

CHOOSING THE FUTURE: US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2020

Instructor: Michael MacMillan, Ph.D.

Day/Dates: Fridays, Oct 16 - Nov 20

Time: 10:00 - 11:30 am

Venue: Via Seniors College Zoom

Course Description:

The upcoming American Presidential election is often described as one of the most important elections for the future of American society. It takes place in the framework of a complex election process that is distinctively American and is driven by conflicts over race, culture, and the role of the state. It has been the subject of ongoing critical debate about its flaws and biases which challenge its democratic claims. In this course, the design and operation of the American electoral system will be discussed, including the role of issues, money and the mass media, as well as the patterns of political behaviour by American citizens and how that impacts strategies for electoral success. These will be considered in the context of the November 2020 election.

My goal in this course is to introduce you to the design and operation of the American electoral system and to consider the current presidential election process in the context of the prevailing patterns of American political opinion and behavior.

TOPIC & READINGS:

The readings listed under each topic are drawn from a variety of on-line resources to facilitate access to topical material. The relevant links are listed after each reading. For those wishing access to more detailed and extensive materials, I will be suggesting resources for further reading throughout the course.

1) American Democracy & Its Challenges

October 16

" America Is Not a Democracy " The Atlantic

Link: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/03/america-is-not-a-democracy/550931/>

" Voter Suppression Is Warping Democracy " The Atlantic

Link: <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/07/poll-prri-voter-suppression/565355/>

"Understanding Mail-in Voting" CNN

Interactive Link: <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2020/politics/mail-in-voting/>

Special Project: Political Compass

Link: <https://www.politicalcompass.org/>

This is a self-administered survey of political ideology that allows you to identify where you fit in the American ideological landscape.

2) The Electoral College and the Contest for the Presidency

October 23

" Five Common Misconceptions About the Electoral College " [The Atlantic](#)

Link: <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/11/five-common-misconceptions-about-electoral-college/602596/>

Special Project:

US Election Prediction Project

Due November 2, 2020

3) Demography of Political Support: Gender, Race and Class

October 30

"Why hard-core Trump supporters ignore his lies" [The Conversation](#)

Link: <https://theconversation.com/why-hard-core-trump-supporters-ignore-his-lies-144650>

"A Big Chunk Of People Of Color And White People With Degrees Are Behind Trump" [fivethirtyeight](#)

Link: <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/a-big-chunk-of-white-americans-with-degrees-and-people-of-color-are-behind-trump/>

4) Election Autopsy: Examining the Results [To Date]

November 6

"The US presidential election might be closer than the polls suggest" [The Conversation](#)

Link: <https://theconversation.com/the-us-presidential-election-might-be-closer-than-the-polls-suggest-if-we-can-trust-them-this-time-141988>

5) Money, Media & American Politics

November 13

"How the Koch Brothers built the most powerful rightwing group you've never heard of" [The Guardian](#)

Link: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/sep/26/koch-brothers-americans-for-prosperity-rightwing-political-group>

" The Past Decade and Future of Political Media: The Ascendance of Social Media " [openmind bbv^](#)

Link: <https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/articles/the-past-decade-and-future-of-political-media-the-ascendance-of-social-media/>

6) **American Presidential Power in the New Congress**

November 20

" The Strangest Thing About Trump's Approach to Presidential Power " The Atlantic

Link: <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/06/the-strangest-thing-about-trumps-approach-to-presidential-power/562271/>

" The Unconstrained Presidency: Checks and Balances Eroded Long Before Trump"

Council on Foreign Relations

Link: <https://www.cfr.org/article/unconstrained-presidency-checks-and-balances-eroded-long-trump>

"How Do We Fix the American Presidency?" New York Times

Link: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/01/opinion/presidency-donald-trump.html>