

American Electoral Reform

WWS 402f

Wednesday 7:30 – 10:00 PM , Robinson 029

Professor Tucker

The November 2000 United States American Presidential election was one of the most contentious in the history of the country. As the country struggled in the aftermath of the balloting to determine whether Al Gore or George Bush had been elected president, a whole host of questions immediately surfaced. These ranged from the incredibly detailed – the relative importance of hanging versus dimpled chads – to much more fundamental questions. Was it legitimate to have a president in power when his or her opponent had received more popular votes? Had the whole system become too dependent on money and fundraising?

In the immediate aftermath of the election, there were many individual proposals made for remedying the system. Campaign finance reform was the most prominent of these, but they also extended to money for electronic balloting, questions of oversight and coordination of local electoral rules, and even discussion about the future of the electoral college itself. Surprisingly, though, the issue has received much less attention over the past year from politicians and policy makers than we would have expected. While it is natural that much of America's focus has been on terrorism and security since September 11th, the fact remains that one of the most important freedoms we are struggling to defend is the right to hold free elections to select our leaders.

The purpose of this taskforce, then, is two-fold. First, we aim to reinvigorate the debate over electoral reform in the United States. The problems that appeared last November have not disappeared, and it is our hope that this task force can serve as a catalyst for provoking thought on how the system can be improved. Second, we aim to take a more unified approach to the subject of electoral reform that is not dependent on the needs of any one politician (or groups of politicians). Task force participants will be grounded in theories of elections and voting in general, and then asked to bring these theories to bare on the specific questions and problems facing the United States. The task force will consider a full range of proposals for reform, ranging from debate formats to timing of primaries, from balloting procedures to campaign spending reform. In addition to producing an overall blueprint for reform, each individual taskforce member will write an in-depth report on one aspect of the reforms. Copies of the report will be made available to politicians and policy makers.

Readings

The following books have been placed on order at the U-Store. Most additional readings can be found in a reading pack that is available at the WWS Business Office; some may need to be downloaded from the web.

Jacobson, Gary C. (2000) *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, Fifth Edition,

Cox, Gary W. (1997). *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press.

Bartels, Larry M. and Lynn Vavreck, eds. (2000) *Campaign Reform: Insights and Evidence*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press

Sunstein, Cass R. and Richard Epstein, eds., (2001) *The Vote: Bush, Gore, and the Supreme Court*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Geer, John G.,(1989) *Nominating Presidents: An Evaluation of Voters and Primaries*: New York: Greenwood Press

Sorauf, Frank J.,(1992) *Inside Campaign Finance Reform: Myths and Realities*, New Haven: Yale University Press

Requirements

All juniors will be required to complete a 20 page final paper (50% of grade) and a 1-2 page briefing paper (10%). Participants will also give an oral presentations of their work (15%) and will be expected to participate in classroom discussions and the crafting of the final report (25%).

Weekly Schedule

Week #1: February 6 : Introduction

Outline the course, responsibilities, requirements, and options for final paper topics.

Week #2: February 13: Electoral Institutions

Assignments Given: Final paper topics

Readings:

Gary Cox: *Making Votes Count*, Ch. 1, 2, 3, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15.

Blais and Massicotte, "Electoral Systems" in LeDuc et. al. (eds.) *Comparing Democracies*, ch.3, p.83-106

Jacobson, *Politics of Congressional Elections*, Ch. 2 "The Context" (p.5-20)

Week #3: February 20: Controversial Elections, Up to and Including the 2000 Presidential Elections

Guest Expert: Professor Andrew Rudalevige

Readings:

The Constitution, Article II and 12th Amendment: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/const/const.html>

Federalist 68 (Hamilton): <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/const/fed/fedpapers.html>

U.S. Supreme Court, *Bush v. Gore* (2000) (edited version):
<http://www.dickinson.edu/~rudaleva/bushgore.htm>

United States Commission on Civil Rights, "Voting Irregularities in Florida During the 2000 Presidential Election," Executive Summary.: Find this at <http://www.usccr.gov/>

Ari Hoogenboom, *Rutherford B. Hayes: Warrior and President* (Kansas, 1995), Ch. 17 (pp. 274-94)

Edmund Kallina, *Courthouse Over White House: Chicago and the Presidential Election of 1960* (Florida, 1988), pp. 80-107, 226-31

Gary Rose (ed.), *Controversial Issues in Presidential Selection*, 2d ed. (SUNY, 1994), Ch. 8 ("Should the Electoral College be Abolished?", pp. 199-222)

Brady, Henry E. et. al., "Law and Data: The Butterfly Ballot Episode," *PS*, March 2001, 59-69

Sunstein, Cass R. and Richard Epstein, eds., (2001) *The Vote: Bush, Gore, and the Supreme Court*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press pp 1-76, 98-122, 205-22, 241-53

Week #4: February 27th: Campaign Finance Reform

Guest Expert: Professor Stanley Kelley

Readings:

Sorauf, Frank J., *Inside Campaign Finance Reform: Myths and Realities*. Chapters TBA

Jacobson, *Politics of Congressional Elections*, Ch. 4 "Campaign Money" (p.59-78)

Week #5: March 6th: Media and Elections

Public Lecture: 4:30 PM, WWS: Martin Plissner, Former head of CBS News Politics Division

Dinner with Plissner to follow lecture

Guest Expert for class: Professor Adam Berinsky

Readings:

Patterson, Thomas E. *Out of Order*, Vintage Books, 1994, Chapters 1, 2, and Post Script (p. 28-93, 243-250)

Thurber et. al., *Crowded Airways*, Brookings Institute 2000, Ch. 1, 2, 7. (p.1-43, 149-169)

Additional readings TBA

Week #6: March 13th: Reforming the Voting Process

Public Lecture: 4:30 PM, WWS: Robert Richie, Executive Director for Center of Voting and Democracy: Empowering the Voter: The Case for Electoral Reform.

Dinner with Richie to follow lecture

Guest Expert for class: Robert Richie

Readings:

Testimony of John B. Anderson to the National Commission on Federal Election Reform (Ford-Carter Commission): <http://fairvote.org/administration/cartercommission.htm>

Other readings TBA

Spring Break (March 20th – no class): Note: There will likely be a one-day trip somewhere around this time.

Monday, March 25th: Assignment Due: FIRST DRAFT of final paper and 1-2 page briefing paper. Must be handed in to Professor Tucker's Assistant Georgette Harrison (basement of Bendheim Hall) by 4:00 PM.

Week #7: TUESDAY, March 26th: Primaries

Guest Expert: Professor John Geer

Readings:

Geer, John G.,(1989) *Nominating Presidents: An Evaluation of Voters and Primaries*: New York: Greenwood Press: All *except* Chapters 3 & 4.

Zaller, John et. al. *Beating Reform: The Resurgence of Parties in Presidential Nominations, 1980 to 2000*, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/psci/pp/zaller.pdf>

Norpoth, Helmut, "Primary Colors: A Mixed Blessing for Al Gore" *PS*, March 2001, 45-48.

Week #8: April 3rd: Individual Presentations I

In class: Oral presentations for first half of participants. 15 minutes oral presentation on topic followed by 20-30 minute discussion by the group.

Goal: Presenters should lay out the basic argument they hope to make in their final presentation. Participants should critique presenters and raise issues about how the different projects interact.

Week #9: April 10th: Individual Presentations II

Same as previous week for second half of class

Week #10:

TUESDAY, April 16th: Public Lecture, WWS, 4:30 PM: Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins, President of the League of Women Voters: "The League of Women Voters and Election Reform."

Dinner with Jefferson-Jenkins to follow.

April 17th: Topic As Needed

Guest Expert: Professor Larry Bartels

Bartels, Larry M. and Lynn Vavreck, eds. (2000) *Campaign Reform: Insights and Evidence*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chapters TBA

Bartels, Larry M. et. al., *Report of the Task Force on Campaign Reform* (note: not in reading pack – will be distributed in class)

Week #11: April 24th: Work on Final Report

Goal: All decisions on **content** of final report must be completed by end of session.

Assignment Due: By Friday, April 26th at 12:00 noon, all participants must email a two-page write up of their section of the final report to the Senior Commissioner.

Week #12: May 1: Work on Final Report

Assignment Due: Senior commissioner arrives with written draft of final report (plus any minority appendices).

Goal: By the end of the meeting, the exact **written version** of the report must be agreed by the participants.

May 7th:

Final 1-2 page briefing paper due for all participants.

Final Reports Due.

20 pages (Maximum is strictly observed – I will stop reading after pg. 20)

12pt Times New Roman Font

1.5 inch margins

1 inch border on top and bottom

Text Double Spaced

Footnotes single spaced at bottom of page in 10pt. Times New Roman font.

May 14th:

All Senior Commissioner Work is due.

Sometime During Reading Period: Presentation of report. Location to be announced.