

Online Learning @ National Constitution Center Teaching the Presidential Election

Weekly online course: October 6- November 9

<http://www.constitutioncenter.org/learning>

Instructor

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Course Overview

The **Teaching the Presidential Election** online course is designed to provide educators with both content and pedagogy knowledge centered on the 2008 Presidential election. The course is based on five lessons, each to be completed over the span of one week, for a total course lasting five weeks. Each lesson is themed and will consist of three parts. The first is a lecture by Dr. John Kenneth White of The Catholic University of America and relates relevant content to the participants through a video lecture. Following the completion of the lecture, participants will receive a historic case study that follows the theme of the lecture. Using the provided primary and secondary sources in the case study, participants will examine the historic election in the context of the current 2008 contest. Finally, each lesson will include instruction and structured reflection on how to convert the new knowledge into a resource for classroom application. This will be accomplished through peer sharing via blog posting and direct instruction from the National Constitution Center's professional education staff. Successful completion of the course will result in the receipt of three graduate level credits from Arcadia University in Glenside, PA. You will receive a final transcript with a grade as a record of your work.

Content Description

American elections have often been compared to pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. With each contest a new piece is inserted and a more complete picture emerges. The election of George W. Bush as president in 2004 marked the 55th time since 1789 that another piece has been added to the puzzle.

But the jigsaw puzzle analogy may not be particularly apt. A better one might be a mosaic. As each state inserts its tiles, a complex mosaic of many shades and colors takes form.

Sometimes the colorations are bold and predictable. For example, since its incorporation into the Union in 1896, Utah has been reliably Republican. Likewise, since ratification of the Twenty-fifth Amendment in 1961, the District of Columbia has been consistently Democratic. The 2004 election was no exception: Republican George W. Bush received 72 percent of Utah's votes to John Kerry's 26 percent. Washington, D.C. proved to be Kerry's best "state" as he got 89 percent of its votes to Bush's 9 percent. But states can change their party affiliations over time. In 1936, Vermont and Maine were the only two states to vote Republican in an election year that saw Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt win re-election in a landslide. Those same states sided with John Kerry in 2004 by margins of 59 percent and 54 percent respectively. Indeed, Kerry (a New Englander) won every New England state, yet he also carried no southern states—a marked change from the New Deal era when the South was reliably Democratic.

Over time, not only do states alter their partisan affiliations, so too, do different electoral groups. During the past fifty years, for example, southern whites—once the most reliable element of the Democratic Party's New Deal coalition—are now solidly entrenched in the Republican camp. At the same time, upscale white-collar professional workers with advanced college degrees are becoming more Democratic in their leanings—thanks to the culture wars and the growing influence of the Christian Right (and other religiously-minded voters) within the GOP.

It is only when these mosaic tiles are viewed collectively (and from afar) that a complete picture emerges. A change in the coloration of one tile may be an aberration—or a harbinger of things to come. For example, the 2008 presidential election may represent a continuation of prevailing voting patterns. Or, it may be that it represents the beginning of a new partisan era. Only when the mosaic tiles from the McCain-Obama contest are added to the wall and viewed from a distance will we have a more complete and true picture.

The Teaching the Presidential Election online course seeks to equip teachers with the tools to present this unique mosaic to their students. The course will use a combination of lecture, online discussion, readings, case studies, and pedagogy sessions to assist participants with both the collection and application of new knowledge about the presidential election process. The workshop is designed to actively present current information about the 2008 general election and use historic elections as a guide to predict and understand events that are yet to come.

Course Objectives

- Understand the chronology of the presidential election process.
- Examine historic elections and connect to the 2008 presidential election.
- Apply newly gained knowledge to the classroom to assist students with connecting to the current presidential election.
- Author original curriculum for a national audience.

Expectations

What do you need to take this course?

- A valid email address
- Either a Mac, PC/Windows, or Linux computer
- Access to the internet (a broadband connection such as cable, DSL, or the connection in your school)
- A web browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari)
- Able to watch Macromedia Flash video

Required Text

Wayne, Steven J. *Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?* Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2007. 3rd Edition The text can be purchased online at Amazon.com, BN.com, Powells Books, or other online retailer. *Please note if purchasing a used copy make sure it is the 3rd edition.*

Optional

McCain, John and Mark Salter. *Faith of My Fathers: A Family Memoir.* New York: Harper Perennial, 2000.

Obama, Barack. *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance.* New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995 and 2004.

Grading

Successful completion of the course includes:

Weekly Blog posts:	10 points each/Total 50 points
Participation in Case Study Forums:	10 points each/Total 50 points
Final Assignment:	100 points

Expectations

- Weekly Lesson: Participants are required to watch the weekly lecture on the site. Discussion questions are provided and designed to assist you with engaging in the lecture. A topic will be posted in the Forum section for each lecture, to provide students with a space to share their response to the lecture and the discussion question.
- Notes: Participants are encouraged to take notes on each area of the lesson, which will enable them to collect information for use in the classroom and the final project.
- Blog: Using the blog feature of the Epsilon systems, participants are asked to submit a blog post once during each of the five weeks of the course. The post should include information on what is currently being covered in the classroom. The blog is an opportunity for participants to get a glimpse into the classrooms of peers and see how the teaching of the presidential election is being applied in real time.
- Discussion Board Posting: The discussion boards in the Epsilon system have been setup with each week. Although not required, participants are encouraged to use the boards to post notes and test new ideas. Boards will be available for each of the five topics to be covered as well as a separate board for pedagogy and a place to share classroom resources.
- Final Assignment: For the final component of this course, each participant will author an original lesson plan based on information presented in the course. The National Constitution Center provides a template which must be used. Throughout the course there will be information and further details for how to complete this assignment.

Course of Study

Lesson #1: Deciding to Be a Candidate and Assembling a Team

The first lesson begins by introducing the course to students through an outline of goals and objectives. The lesson begins with a self-guided PowerPoint presentation. Students watch the first lecture of the course "Deciding to Be a Candidate and Assembling a Team." The lecture will focus on: How a person decides to run for President of the United States; what the process is in assessing a viability to run; putting together an exploratory committee; hiring the team and staff to put the campaign together; and finally making the formal announcement. Guiding questions will be provided to assist with note taking and understanding. The historic case study for the lesson will focus on the 1960 election, and participants will be provided with a set of documents and the case study framework to be completed on the discussion boards.

Reading:

Steven Wayne, *Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?*, Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Lesson #2: Primaries and the Convention

The second lesson focuses on the presidential nomination process. Examining the changing role of the political party in American presidential politics, the content of the lesson will examine the 2008 nominating contests as well as the 1968 election as a case study. Included topics will include: primaries, caucuses, conventions, and the role of states in picking a presidential nominee.

Reading:

Steven Wayne, *Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?*, Chapters 6 and 7.

Lesson #3: Money and Media

The third lesson in the course looks at the growing role of money and the media in the presidential election process. This lesson will examine these two aspects of a campaign over the duration of the contest from the party nomination to Election Day. Topics to be addressed include: campaign finance, role of the media, campaign staff, political advertising, and messaging.

Reading:

Steven Wayne, *Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?*, Chapters 4-5.

Lesson #4 The Democratic and Republican Party Coalitions

The fourth lesson will cover the process of putting together a coalition to win the presidential election. The lesson will look at the changing view and policies of the Democratic and Republican Parties, specifically focusing on the role of the candidate as leader of the party. Students will be asked to consider how the presidential election and campaign lead a national conversation on the future of our nation. The 1980 election will be presented as the case study and provides an excellent comparison to 2008.

Reading:

Steven Wayne, *Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?*, Chapter 8.

Lesson #5: Governing in 2009

The final lesson examines the impact of the presidential election. The lecture will examine the final events of the contest, from the vote itself to the inauguration. The lesson also contains information on the mandate to govern, creation of a cabinet and setting the agenda. Participants will be asked to examine the impact of the campaign on the policies of the new president.

Reading:

Steven Wayne, *Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?*, Chapter 9.

Final Assignment

Participants are required to submit a complete “classroom ready resource.” Requirements and information about structure, format, and expectations for the resource will be presented during the first lesson of the course, along with a template for submission. Lessons should be submitted via drop box on the course site.