

FINANCING AMERICAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

PSC 761, Fall 2006
University at Buffalo, SUNY
Seminar Room Park Hall
6:00 – 8:50pm Wednesdays

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This course is a research seminar on the issues surrounding the subject of campaign finance. The course investigates a number of questions about the financing of campaigns. How have political campaigns been funded? What is the impact of campaign financing on election outcomes and on the behavior of elected officials in making public policy-decisions? How does money affect election results? Does money matter more to the election of challengers than the reelection of incumbents? Does the positive relationship between a candidate's campaign spending and the candidate's vote percentage reflect the impact of campaign spending or are stronger candidates who would have done well anyway simply able to raise more campaign funds? How should campaign spending be measured or its effects be specified? Are the effects of campaign spending linear? Are they conditional (or interactive) with other considerations, including the spending of the opposing candidate? How can campaign spending be analyzed across districts and states with different population sizes, turnout rates, and media markets? To the extent that campaign spending matters, why does it matter—what does campaign spending buy for a candidate that is important to attracting votes? Presumably, some candidates spend their campaign funds more wisely than others—who are the more efficient candidates and what makes their spending more efficient? How can campaign spending be analyzed across election years in which different campaign technologies (polling, media, etc.) affecting campaign expenses are used? What candidates raise more money than others and why? Who gives to campaigns and why do they contribute? How do campaign contributions affect the working of the government? Do contributions provide access or influence policy decisions or do they simply help elect those who are already inclined to act the way that the contributor wants?

Besides these and other empirical questions, there are many normative questions about campaign financing and the efforts to control it in a democracy. Politics in a representative democracy is supposed to be about obtaining the consent of the governed under conditions of political freedoms and equality. However, one freedom that citizens possess in a liberal republic is the first amendment guaranteed freedom to use their resources to express their point of view directly or indirectly by supporting others who share their views. In practice, the exercise of this freedom may undermine the value of political equality. Money may challenge the supposed supremacy of votes in the electoral process. To paraphrase one political pundit: in American politics you don't beat your opponent anymore, you bankrupt him. Can a democratic republic have both free (allowing campaign financing by private individuals or groups) and fair (open campaigns decided on the merits as the electorate judges them) elections? If so, how?

The course will also consider the effectiveness of campaign financing laws and various alternatives to the current system of campaign financing. In examining various campaign financing systems, the course will examine the tradeoffs in values that each of these systems entail and the constitutional issues that are raised.

REQUIRED READING

There are nine required texts and a number of readings for this course. In their order of appearance, they are:

- Anthony Corrado, Thomas E. Mann, Daniel R. Ortiz, and Trevor Potter (ed.), 2005. *The New Campaign Finance Sourcebook*. Publisher: Brookings Institution Press, ISBN: 0815700059
- Peter L. Francia, John C. Green, Paul S. Hermson, Lynda W. Powell, and Clyde Wilcox, 2003. *The Financiers of Congressional Elections: Investors, Ideologues, and Intimates*, Publisher: Columbia University Press. ISBN: 0231116195
- Michael J. Malbin (ed.), 2003, *Life After Reform: When the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act Meets Politics*. Publisher: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, ISBN: 0742528332
- Michael J. Malbin (ed.) 2006. *The Election After Reform: Money, Politics, and the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, ISBN: 0742538702

Robert K. Goidel, Donald A. Gross, and Todd Shields, 1999. *Money Matters*, Publisher: Rowman & Littlefield, ISBN: 0-8476-8868-2

Annelise Anderson (ed.), 2000. *Political Money: Deregulating American Politics*. Publisher: Hoover. ISBN: 0817996729

Bradley A. Smith, 2001. *Unfree Speech: The Folly of Campaign Finance Reform*. Publisher: Princeton University Press, ISBN: 0691070458

John Samples (ed.) , 2005. *Welfare for Politicians?: Taxpayer Financing of Campaigns*, Publisher: Cato Institute, ISBN: 1930865708.

David Donnelly, Janice Fine, and Ellen Miller (ed.), 1999. *Are Elections for Sale?* Publisher: Beacon, ISBN: 0807043230

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course grades will be based of three considerations. These will combined in the following percentages to compute your overall course grade:

(1.) Class Participation	25%
(2.) Discussion Leadership	15%
(3.) Research Paper	60%

Each student will be assigned three (or four) articles and one book on which he or she will be the class discussion leader. As discussion leader your job is to **briefly** summarize the contribution of the article or book and the evidence (or logic) on which it rests, assess the strengths and weaknesses of the article or book, and raise questions for the class to consider. We have a great deal of material to cover in this course, so do not make long-winded summaries of the article or book. Assess the value-added to the literature and you should assume that everyone in the class has read the piece on which you are the discussion leader. Remember that you are a discussion leader— so your job is to stimulate and guide class to illuminate the reading. You also have a responsibility to participate in class discussions on which you are not the designated discussion leader.

As a research seminar, each student is to write a research paper for the class. The goal of this assignment is for each student to write a paper during this semester that would be presentable at a professional political science conference. The paper should be an piece of empirical research on a question directly relevant to the financing of American political campaigns. Your paper may address a new question, an old question in a new way, or replicate a previous piece of research with new data, or some combination of the above. You should write the paper using a professional format: tables and figures on their own separate pages, double-spaced text, an abstract, citations in scientific format with references at the end of the paper, and so forth. Your paper should state a clear question, the data and methods that you are using to answer the question, and your answer to the question. You should inform me of your paper’s topic and question no later than October 4 (Week 6).

The course readings begin with a very useful overview of the campaign finance system. This is provided by Corrado, Mann, Ortiz, and Potter’s *The New Campaign Finance Sourcebook*. With this summary background, the next four classes (weeks 3 through 6) are devoted to examining a set of 34 research articles aspects of campaign finance. All of these articles are available through JSTOR at the UB Library’s website. These articles should give you a good background of what is known about campaign finance and should provide you with an idea or two for your research paper. The course then turns to several recent books reporting empirical research on campaign finance. The last few weeks of the course turns to several books examining normative and policy issues about campaign finance.

In the last two sessions of the course, you will each present your research paper to the class. Each presentation will be 12 to 15 minutes followed by 5 minutes of questioning from your classmates. It is important that you participate not just in presenting your own research but in discussing the research produced by others in the class as well.

There are a number of websites that you should visit to learn about campaign finance. Perhaps the three most useful are:

Federal Election Commission (<http://www.fec.gov/>) This website has a great deal of data and provides very helpful summaries of campaign finance laws.

Campaign Finance Institute (<http://www.cfinst.org/>) This is a bipartisan institute in Washington that conducts and provides access to political science research on campaign finance. They also provide very useful e-Guides to campaign finance laws and court rulings.

Center for Responsive Politics (<http://www.opensecrets.org/>) Excellent website on everything related to campaign finance.

COURSE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Week 1, August 30 Class cancelled to attend the American Political Science Association's Annual Meeting.

Week 2, September 6

Introduction to the Financing of American Political Campaigns

Read: Corrado, Mann, Ortiz, and Potter's *The New Campaign Finance Sourcebook*.

Week 3, September 13

The Empirical Assessments of Campaign Spending Effects I: Findings about House Elections

Read: 1. Gary C. Jacobson, 1978. "The Effects of Campaign Spending in Congressional Elections," *The American Political Science Review*, 72: 469-91.

2. Donald Philip Green, and Jonathan S. Krasno, 1988. "Salvation for the Spendthrift Incumbent: Reestimating the Effects of Campaign Spending in House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 32: 884-907.

3. Scott J. Thomas. 1989. "Do Incumbent Campaign Expenditures Matter?" *The Journal of Politics*, 51: 965-76.

4. Gary C. Jacobson, 1990. "The Effects of Campaign Spending in House Elections: New Evidence for Old Arguments," *American Journal of Political Science*, 34:334-62.

5. Donald Philip Green and Jonathan S. Krasno, 1990. "Rebuttal to Jacobson's 'New Evidence for Old Arguments,'" *American Journal of Political Science*, 34: 363-72.

6. Alan I. Abramowitz. 1991. "Incumbency, Campaign Spending, and the Decline of Competition in U.S. House Elections." *The Journal of Politics*. 53: 34-56.

7. Stephen Ansolabehere, and Alan Gerber. 1994. "The Mismeasure of Campaign Spending: Evidence from the 1990 U.S. House Elections," *The Journal of Politics*, 56: 1106-18.

Week 4, September 20

The Empirical Assessments of Campaign Spending Effects II: House and Senate

Read: 1. Christopher Kenny; Michael McBurnett, 1992. "A Dynamic Model of the Effect of Campaign Spending on Congressional Vote Choice," *American Journal of Political Science*, 36: 923-37.

2. Christopher Kenny and Michael McBurnett, 1994. "An Individual-Level Multiequation Model of Expenditure Effects in Contested House Elections," *The American Political Science Review*, 88: 699-707.

3. Christopher Kenny and Michael McBurnett, 1997. "Up Close and Personal: Campaign Contact and Candidate Spending in U. S. House Elections," *Political Research Quarterly*, 50: 75-96.

4. Robert S. Erikson, and Thomas R. Palfrey. 1998. "Campaign Spending and Incumbency: An Alternative Simultaneous Equations Approach." *The Journal of Politics* 60: 355-373.

5. Robert S. Erikson and Thomas R. Palfrey, 2000. "Equilibria in Campaign Spending Games: Theory and Data," *The American Political Science Review*, 94: 595-609.
6. Alan I. Abramowitz. 1989. "Campaign Spending in U.S. Senate Elections," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 14: 487-507.
7. Alan Gerber. 1998. "Estimating the Effect of Campaign Spending on Senate Election Outcomes Using Instrumental Variables," *The American Political Science Review*, 92: 401-11.
8. Ken Goldstein and Paul Freedman, 2000. "New Evidence for New Arguments: Money and Advertising in the 1996 Senate Elections," *The Journal of Politics*, 62: 1087-1108.
9. Richard N. Engstrom and Christopher Kenny, 2002. "The Effects of Independent Expenditures in Senate Elections," *Political Research Quarterly*, 55: 885-905.

Week 5, September 27

The Empirical Assessments of Campaign Spending Effects III: State Elections and Timing

- Read:
1. David A. Breaux, and Anthony Gierzynski. 1991. "It's Money That Matters': Campaign Expenditures and State Legislative Primaries," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 16: 429-43.
 2. Anthony Gierzynski, and David Breaux. 1993. "Money and the Party Vote in State House Elections," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 18: 515-33.
 3. Anthony Gierzynski and David Breaux, 1996. "Legislative Elections and the Importance of Money," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 21: 337-57.
 4. Timothy B. Krebs, 1998. "The Determinants of Candidates' Vote Share and the Advantages of Incumbency in City Council Elections," *American Journal of Political Science*, 42:921-35.
 5. Robert E. Hogan, 2001. "Campaign War Chests and Challenger Emergence in State Legislative Elections," *Political Research Quarterly*, 54: 815-30.
 6. Kedron Bradwell. 2002. "Money and Challenger Emergence in Gubernatorial Primaries," *Political Research Quarterly*, 55: 653-68.
 7. Randall W. Partin. 2002. "Assessing the Impact of Campaign Spending in Governors' Races," *Political Research Quarterly*, 55: 213-33.
 8. Edie N. Goldenberg, Michael W. Traugott, and Frank R. Baumgartner, 1986. "Preemptive and Reactive Spending in U.S. House Races," *Political Behavior*, 8: 3-20.
 9. Robert Bierasack, Paul S. Herrmson, and Clyde Wilcox, 1993. "Seeds for Success: Early Money in Congressional Elections," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 18: 535-51.
 10. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, 1996. "A Dynamic Analysis of the Role of War Chests in Campaign Strategy," *American Journal of Political Science*, 40: 352-71.

Week 6, October 4

The Empirical Assessments of Campaign Spending Effects IV: The Decision to Contribute and Effects on Governing

- Read:
1. Jack L. Noragon, 1981. "Political Finance and Political Reform: The Experience with State Income Tax Checkoffs," *The American Political Science Review*, 75: 667-87.

