

Election Simulation (for campaign roles)

We will run an election simulation with three candidates. Students will be divided into four groups. Three of the groups will be composed of a candidate running for elected office and her or his campaign staff. The fourth group will be composed of a media group, including owners, editors, and reporters representing a variety of national, state, and local news media.

Candidates running for office will be a personal and political composite of (1) an actual viable political candidate (family background, political experience, policy issue stances, etc. – most of which can be found online); (2) responses to the 2008 election issues; and (3) the personality of the student playing the role of the candidate.

Candidate's Guidelines

Each person in the group has a special role to play in the campaign. The roles are:

1. Candidate
2. Candidate's spouse (discusses all decisions made by the candidate)
3. Campaign Chairperson (chief policy adviser; designs campaign brochures/website)
4. Press Secretary (writes press releases, responds to press inquiries; advises candidate on how to handle the press and how to respond to the opponent's campaign)
5. Public Relations Adviser (designs and directs filming of TV commercial; advises candidate on image)
6. Campaign webmaster (manages the campaigns web presence)

While the candidate's position on issues and his/her public/personal image will be based on an actual politician, each campaign group may embellish upon these characteristics and policy interests to the extent that they are congruent with the candidate's "background."

Each campaign staff (including spouse) will need to carefully determine the candidate's strengths and weaknesses and build a campaign accordingly. The staff will also want to examine the opponent's background and use information collected to benefit their candidate.

Each staff persona (including spouse) will advise the candidate in discussion groups (usually held the last 45 minutes of class on dates listed below, although out of class meetings are needed) and will write memos of advice to the candidate (due dates for these memos are listed below). Each candidate will issue a memo to his/her staff regarding concerns about past events and desires for future events. *You must provide a copy of all memos to the instructor as well.*

Schedule

The last 45 minutes of class on dates listed below is devoted to the simulation.

Week Event

1. Feb. 23rd. Meet to discuss strategy for the first press conference. You will want to discuss your candidate and his or her opponent(s). Be prepared to emphasize the strengths of your candidate and know how to address what you think are your candidate's weaknesses. Part of your strategy should be anticipating the strategy of the other campaigns, including how to combat the opponent's strengths that may be your candidate's weaknesses, and how to create a unique candidate image so that the voters have a "clear" choice.

2. March 2nd. First “open” press conference based on biographical background of candidates. *Each candidate holds a 10-minute session.* Campaigns will meet afterward to discuss impressions and draft campaign issues statements that will be posted on Ning.com the following Monday (3/9). Each staff person will write a short memo (one page) based on his or her evaluation of the first press conference advising the candidate about future strategies. Each candidate writes an internal memo to staff about needs of the campaign. *Memos due following Thursday, March 5th. **Assignment #1.***

3. March 9th. *Candidates provide one-page written issue statements to press, which are also posted on the campaign’s website in Ning.com.* During the first half of class, media prepares questions, campaigns prepare candidates for press conference. During the second half of the class, a press conference based on the campaign issues release is held. Each staff person will write a short memo (one page) based on his/her evaluation of the second press conference advising the candidate about future strategies. Each candidate writes an internal memo to staff about ideas for the first debate. *Memos due Thursday, March 12th. **Assignment #2.***

4. March 12th. Media Group 1 negotiates debate rules with press and candidates. **For example,** the agreement can be: the candidate to receive the first question will be determined by a flip of the coin prior to the commencement of the debate. For each round of questioning, the candidate who receives the initial question will have two minutes to answer, followed by a one-minute response from the opponent, with a 30-second rebuttal opportunity from the first candidate. The last 15 minutes will be reserved for audience questions.

5. March 19th. First candidate debate, sponsored by Media Group 1. *Candidates provide campaign brochures to the press and post them online* (please bring enough copies for everyone in the class). The debate is held the last 45 minutes of class. A campaign PR statement about the staff’s interpretation of the debates is provided to each candidate. Each candidate writes an internal memo to staff about ideas for TV commercial. *Memos due the following Monday, March 23rd. **Assignment #3.***

6. March 23rd. *Each campaign will film their TV commercial during this week. **Assignment #4.*** Media will do a poll of their readers. *Media articles on poll results due following Monday (March 30th).*

7. April 2nd. Campaigns receive poll results. *First airing of political commercials.* “Meet the Press” roundtable discusses the race, moderated by two selected journalists. Campaigns watch and meet afterward to develop a press release in response to the media pundits and write a prepared speech for the next event. Each candidate writes an internal memo to staff about next speech. *Press release and memos due following Monday, April 6. **Assignment #5.***

8. *April 23rd. Each candidate makes a 5-minute speech followed by a 15-minute press conference.* Each staff person will write a short memo (one page) based on his or her evaluation of the media’s reception of the speeches to advise the candidate about future strategies. Each candidate writes an internal memo to staff about ideas for next debate. *Memos due the following Monday, April 27th. **Assignment #6.***

9. April 27th. Media Group 2 representatives and the *campaign staffs will agree upon the terms of the debates*, e.g., whether or not a list of the journalists' potential questions are made available to the candidates before the debate. Debate questions from each media source are due Thursday, April 30th. If the candidates decide to restrict the debate to submitted questions, each campaign will also receive the questions on the following Monday (April 30th).
10. May 7th. **Public Debate and Election.** *Invite all your friends.* Campaigns hand out brochures to the audience and post them to web. Debate begins with airing of television commercials (campaigns can make a 2nd commercial if they wish). **Assignment #7.**

The debate is sponsored and moderated by Media Group 2. Upon the conclusion of the debate, citizens in the audience will complete their election ballots and drop them in boxes at the exits. The press will conduct exit poll interviews with at least 5 people and write up their prediction of the winner based on the results. Exit poll and election results will be announced in the next class.

11. May 11. During the first half of class members of the media form an election watch panel to discuss their reader/listener exit polls and make their predictions for the winner. Election results are announced. During the second half of class, the *winner and loser each appear before the press with the appropriate acceptance or concession speech.*

Election Simulation (for media roles)

We will run an election simulation with three candidates. Students will be divided into four groups. Three of the groups will be composed of a candidate running for elected office and her or his campaign staff. The fourth group will be composed of a media group, including owners, editors, and reporters representing a variety of national, state, and local news media.

Candidates running for office will be a personal and political composite of (1) an actual viable political candidate (family background, political experience, policy issue stances, etc. – most of which can be found online); (2) responses to the 2008 election issues; and (3) the personality of the student playing the role of the candidate.

Media Guidelines

There will be two media groups. Each media group will consist of the following roles:

1. Media owner
2. Op-ed columnist for national newspaper (e.g., *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*)
3. Reporter for national newspaper (e.g., *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*)
4. Reporter for weekly national news magazine (e.g., *Newsweek*, *Time*)
5. Columnist or reporter for State's large city newspaper
6. Columnist or reporter for Local city newspaper

Each reporter has her or his own particular interest in the campaign, based on the readership of her or his newspaper or journal, which includes the geographical distribution of the news sources (e.g., national vs. state vs. local) as well as the readers' socioeconomic status and ideological leanings.

Each reporter should use biographical backgrounds provided by each candidate supplemented by information found on the Internet or in the library to develop their early news stories and questions for the first press conference (week 2). Afterwards, the reporters will need to keep abreast of the potential issues salient to their news sources from the 2008 election season. Current issues, in combination with each candidate's personal and political histories and campaign public relations efforts (including press releases, campaign literature, speeches, and TV commercials) will provide the basis for future articles, press conference questions, questions asked during the debates, and public opinion polls of readers.

Most weeks, the press will have to be prepared to ask the candidates questions, which can include questions about the actions or statements that arise from the other candidate's campaign. It is up to each reporter to determine how personal he or she wants to make the questions.

A public opinion "straw" poll will be done once during the campaign. Each reporter will select 10 "subscribers" (these can be friends, family or anybody you can get to play the game) to read the set of articles you have written about the campaign. You will ask each of the 10 subscribers to answer a set of questions you have developed about the race. You will write up an article describing the results of the "straw" poll.

Near the end of the race, your media group will want to endorse one of the candidates. In this exercise, you will write an editorial article explaining the reasons for picking one candidate over the other. Remember, you will want to reflect the opinions of your readership as well as represent the politics of the actual editorial board (by reading editorials in your news source throughout the semester you should be able to determine which candidate the newspaper or magazine would endorse).

The final debate, which occurs during the last week, will be open to the public (anyone you know is invited to attend). The press will ask the questions. The candidates will have the opportunity to pass out their campaign literature and show their TV commercials. At the end of the debate, the audience will vote. The press will conduct exit poll interviews with at least 10 people and write up their prediction of the winner based on the results.

All media releases (articles, debate questions, polls, etc.) will be posted to Ning.com and provided to everyone in the class including the instructor. Be sure to always bring enough copies.

Schedule

The last 45 minutes of class on dates listed below is devoted to the simulation.

Week Event

1. Feb. 23rd. The media groups meet to discuss questions for the first press conference.
2. March 2nd. The first “open” press conference, based on biographical background of candidates is held. Each candidate takes the podium for 10 minutes. Owners write memo to writers/reporters on views of candidates and issues to focus on. Writers/reporters post articles on candidates. *News articles due the following Thursday (March 5th)*. Make sure the articles are posted before class. **Assignment #1.**
3. March 9th. Candidates provide issue statements to the press. During the first half of class, *prepare questions based upon candidates issue statements*. During the second half of class, conduct the press conference. Owners write memo to writers/reporters on views of issues to ask candidates about for debate on March 19th. Writers/reporters post articles on issues and press conference. *News articles due the following Thursday (March 12th)*. Make sure the articles are posted before class on the 12th. **Assignment #2.**
12. March 12th. Media Group 1 negotiates debate rules with press and candidates. For example, the agreement can be: the candidate to receive the first question will be determined by a flip of the coin prior to the commencement of the debate. For each round of questioning, the candidate who receives the initial question will have two minutes to answer, followed by a one-minute response from the opponent, with a 30-second rebuttal opportunity from the first candidate. The last 15 minutes will be reserved for audience questions. Debate questions due from Media Group 1. **Assignment #3 for students in Media Group 1.**
4. March 19th. The first candidate debate, sponsored by Media Group 1, is held. Candidates provide campaign brochures to the press. The debate is held during the last 45 minutes of class. Owners write memo to writers/reporters on what to poll readers about.

Writers/reporters post articles on debate. *News articles due the following Thursday.* Make sure the articles are posted before class. *News articles due the following Monday (March 23rd).* **Assignment #3 (Media Group 2 & owners) or 4 (Media Group 1).**

5. March 23rd. *Media will poll their readers.*
Owners write memo on their views of the campaign so far. Article on poll results due following Monday (March 30th). **Assignment #4 (Media Group 2 & owners) or 5 (Media Group 1).** Media will prepare to share their wisdom and insights about the election race during the “Meet the Press” roundtable scheduled for next week. Each campaign will film its TV commercial. Each group will select a moderator to participate in April 2nd roundtable.
6. April 2nd. *Campaigns receive poll results.* First airing of political commercials. “Meet the Press” roundtable discusses the race, moderated by two selected journalists. Campaigns watch and meet afterwards to develop a press release in response to the media pundits and write a prepared speech to be delivered April 23rd, which will serve as the basis for questions from the press. Media groups meet to discuss endorsement.
7. April 23rd. Each candidate makes a 5-minute speech followed by a 5-minute press conference. *Owners write memo on which candidate to endorse due Thursday, April 23rd.* *Editorial endorsement from each writer is due following Monday, April 27th.* **Assignment #5 (Media Group 2 & owners) or 6 (Media Group 1).**
8. April 27th. Media Group 2 and the campaign staffs will agree upon the terms of the debate, e.g., whether or not a list of the journalists’ potential questions are made available to the candidates before the debate. *Owners write memo on which issues they believe are important for exit poll interviews. Debate questions from Media Group 2 are due April 30th.* **Assignment #6 for Media Group 2 & owners.** If the candidates decide to restrict the debate to submitted questions, each campaign will also receive the questions on Thursday, April 30th (be sure to bring enough copies).
9. May 7th. **Public Debate and Election.** *Invite all your friends.* Campaigns hand out brochures to the audience. Debate begins with airing of television commercials.

The debate is sponsored and moderated by Media Group 2. Upon the conclusion of the debate, citizens in the audience will complete their election ballots and drop them in boxes at the exits. *The press will conduct exit poll interviews with at least 5 people and write up their prediction of the winner based on the results. Owners will write memo to staff giving their opinions about how the campaign was covered.* **Assignment #7.** Exit poll and election results will be announced the following class.

10. May 11. During the first half of class *members of the media form an election watch panel to discuss their reader/listener exit polls and make their predictions for the winner.* Election results are announced. During the second half of class, the winner and loser each appear before the press with the appropriate acceptance or concession speech.

Tips for Working Successfully in a Group
From Randy Pausch, 2008, *The Last Lecture*

1. **Meet people properly.** It all starts with an introduction. Exchange contact information. Make sure you can pronounce everyone's names.
2. **Find things you have in common.** You can almost always find something in common with another person, and from there, it is much easier to address issues where you have differences. Sports cut across boundaries of race and wealth. And if nothing else, we all have the weather in common.
3. **Try for optimal meeting conditions.** Make sure no one is hungry, cold or tired. Meet over a meal if you can; food *softens* a meeting. That's why they "do lunch" in Hollywood.
4. **Let everyone talk.** Don't finish someone's sentences. And talking louder or faster doesn't make your idea any better.
5. **Check egos at the door.** When you discuss ideas label them and write them down. The label should be descriptive of the idea, not the originator: "the bridge story" not "Jane's story."
6. **Praise each other.** Find something nice to say, even if it's a stretch. The worst ideas can have silver linings if you look hard enough.
7. **Phrase alternatives as questions:** Instead of "I think we should do A, not B," try "What if we did A instead of B?" That allows people to offer comments rather than defend one choice.