Online Election 2012: Social Media and the Presidential Race

Instructor: David Perlmutter
Session: Winter 2012-13
Begins: 12/31/2012-Ends: 01/18/2013

1:00P - 2:50P MTWThF [232 AJB]

Office Hours: 2:50-3:30pm MTWThF and by appt.
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COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course looks back at the presidential campaign to discover the "lessons learned" in how online social-interactive media like blogs, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook play an important role in modern elections. We also offer some historical background about the interaction between technological innovations and social revolutions in politics from the previous eras where newspapers and television dominated. Students will gain an understanding of how social media influence not only our votes but also our political ideas and actions.

READINGS

All readings will be from websites in class or for your own research for assignments; there are no required purchases.

Here are some useful sites devoted to the 2012 Iowa caucuses:

http://iowacaucus.com/
http://www.iowacaucus.biz/IA_Caucus_Howitworks.html
http://caucuses.desmoinesregister.com/
http://www.iowademocrats.org/
http://iowagop.org/

Here are some useful sites devoted to the 2012 election:
http://www.politico.com/2012-election/
http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2012/ecalculator#?battleground
GRADING & CLASS REQUIREMENTS

Assignments and their grades take into account that this class is listed as two S.H. and takes place over a short time.

Attendance: Five (5) points for every class session that you attend/participate in its entirety—for a maximum of 50 total points.

Quizzes: Three in-class, randomly offered quizzes will be given. The quiz will come at the end of class and cover material from that class session and the previous class session. Each quiz = 10 pts.

Final assignment: Social Media, Youth Targeting & Issues and the Election: A paper (minimum 2,000 words). [Note: please use footnotes for references; all references (as well as title page content) do not count for word length.]

Examine the social media production of either the Obama or the Romney campaign in relation to (a) how it targeted youth voters (18-25) and (b) how it spoke to "youth" issues.

Some questions to answer:
- What social media did they use?
- How?
- What were main messages/images/ideas in relation to youth issues? What was missing?
- Who was the targeted audience? Not targeted? Why?
- How did they try to build community/interaction?
- What can we say about the effects?

Total points: 20

Due by MS Word (2007 ed. or later); attachment to my e-mail by midnight Friday, Jan. 18.

General hints for getting a better grade:
- The plural of "medium" is media, not "mediums."
- Subject/verb construction should be consistent—e.g., "bloggers give their opinions," not "a blogger gives their opinion."
- If you make a claim, back it up with facts.
- I like details—shows you went beyond the surface to uncover interesting facts and ideas.
  ➢ I dislike abstractions unless they are backed up by facts.
- I like it when the facts are correct.
- Research is better than just more opinion.
- Show you paid attention in class, at the caucus.
- Organization—paper is broken down into coherent units.

- Strong opening sentence; organization; follow-up!

**Late: 10 points per 24 hours**

**FINAL GRADE FOR CLASS**

Final letter grade will then be converted from your total points by the standard method: 90 or more points equals A-, A, or A+, etc.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Activities &amp; Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/31</td>
<td>Intro &amp; overview</td>
<td>Lecture &amp; discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/1/13</td>
<td><strong>No class—New Year’s holiday</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1/2 | Prehistory of Social Media & Political Campaigns/Elections | Lecture & discussion  
Screening: The Candidate |
<p>| 1/3 | Prehistory (cont.) | Lecture &amp; discussion |
| 1/4 | Prehistory (cont.) | Field trip (out-of-class) |
| 1/7 | No class—research [Review suggested websites] | |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>No class—research [Write final paper draft]</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/9</td>
<td>2012 Case studies</td>
<td>Lecture &amp; discussion</td>
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<td>1/10</td>
<td>2012 Case studies (cont.)</td>
<td>Lecture &amp; discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/11</td>
<td>2012 Case studies (cont.)</td>
<td>Viewing, lecture &amp; discussion</td>
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<td>1/14</td>
<td>Class final presentations</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/15</td>
<td>Class final presentations</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/16</td>
<td>2012 Case studies (cont.)</td>
<td>Viewing, lecture &amp; discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/17</td>
<td>2012 Case studies (cont.)</td>
<td>Viewing, lecture &amp; discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/18</td>
<td>Wrap-up</td>
<td>Viewing, lecture &amp; discussion</td>
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Final paper due by MS Word attachment to my e-mail by midnight Friday, Jan. 18.
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND NOTIFICATIONS

DISABILITY: Please notify me if you require some modification of seating, testing or other class requirements so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

EMAIL: Make sure your UI email account is active and connected to the University system so that you can get J-MC School, UI and class messages. You should check your email regularly.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is mandatory save for VERY good excuses.

PARTICIPATION: You will be expected to complete all reading assignments and participate fully in class discussions and other activities.

CHANGES: It may be necessary to make changes in the syllabus.

COMPLAINTS: Student complaints concerning faculty/TA actions: First attempt to resolve the matter with the TA; if not possible, contact the professor. If you are still not able to settle the issue, you may submit a written complaint to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs, Office of Academic Programs, 116 Schaeffer Hall. The full text of this policy can be found in the College's Student Academic Handbook.

SEVERE WEATHER: The University Operations Manual section 16.14 outlines appropriate responses <http://www.uiowa.edu/%7Eour/opmanual/v/16.htm#1614d> to a tornado or similar crisis. If there is a crisis as indicated by the UI Outdoor Warning System, members of the class should seek shelter in the innermost part of the building at the lowest level and stay until the crisis is over. In the case of really bad weather, please check your email before coming to class. If the class is cancelled I will send an email notice as far ahead as possible.

ADMINISTRATIVE HOME: The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall or see the CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: Student Academic Misconduct includes plagiarism and cheating. Plagiarism is presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own, whether in writing or speaking. Cheating includes copying someone else's work or purposefully allowing someone else to copy your work. Disciplinary actions: The professor will inform you immediately of the allegation. If found guilty your grade can be reduced, you may receive an F in the course, probation, suspension or even expulsion. The full text of this policy can be found in the College's Student Academic Handbook.
SEXUAL HARASSMENT: The University has a policy on sexual harassment and consensual relationships in the instructional environment. You may obtain the full text of this policy in the Office of Affirmative Action, 202 Jessup Hall.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES: Student Rights and Responsibilities include your right to expect a classroom environment that enables all to learn comfortably. You further have a responsibility to this class and your own education to help create a classroom environment where the same is possible. At the most basic level, this means that you will respect the other members of the class and the professor/TA, and treat everyone with the same courtesy you want to receive in return.