and participate in class discussion. I will periodically take attendance during the semester; one-third of the attendance and participation grade will be based on your presence during these sessions. Another third is based on the quality and extent of your participation during in-class discussion. The final third of this grade is based on your contribution to the group project—evaluated based on each group’s report of how responsibilities were divided up among team members—as well as completion of an individual memo reflecting on the experience of collaborative teamwork.
5.3 Response Papers

At the end of each of the first two parts of the course, students are required to write a 5–7 page (double-spaced) paper that addresses themes raised in lecture and course readings. I will distribute paper prompts for these papers 2–3 weeks before the due dates listed on the syllabus.

5.4 Group Presentation and Paper

The final project for this course will consist of a 15–25 minute presentation and a 10–12 page paper, both of which will be prepared by groups of 3–4 students working jointly. The same grade will be given to all students in the group. For both the paper and presentation, group members will put themselves in the shoes of a political consulting firm, offering advice to a specific candidate or party in an electoral campaign outside of the U.S. that is either underway at the time of the course or has recently occurred (i.e., during the prior semester). We will discuss this assignment in more detail and choose groups early on so students have plenty of time to prepare, and—for those studying upcoming elections—to follow the campaigns over the course of the semester. During this session, we will also discuss collaborative work in political science in order to identify the characteristics of a well-functioning team. When submitting the final paper, groups will turn in a co-authored report on how responsibilities were divided up among team members, and each student will submit an individual 1–2 page memo reflecting on the experience of collaboration, highlighting what worked well and what did not. The report and memo factor into the attendance and participation grade, as explained above.

5.5 Final Exam

A final exam, covering all of the course material, will be held during the scheduled exam period, as listed below.

6 Class and University Policies

It is our shared responsibility—professor and students alike—to ensure a positive learning environment. Please be respectful of each other and treat your colleagues and instructors as you would like to be treated if the shoe were on the other foot.

6.1 Excused Absences

Absence from class can be excused, and exam or paper due dates rescheduled, only for religious observances (following BU’s [Policy on Religious Observance]), unexpected or major life events (e.g., a wedding or funeral of a close relative, a medical emergency or appointment), and BU extracurricular activities such as sporting competitions and arts performances. Please inform the professor by email as soon as you are aware of a conflict. In some cases I may require verification
of the reason for the absence. No absence can be excused after the fact, except for unforeseen medical emergencies.

6.2 Assignment Completion and Late Work

Late assignments without a pre-authorized extension will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., B+ to a B) per 24-hour period, starting with the due date; this includes weekends and holidays. You can turn in a late assignment by emailing it to the professor (be sure to get a response confirming receipt) or submitting via Blackboard. The absolute deadline for submitting late final papers is the date of the final exam, since grades are due shortly thereafter.

6.3 Academic Integrity

Students are expected to do their own work and to accurately and honestly give credit for information, ideas, and words obtained elsewhere. Plagiarism will be dealt with strictly according to the [Academic Conduct Code](#); please review the website for examples of what counts as plagiarism so you know how to avoid it. If you have questions or concerns about how to properly cite outside sources, please let me know and I will be happy to assist.

6.4 Resources and Support

If you have questions about course materials or assignments or are in need of extra help, you are encouraged to visit the professor during office hours, as listed at the top of the syllabus. In particular, I can offer feedback on outlines, drafts, or thesis statements of papers prior to the due date, as long as you do not wait until the last minute.

Students with disabilities (physical or learning) who need special accommodation in the course should arrange for a documentation of disabilities from [BU Disability & Access Services](#) and present a letter from that office to the professor. I will be happy to work with you to implement whatever accommodations they recommend.

7 Schedule and Required Readings

Note: Each entry contains a hyperlink to the electronic reading, where available.

7.1 Part I: International Influences and Changing Campaigns

7.1.1 Friday, Sept. 3. Americanization, Modernization, and Success Contagion.

7.1.2 Wednesday, Sept. 8. International Influences on Campaigning.


7.1.3 Friday, Sept. 10. Consultants Abroad: Sawyer-Miller in Chile.


7.1.4 Monday, Sept. 13. Consultants Abroad: Sawyer-Miller in Chile, continued.


7.1.5 Wednesday, Sept. 15. Consultants Abroad: Sawyer-Miller in Peru.


7.1.12 Friday, Oct. 1. Teamwork, Collaboration, and Overview of Group Project.


7.2 Part II: Cross-National Variation in Campaign Styles

7.2.1 Monday, Oct. 4. The Effects of Party and Electoral Systems.


7.2.2 Wednesday, Oct. 6. Campaigns in Sweden and Spain.


7.2.3 Friday, Oct. 8. Campaigns in Japan.


7.2.4 Tuesday, Oct. 12. RESPONSE PAPER DUE; Populist Campaigns: Italy.


7.2.6 Friday, Oct. 15. Populist Campaigns: The Philippines.


7.2.7 Monday, Oct. 18. Campaign Finance and Corruption: Brazil.


7.2.8 Wednesday, Oct. 20. Mobilization and Vote Buying.


7.2.9 Friday, Oct. 22. Mobilization and Vote Buying: Mexico.


7.2.11  Wednesday, Oct. 27. Violence as a Campaign Strategy.


7.2.14  Wednesday, Nov. 3. The Mass Media and Elections: Brazil.


7.2.15  Friday, Nov. 5. New versus Old Media: Brazil and the United Kingdom.


7.3 Part III. How do Campaigns Affect Voters?

7.3.1 Monday, Nov. 8. Media Effects: Mexico.


7.3.2 Wed., Nov. 10. Media Effects: Ukraine


7.3.3 Friday, Nov. 12. RESPONSE PAPER DUE; Media Effects: United Kingdom.


7.3.4 Monday, Nov. 15. Advertising Effects: Mexico and Brazil.


Scott Desposato, “The Impact of Campaign Messages in New Democracies: Results From An Experiment in Brazil,” unpublished manuscript, University of California, San Diego.

7.3.5 Wednesday, Nov. 17. Advertising Effects: Chile.


7.3.6 Friday, Nov. 19. Get-out-the-Vote: United Kingdom.


7.3.7 Monday, Nov. 22. Get-out-the-Vote: Sweden and France


7.4 Part IV. Group Presentations

7.4.1 Monday, Nov. 29. Group presentations

7.4.2 Wednesday, Dec. 1. Group presentations

7.4.3 Friday, Dec. 3. Group presentations

7.4.4 Monday, Dec. 6. Group presentations

7.4.5 Wednesday, Dec. 8. Group presentations

7.4.6 Friday, Dec. 10. Group presentations / Conclusion; GROUP PAPERS DUE

7.5 Thursday, Dec. 16, 9–11 a.m.: Final Exam