POL 11A: America Decides
University of California, Davis

Fall Quarter, 2020
Tuesdays and Thursdays
6:10-8:00pm (live online via Zoom)
Live lecture URL: **https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/93188405518**
Lecture Recording YouTube URL: **https://tinyurl.com/yy7frgsa**

Instructor:	Dr. Isaac Hale
Email:	idhale@ucdavis.edu
Office Hours:	Tuesdays & Thursdays, 4-5 PM via Zoom (or by appointment)
Office Hours Zoom Link:	**https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/97085947577**
Teaching Assistant:	Samantha Pereira
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Office Hours:	Mondays, 10 AM – noon via Zoom (or by appointment)
Office Hours Zoom Link:	**https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/98685221784**
Teaching Assistant:	Spencer Kiesel
Email:	skiesel@ucdavis.edu
Office Hours:	Wednesdays, 10 AM – noon via Zoom (or by appointment)
Office Hours Zoom Link:	**https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/95162403127**
Teaching Assistant:	John Reid
Email:	jtreid@ucdavis.edu
Office Hours:	Tuesdays & Thursdays, noon – 1:00 PM (or by appointment)
Office Hours Zoom Link:	**https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/98904328004**

Course Description

Who will be elected president on Nov. 3? How did Biden become the presumptive Democratic nominee? Have Americans already made up their minds, or do the campaigns still have a chance to influence voters? What role has money played? How about the media? We will discuss all these questions and many more this fall in POL 11A.

This course has two main goals: First, to understand the forces that shape the outcome of U.S. presidential elections. Second, to build students' skills as social scientists, enabling a more informed lens through which to view and interpret presidential elections for years to come.

By the end of the quarter, successful students should be able to:
- Understand the formal and informal rules that govern U.S. presidential elections
- Identify the forces that shape presidential election outcomes
- Search for, identify, and analyze election-related social science data
- Utilize critical-thinking tools to search for and evaluate election news

This is a challenging quarter for all of us. I do not expect this class to be your top priority. If you or your family are sick or struggling, let me know – I can help make sure you succeed in this class anyways. There is also no shame in taking this class pass/fail: do not hesitate to let me know if this would be your preference.

I also know that the transition to online courses means that the course structures you are probably used to at UC Davis are not appropriate this quarter. As such, I have taken several steps to make this course as engaging and accessible as possible. There will be no midterm or final exam for this course. Instead, the course will have assignments before the election as well as two short post-election paper. This will help ensure that students face less time pressure and that each graded assignment is worth less of the total grade.

The class will feature both live lectures on Zoom (at the regularly scheduled class time) and lecture recordings will be uploaded to YouTube. I encourage you to attend live lecture when possible – there will be opportunities for Q&A engagement every class. Because this class is about current events, we will also be discussing new developments in the campaign every class. If you sometimes cannot attend class though, don't worry: you can watch the lecture recording at a time that works for you. Regardless, you are expected to keep up with the class material. The links for both the live lecture and the YouTube channel are posted at the top of the syllabus.

One final note – this course is meant to be fun! While the material in this class will often get into the weeds of the presidency, I will endeavor to make sure our discussions are always focused on the campaign! If there is something happening in the news that is relevant to our class, I will be sure to allocate time to discuss it. I encourage you to apply current events to course material in class discussion as well. I also encourage you to email me with news items you would like to discuss in class. I will make the time to do so!

Class Expectations

Live Lecture
Because of the COVID-19 suspension of in-person classes, all lectures will be given digitally on Zoom. These lectures will be given live on Zoom during the normal class time. There will be opportunities for students participating live to ask questions during lecture. To join lectures throughout the session, use the following link: **https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/93188405518**

Lecture Recordings
Lectures will be recorded and posted to YouTube for students who are not able to attend lecture at the regular time. The YouTube link for class lectures is **https://tinyurl.com/yy7frgsa**. You are responsible for keeping up with lecture and should take care not to fall behind.

Office Hours
The office hours for the instructor and TAs are listed at the top of this syllabus. You can join our Zoom office hours using the links provided at the beginning of the syllabus.

In addition, we are happy to set up additional office hours at a time more convenient for you. Send us an email if you wish to do so. Once you have scheduled additional office hours you may use that

same link to meet with us.

Online Access
All readings and documents for this course can be accessed through the Canvas website or via hyperlinks in the syllabus schedule. Messages will be sent by me via Canvas, so make sure you have email notifications for Canvas messages activated.

Participation
Because this class is fully online, "participation" will not be a part of your grade. However, I still encourage you to ask questions, participate in the class chat, and share your opinions. There will be opportunities to do so during the virtual lecture.

Email
I welcome questions and comments, either by email or by Canvas message. When you email me, you should compose your email as you would any piece of professional correspondence. I will respond to your emails as quickly as possible, but please do not expect a quick response to email sent on weekends or after 5pm on any day.

Lecture Slides
Slides will be used in class on most days. Slides will be posted to Canvas before class.

Required Readings
There is no required textbook for this class. You may access all readings through the Canvas portal for this class.

Grading
Grading for this course will be calculated as follows:

Biden Campaign Memo	10%
Trump Campaign Memo	10%
Election Madness Game	5%
Election Madness Race Profile Worksheet	20%
Election Analysis Report	25%
Final Essay	30%
Total:	**100%**

All grading items listed above are detailed in the sections that follow.

Campaign Memos
Prior to the election, you will write a pair of short campaign strategy memos: one for each of the presidential campaigns. In these memos your task is to provide advice to the candidate to help them win the election.

Make sure to use 12-point font, one-inch margins, and double-spacing. Additionally, please number each page. Each memo should be roughly 2 pages long (not including the bibliography). You must

cite the polling data you use as well as any other sources. Prompts for the memos are posted to Canvas.

Election Madness Game

You will be joining students around the country in predicting 20 battleground 2020 congressional races plus the presidential race. Go to www.electionmadness.org to see the chosen races and find out more information on each. Your task is to predict the winner of each race.

Between October 19th and October 26th, you can visit **https://electionmadness.org/** and make your prediction picks for each race. Between these dates (and only between these dates!) there will be a link on the Election Madness website that will take you to a Qualtrics interface where you will enter your choices. In order to get credit, you must provide the requested identifying information (e.g. school name, class title, instructor name, etc.).

Election Madness Worksheet

As part of the Election Madness game, you must do background research to explain your picks for each race. For each race you will provide key information about the candidates, their district/state, previous election results, and more. The worksheet for this assignment is posted to Canvas.

This is a major assignment that you should plan to do some real research for. There are 21 races, and you will have to learn something about each of them. If you wait until a day or two before it is due, you will not have enough time!

Election Analysis Report

The purpose of this analysis report is to give you a chance to assess an aspect of the election that was most interesting to you. There are multiple options for this paper, but all will involve basic data analysis. The prompt for the election reflection paper is posted to Canvas.

Final Essay

In lieu of a final exam, you are required to submit a final essay for this class. This essay will ask you to place the results of the 2020 election in a larger political context. Make sure to use 12-point font, one-inch margins, double-spacing, and proper citation format (see section below). Additionally, please number each page. The essay should be roughly four pages long (not including the bibliography). Essay prompts and grading guidelines will be posted to Canvas after the election.

Late Submissions

Do not wait until the night before it is due to begin to work on an assignment. Life is complicated and full of unexpected surprises. Plan for uncertainty by managing your time efficiently. Even if your work is not complete because something unexpected interfered, submit what you have accomplished prior to the emergency. After-the-fact extensions will be granted only under extreme circumstances, and at my sole discretion.

If you know in advance that you will miss an assignment deadline, you may submit a partially completed assignment early — and then appeal for an extension.

Assignments submitted late will have 10% deducted from their final score for every day they are late. This penalty begins immediately following the day and time the assignment is due and will not be prorated. Late final essays will not be accepted after the end of the summer session.

Grade Appeals

If you are not satisfied with the grade you receive on an assignment, please take the following steps:

1) Review any comments/feedback the TAs and I have provided.
2) Contact the person who graded the assignment to discuss your grade
3) If you still have questions, come to my office hours or contact me by email.
4) If you still believe the grade you received is in error, submit a one-paragraph written request for a regrade by email. If the request is approved, your work will receive a completely new evaluation by me. Your score may increase, decrease, or stay the same.

Writing Resources

There are lots of writing resources still available, even with social distancing. The writing center (**https://tutoring.ucdavis.edu/writing**) provides video resources and handouts with writing guides. They also offer one-on-one appointments with both professional specialists and undergraduate peer tutors. If you do not feel confident in your writing, I highly encourage you to take advantage of these resources.

Disabilities

UC Davis encourages qualified students with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. I am strongly committed to the same policy. If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact the Student Disability Center at (530) 752-3184 as soon as possible to identify and document your specific needs. Additionally, it is your responsibility to contact me privately immediately at the beginning of the session (i.e., within the first week) so we can discuss how to accommodate your needs. Do not wait until just before an assignment deadline or an exam to inform me of a learning disability.

Academic Dishonesty

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless otherwise specified by me. Any reference materials used to prepare an assignment must be cited. The following document contains specific guidelines for avoiding plagiarism: **http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/plagiarism.pdf**. In general, you must cite the person at the end of the sentence in which you use another person's idea. When you use a specific phrase, you must put that phrase in quotation marks and cite the original author at the end of the sentence in which you use the phrase. If you wish to submit a piece of writing that you have used in another class, you must receive my permission before doing so.

Weekly Assignments and Topics

The list below indicates reading assignments, class topics, and essay due dates. All journal articles and other readings will be available on Canvas. Because this class is about current events, readings will be posted to Canvas a few days before they are due. Readings will always posted in a folder named by the class date under "Readings" in the Files section of Canvas. You should do each day's readings <u>before</u> that day's class. I will generally keep us on schedule but note that discussions may bleed over from one class to the next.

Part I. Pre-election

Date	Topic	Assignments Due
Week 1		
Thurs, Oct 1	Course Introduction & Logistics	• Read the Syllabus (no other reading for today)
Week 2		
Tues, Oct 6	The Electoral College	
Wed, Oct 7	NO CLASS	• **DEBATE NIGHT! WATCH THE VP DEBATE**
Thurs, Oct 8	Predicting the Election Using Data	
Week 3		
Tues, Oct 13	The 2016 Election	
Thurs, Oct 15	The 2020 Democratic Primary	• Election madness worksheet due at midnight

Week 4		
Mon, Oct 19	NO CLASS	• Election madness website predictions open: **https://electionmadness.org/**
Tues, Oct 20	Trump & Biden	
Thurs, Oct 22	The Presidential Campaigns	• Biden campaign memo due at midnight

Week 5		
Mon, Oct 26	NO CLASS	• Last day to submit election madness predictions online: **https://electionmadness.org/**
Tues, Oct 27	Election Challenges: COVID & Voter Suppression	
Thurs, Oct 29	Election Night Preview	• Trump campaign memo due at midnight

Part II. Post-election

Week 6		
Tues, Nov 3	**ELECTION DAY**	• If you are a US citizen, vote (if you haven't already!) • **WATCH ELECTION NIGHT COVERAGE**
Thurs, Nov 5	What Happened?	• Reading will be announced on Canvas on Wednesday, Nov 4.
Week 7		
Tues, Nov 10	Results of The Election Game	
Thurs, Nov 12	*Guest Lecture TBA*	

Week 8		
Tues, Nov 17	Who Matters in Elections?	
Thurs, Nov 19	Race & Gender in the Campaign	
Fri, Nov 20	NO CLASS	• Election analysis report due at midnight
Week 9		
Tues, Nov 24	The Election & Governance	
Thurs, Nov 26	**NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK**	
Week 10		
Tues, Dec 1	2020 & the 2-party system	
Thurs, Dec 3	2022 & 2024	
Week 11		
Tues, Dec 8	Might different rules have led to a different outcome?	
Thurs, Dec 10	Does Our System Need Reform?	
NO FINAL EXAM – Final Essay due noon, December 15th		