Learn the challenges political leaders in our country face today by stepping out of your personal experience and into the shoes of a Member of Congress.

This class is designed to ground you in the political realities and possibilities of elected leadership and to help you develop empathy and understanding across divisions of ideology, identity and geography. Each student will be assigned an unfamiliar district and will deconstruct its representative’s path to victory in their last election. Students will study the district’s unique demographics, become familiar with its important stakeholders and engage in activities and discussions about the biggest issues of the day sharing the representative’s perspective. This will allow us to analyze the political pressures on our elected leaders, the causes and impact of a variety of “crises,” including the politicization of our immigration debate, impeachment, why we always seem headed towards a government shutdown, and will provide a construct for students to learn about campaign components and experiment with strategy as they prepare their assigned Member for re-election.

Course Structure: Regular class meetings are primarily in seminar format, with a strong emphasis on class discussion. You’ll be expected to keep up with the Member you’re assigned in real-time in addition to the exercises for the purposes of discussion.

Grades:

- 25% Class participation (two lowest scores will be dropped)
- 25% Practical exercise completion (homework and in class)
- 10% OPED (Due Feb 24)
- 10% Memo re: legislative initiative (Due March 2)
- 20% Three part re-election strategy exercise
  - Baseline strategy memo (Due March 23)
  - Communications plan (Due April 6)
  - Strategy in reaction to a scenario (Due April 20)
- 10% Course Reflection Essay (Due April 24)

Grade calculation: Grades will be converted from letter to numeric as follows: B+ = 88; B=85; B+=82 (and so on), with the exception of A+, which will receive a score of 100, and F grades, which will receive a 50.

Final grades will be rounded to the nearest tenth (ie: 89.2 → 89 → B+; 89.6 → 90 → A-).
Course goals:

- An understanding of the real-world challenges that political leaders face: balancing your personal views with those of voters, the realities that come with re-election, how resource limitations play a factor, and how there’s always something you didn’t plan for, but have to deal with
- A basic understanding of the purpose and structure of a campaign, how to approach political strategy, and how to make strategic recommendations
- Importance of message and an understanding of today’s earned and paid media landscape
- Greater perspective on how YOU can best play a role in our political system

Part 1: Part 1 of the course is designed to analyze the key components of a winning campaign in addition to considering the broader dynamics in our politics today.

Part 2: Part 2 of the course is designed to offer perspective on how politics impacts governing.

Part 3: Part 3 of the course will challenge students’ understanding of the concepts assessed in Parts 1 & 2, provide a more in-depth understanding of key components of campaigns, and give students the opportunity to experiment with campaign strategy.

More detail on classes: (* next to class title denotes guest speaker is possible)

Part 1:

January 8: Introductions and Tone Setting for the Course

Goal: The purpose of this class is to help us get to know each other and set the tone for the course: why we’re taking the approach outlined, what success looks like, who the key players are in campaigns and Congress, etc.

Homework before next class: News articles saved in the “Readings” Folder of Sakai for “Class 2” should be read before our next class.


Goal: The purpose of this class is to discuss the electoral landscape that campaigns will be operating on in 2020, to assign students their Members to follow for the rest of the course, and to review the coming homework exercises.

Homework: Students will research and summarize the profile of the Member they’re assigned and their opponent in their last campaign, analyze the demographics and electoral history of the district they’re assigned, and analyze the fundraising and spending in the last campaign for the seat. Templates and acceptable sources for this research/analysis will be shared by the instructor.
January 20: No class on MLK

January 27: Can you win? A Candidate’s Path and the Resources You Need to Travel It *

Goal: The purpose of this class is to discuss the degree to which: candidates, the make-up of a district and money matter for electoral success. Speaking of money - where does it all come from? It’s essential that students complete their homework exercise to gain the context their assigned member operated within in 2018 for this discussion.

Homework: News articles saved in the “Readings” Folder of Sakai for “Class 4” should be read before our next class. Students will also research and summarize key campaign messages that their Member communicated in their last campaign. Templates for the exercise and acceptable sources for this research/analysis will be shared by the instructor.

February 3: "Change we can believe in": The message makes the campaign

Goal: The purpose of this class is to gain an understanding of the importance of a campaign message is to a campaign. We will discuss what right looks like, but also assess with the context of students’ assigned Members: in what scenarios messages may be more generic than unique, how vulnerabilities are created by some messaging choices, and what all of it means for a candidates’ future once elected.

Homework: Students will research and summarize endorsements the Member had from groups, elected officials, and key political stakeholders. Templates for the exercise and acceptable sources for this research/analysis will be shared by the instructor.

February 10: It takes a village: the people and organizations behind candidates' elections*

Goal: The purpose of this class is to discuss the importance of a strong organization to a campaign and how you build one. We will also discuss the value of different endorsement and how to approach your strategy for building a winning organization. Again, it’s essential that students complete their homework exercise to gain the context their assigned member operated within in 2018 for this discussion.

Homework: News articles saved in the “Readings” Folder of Sakai for “Class 6” should be read before our next class.
Part 2:

February 17: Border crisis, Government Shutdowns, Impeachment: The realities of governing - Part 1

Goal: The purpose of this class is to discuss the causes of some of the challenges their Members have experienced in the 116th Congress, the pressures they and their staffs have had to endure along the way, and the ultimate impact. We will also discuss how Members and their teams approach navigating the issues that come at them whether they like it or not and the homework assignment that will articulate the result to your Members’ constituents.

Homework: Class will select together hotly debated issues from the 116th Congress that they will then choose from to write their homework assignment on - an OPED (no more than 600 words) explaining their Member’s position on the issue. Students also need to prepare for the next class discussion by being knowledgeable of what issues their Member championed on the campaign trail in 2018, in addition to any additional campaign promises they made.

February 24: Delivering on your campaign priorities!: The realities of governing - Part 2

Goal: The purpose of this class is to discuss what success looks like, especially as Member with little seniority, when it comes to delivering on the priorities Member’s campaigned on. We will also discuss some of the challenges to governing, in addition to how to a Member’s Party and personal priorities can get in the way. Goals and intent of the homework assignment will also be reviewed before class concludes.

Homework: Students will write a 1-3 page confidential memo to their Member of Congress to help them strategically advance an issue selected in class. News articles saved in the “Readings” Folder of Sakai for “Class 8” should also be read before our next class.

March 2: The advantage of incumbency: Running a politically savvy official operation*

Goal: The purpose of this class is to gain perspective on how smart Members manage their official office. We will discuss how the “advantage of incumbency” impacts fundraising, earned media, paid communication, stakeholder engagement and the legality of it all.

Homework: Enjoy spring break! And, please read articles saved in the “Readings” Folder of Sakai for “Class 6” to prepare for our next class.

SPRING BREAK!!
Part 3: Preparing for Re-Election

March 16: It’s more than polling: The data and analytics that drive campaigns*

Goal: The purpose of this class is to discuss how polling is used to guide a candidate toward re-election in addition to the other data that drive campaigns. Students will also get the opportunity to engage in Q&A that will also help them prepare to complete their homework assignment, which will be reviewed in detail during the class.

Homework: As the top political advisor to your Member of Congress, it's your job to ensure they’re on a path to get re-elected. You will write them a series of three memos throughout the remainder of the class that will offer your recommendations. Homework before next class will be to complete the first part, which will focus on the data and funding you’ll need to chart a path.

March 23: Part 1: Paid communication in the digital & social media age

Goal: The purpose of this class will be to discuss more traditional paid media like TV, radio, and direct mail. We’ll dive into what makes a good ad and mail piece in addition to how to approach the right media plan for your candidate in today’s media environment.

Homework: News articles saved in the “Readings” Folder of Sakai for “Class 11” should be read before our next class.

March 30: Part 2: Paid communication in the digital & social media age*

Goal: The purpose of this class will be to discuss and gain perspective on how campaigns are integrating digital into their paid media plans today. We will also discuss the challenges of communicating on the digital/social media landscape, including disinformation, platforms rejecting political ads, and the ongoing debate around data sharing.

Homework: Homework before next class will be to complete the second strategy memo to your Member of Congress. This time, you’ll focus on your message and communications strategy. We will discuss the assignment for understanding before class concludes.

April 6: Smart campaign management: It’s all about resources

Goal: The purpose of this class is to review and discuss the variety of “resources” a campaign has and how a campaign manager needs to think about resource stewardship and managing execution of the strategy. We will also use the class to do group-work around a realistic scenario a campaign manager could find themselves in. The teams will discuss, devise a proposed course of action in response, and then present their reactions and response to the class.

Homework: News articles saved in the “Readings” Folder of Sakai for “Class 13” should be read before our next class.
April 13: Expecting the unexpected: Navigating attacks and the things out of your control

Goal: The purpose of this class is to gain perspective on the variety of unexpected events that can turn the best campaign plan upside down and discuss how to react to them. Hurricanes, terrorist attacks, and dirt on a candidate from the past have all forced strategy shifts before, and they will again. In addition to class discussion, we’ll do group-work around a realistic scenario a campaign manager could find themselves in. Teams will discuss, devise a proposed course of action in response, and then present their reactions and recommendations to the class.

Homework: Homework before next class will be to complete the final strategy memo to your Member of Congress. This time, you’ll have to make recommendations on how to navigate a unique challenge or “crisis” in the heat of a campaign. We will discuss the assignment for understanding before class concludes.

April 20: Course reflection and discuss their next steps in political engagement

Goal: The purpose of this class is to reflect together on the course as a whole before students write their final reflection essay and as they consider how they’ll engage in the political process going forward. We will also take a class photo, so consider that when you’re getting dressed for the day!

Homework: The final assignment for class, in lieu of a final exam, is a short (no more than 3 pages) essay reflecting on what you experienced and learned throughout the course. We will discuss the parameters for the assignment before class breaks.

April 27: Additional Office Hours for Career Mentorship

Goal: The purpose of the instructor making time during the scheduled final is 100% for your benefit. If you have something better to do - do it! If you want extra guidance as you prepare to walk the road ahead or want to make asks for help, please swing by and lets chat!

Homework: Have a great summer!
Other notes/policies:

**Reading assignments:** Reading will be light and primarily be news articles. All assigned reading will be posted in Sikai prior to the class they are planned to be homework following (ie: readings for Class 6 will be in Sikai before we walk into Class 5) so they remain as relevant as possible.

**Written assignments:** All written assignments will be reviewed in the class before they are homework and success defined. The instructor will also be available via cell/email for clarification, and assignments must be submitted by the time class starts on the date due.

**Class participation:** Class attendance will be a portion of this grade, and if you miss a class, please take the initiative to get a readout on what was missed, including homework guidance. In addition to showing up, you’re expected to be engaged in class discussion. If you leave the class feeling like you wish you could have contributed something, but didn’t get the chance, please share it on the Google Form linked in Sakai.

**Practical exercise completion:** Homework exercises need not be perfect, but need to be thoroughly completed to help us adequately achieve the learning objectives of the course. You’ll be filing the completed exercises for future reference and sharing with the instructor. Small group work exercises that take place during class meetings will be viewed as “practical exercises,” and you can expect the instructor to audit your participation in both.

**Google Drive e-filing of exercises:** Following the assignment of your Member of Congress in Class 2, please create and share (allison.jaslow@gmail.com) a Google Drive folder labeled: “Last Name of Student”/Rep. “Last Name of Member of Congress” - you’ll begin to populate this folder with completed exercises from homework.

**Laptops & phones:** Please bring your laptop to every class, as you may need to reference electronic documents you’ve created and/or open source information at points in the class. However, please keep all laptops, tablets, and phones out of sight unless instructed to use them.

**Duke Community Standard:** The Duke Community Standard applies to this course and any student who violates it will receive an F.

**Recordings:** Students are not permitted to record audio or video from class meetings; any student who violates this standard will receive an F.

**Late work:** Late work will be penalized by 20% of the assignment’s total value per late day.

**Respect:** It’s expected that all students will act respectfully toward each other, any class guests and the instructor. Disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated and will result
Syllabus changes: The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus with the intent of achieving the best learning experience possible. Any need for changes will be discussed with the class prior to making them.

-Nothing Follows-