PSC 231/231W: Money in Politics

Course Description

This seminar will examine the role of money in the U.S. political process. Topics include the historical development of campaign finance law, the electoral effects of campaign spending, the effects of campaign contributions on public policy outcomes, and various reform proposals (including the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act). The institutions responsible for the creation, enforcement, and interpretation of campaign finance law will also be analyzed. Students will be asked to think critically about concepts such as equality, liberty, and representation, which drive the questions and debates in this area.

Course Requirements

Class Participation. 20 percent of your grade will be based on participation in class discussions. It is essential for the success of the seminar that you come to class prepared and ready to discuss the readings. You are expected to attend each class, and you should let me know when you will not be attending. If you remain silent during the semester and/or come to class unprepared, your class participation grade will suffer.

Take-Home Essays. 40 percent of your grade will be based on two 750-1,000 word essays that will ask you to draw on the class readings. You will have one week to complete each essay. The first essay will be assigned on October 11 and will be due on October 25. The second essay will be assigned on November 8 and will be due on November 15. No late essays will be accepted.

Research Paper. 25 percent of your grade will be based on a 10-15 page research paper. 15 percent of your grade will be based on an in-class presentation based on your paper. Details about the paper and presentation will be provided early in the semester. Topics will be due on October 11, and papers will be due on December 6. No late papers will be accepted.

Additional Requirements for 231W Students. Students enrolled in 231W are expected to meet with Writing Fellows throughout the semester to discuss their research paper; details will follow in the paper assignment. Also, 231W students must turn in a draft of their paper to me two weeks prior to the due date—November 22—for comments. Their final papers will be judged more heavily based on writing than others and must be 16-20 pages long. Failure to meet any of these requirements will result in being required to switch out of 231W and into 231.
**Readings**

There are three required books for this course; all other readings are available in a course packet available at the copy center in Meliora Hall. When appropriate, I will make available, either online or in class, additional short readings based on ongoing events in campaign finance.


**Course Website**

http://www.lib.rochester.edu/index.cfm?page=11&searchtype=rci&TheClass=6538

If this link does not work, go the main library web page, click on course resources, and follow the prompts.

**Other Websites of Interest**

Brookings Institution Site on Campaign Finance Reform
http://www.brookings.edu/gs/cf/cf_hp.htm

Campaign & Media Legal Center Site on the BCRA Case
http://www.campaignlegalcenter.org/BCRA.html

Center for Responsive Politics Money Data
http://www.opensecrets.org/

Campaign Finance Institute
http://www.cfinst.org/

Money Data
http://www.politicalmoneyline.com
September 13: Introduction and Overview

September 20: Federal Campaign Finance Law, Past and Present; Liberty vs. Equality

- Smith, chs. 1-2, 6, 8.

September 27: Congressional Elections I: Overview


October 4: Congressional Elections II: Does Money Matter?

October 11: Presidential Elections

- **First Take-Home Essay Handed Out; Paper Topics Due**


- **First Take-Home Essay Due at 2 PM**
- West and Loomis (all)

November 1: Does Money Influence Policy Outcomes? II

November 8: Public Opinion and the Mass Media

- Second Take-Home Essay Handed Out
- Selection from *Inside the Campaign Finance Battle* (pp. 257-296)

November 15: The U.S. States

- Second Take-Home Essay Due at 2 PM

November 22: Campaign Finance and the Impact of BCRA

- Reread discussions of BCRA and *McConnell* decision from the first week
- Other readings, based on ongoing events, to be distributed
November 29: Challenges to the System

- Smith, chs. 3-5.
- Selection From Designing Democratic Institutions

December 6: Presentations and Wrap-Up