The Iowa Caucuses: Grassroots Politics on a National Stage

FYS 018
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Journalism & Mass Communication
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Course Description

We will explore the presidential nominating process as it occurs in Iowa, comparing candidate messages with media coverage of the candidates and their public events. Because candidates will be building toward voters’ final choices on caucus night, we’ll have opportunities for field experience, from hearing the candidates to talking behind the scenes with their field organizers, national media in town to cover the selection process, and various activist groups engaged in politicking. During class time, guest speakers, discussion, and short films will help explain the ongoing build-up to caucus night, and you will write short responses to all these. You will work inside the campaign of your choice for at least one 4-hour block of phone-banking, attend on-campus political events, and potentially engage in short-term fieldwork for a campaign or visiting media, so flexible weekends are required of participating students. In longer assigned papers, you will compare events with coverage, answer the questions of ‘why Iowa?’ and ‘why caucuses?’, and examine your personal experiences inside a campaign.
Readings

To purchase: *Caucus Chaos*, by Dave Price, which we'll read in late September and through October.

To read: various articles as they are assigned and provided as handouts or links.

Course Plan

Introduction to Politics and Why We Engage in Political Action September 1st

Read handouts • "What is 'Politics'?"
• "The Past and Future of America's Social Contract for Sept. 3rd

Detailed View of the US Presidential Nomination Process/Overview of Media Involvement

Read in handout form, *Iowa Caucuses, Race for the White House, Democracy in Action* by Eric M. Appleman. **ALL BY SEPTEMBER 10th!**

• "Context," including Considering the Field of Play and Context in 2016 and Recent Elections;

• "Pre-Campaign Period," including Laying the Groundwork, Party Activity, Speculation, The View in 2013-14, and Indicators;

• "Pre-Primary Period," including Launch, Building, Race for Money, Campaign Heats Up, and Early Exits;

• "Iowa," including First-in-the-Nation, Early Groundwork, Play in Iowa?, Pencil in the Date, Adjustments and Improvements, The Iowa Republican Straw Poll; Organize, Organize, Organize; The Day Arrives, and Historical Perspective.

**IN-CLASS PREPARATION FOR VISITORS SEPTEMBER 24th.**

Closer Examination of the Intersections of Campaigns and Media - early October

Read *Caucus Chaos* and various handouts.

Outcomes: Public Responses to Campaigns and Media - mid to late October

Read handouts.

In-Depth Analysis by YOU - November to end of semester

Research papers begin; class continues to include speakers and events, but individual and group meetings and coaching will begin to dominate.
Assignments

Presentation for International Journalists, rehearsal October 22nd, event Oct 24th.

Journal/Scrapbook
Get a looseleaf folio or binder and plan on keeping your notes from events, journaled responses TO EVERY SPEAKER & FOR EVERY FIELD TRIP plus any assigned in class, short papers, and various "paper ephemera" in (stickers, photos, tickets, passes, etc). I'll look at these in pieces (i.e., you’ll turn in sections, but not all) about the first of each month.

Hearing guest speakers and reporting on their comments, then expanding on those in your journals, will be frequent. (Be sure you are capturing significant details, evoking sense of place, and reporting what really happened; then be watching for messaging, audience responses, and your own reactions.) Expansion will have to do with differences between principles and practice, generally, but may also require comparison of desired outcomes by a campaign with actual outcomes in media coverage.

Current guests are an international visiting group of 20 world journalists, as well as local and national figures Tanner Jones (director at KCCI tv, Drake SJMC junior), Addisu Demissie (formerly a field organizer, then part of the Obama campaign and White House, campaign manager for Senator Cory Booker, now with Obama for America, IA Rep. Abbie Finkenauer (Drake SJMC grad), IA Senator Janet Petersen (Drake SJMC master's holder), a panel or representative from Drake College Republicans and from Drake College Dems, and others as they may be available.

Short Papers (2-3) as assigned.

Detailed handout will ask you to (1) first paper: compare events with coverage, (2) second paper: answer the questions of 'why Iowa?' and 'why caucuses?', and (3) third paper: examine their personal experiences inside a campaign and during other experiential learning

Research Paper (November focus out to finals week):
In segments: Research & Reading Plan, then execution of that, then First Drafts by Section (Intro, Lit Rev/Background, Method, Findings, Discussion, References), and lastly, a Final Draft.

How Our Course Fulfills Broad FYS Goals

All FYS's teach collegiate writing styles and types (essay, analysis, position/argument, and research), presentation skills, and information-gathering and evaluation. Writing will be central, from journaling your experiences to your short-response papers critiquing speaker visits (not criticizing but critiquing based on discussed criteria) to your longer papers analyzing how candidates present themselves and how media report those presentations. All this writing will require careful critical thinking and a constant alertness for differences between principles and practice, hoped-for images and actualities. A library tour near the outset of the class, followed by continuous in-class reference to various types of media and assessment of their accuracy and thus their credibility, will help make information literacy (especially determining quality and credibility of sources) a centerpiece of your class experience.
Course Grade

Grading is based on a total of points earned for attendance, in-class and out-of-class graded exercises, quizzes, midterm exam, and portfolio. Letter grades are assigned on a 10-percent basis (90-100% = A, 80-89% = B, 70-79% = C, 60-69% = D, Below 60% = F).

Your final grade will be lowered one letter grade for every two absences not due to illness or other extenuating circumstance. EMAIL is my preferred method of hearing from you about illness.

Course Policies

**Accommodation:** If a physical, mental, intellectual or emotional impairment makes necessary accommodations not already in place for this course (including the arrangement or meeting place of the class or the format of exams, for example), contact Michelle Laughlin in Student Disability Services at 271-1835. I am confident that we can work together to create a learning environment that meets your particular needs.

**Attendance:** Because of the ever-shifting events of what we’re studying in this course, attendance is critical to your success. Many portions of the course will take place on campus; others will include off-campus excursions to enhance the unique learning available with the course. Some will take place during scheduled class times; some will take place at other times. Your attendance at all class meetings is required.

**Academic Honesty**

For all assignments, you are expected to hand in work that represents your own work. I take this issue very seriously. So does Drake University. Here are the locations of two honesty policies from departments many of you are part of at Drake:

- **Politics Department Policy:** You can find this statement on the department’s webpage at: [http://artsci.drake.edu/polsci/node/24](http://artsci.drake.edu/polsci/node/24)
- **School of Journalism and Mass Communication Policy:** The SJMC policy can be found here: [http://sjmc.drake.edu/about/academic-integrity/](http://sjmc.drake.edu/about/academic-integrity/).

The wording of each policy is specific to each industry, but the bottom line is this: cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

Cheating is defined as an act, or attempted act, of giving or obtaining aid and/or information by illicit means in meeting any academic requirements including examinations. Plagiarism is defined as misrepresenting another’s ideas, phrases, or discourse as one’s own.

The penalty for cheating or plagiarism includes dismissal from this course and passing on of the information to both my own Dean and to yours. I generally give a student an F for the course as my FIRST STEP after finding plagiarism or cheating.

Examples of such cases include cheating on a test by copying from another student or using disallowed materials, incorporating into written assignments materials written by others without giving them credit, and otherwise improperly using information written by others (including that which might be stored on computer disks).
Sometimes plagiarism is the result of carelessness or ignorance. As a general rule, provide enough information so that a reader can identify and refer to all the sources you have used in writing a particular work. Here are some guidelines to follow:

1. Word for word quotations: When you incorporate into your work, you must use quotation marks around the borrowed words and you must identify the source.
2. Paraphrase: If you have relied on another person’s ideas or train of thought but changed the actual words used or the order of the ideas you still must acknowledge the source.
3. Borrowed ideas: When your ideas or opinions have been shaped by what you have read or lectures you have heard, you must acknowledge your source.
4. Material and Organization: If you rely on factual material gathered by another person, or if you have relied on another person’s way of organizing common material, you must acknowledge your source.
5. Exceptions to the rule: You need not footnote information that is common knowledge ("George Washington was the first President of the United States") or an opinion or idea expressed by many people ("Iowa is an important state in the presidential nominating process") or dictionary definitions.
6. Err on the side of over-acknowledgement: Be generous and open in giving credit for any source of help.

SJMC Core Values

The curriculum of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication is guided by 14 core values. The values in boldface type are those that will receive particular emphasis in JMC 58 and JMC 59.

Our students will:

1. Understand and apply First Amendment principles and the law appropriate to professional practice.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications.
4. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
5. Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
6. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
7. Think critically, creatively and independently.
8. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
9. Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
10. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
11. Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.
12. Take ownership of their own academic experience.
13. Be engaged with the community: the university, the local community, professional groups.