

POLS115/193
Fall 2007

Blog Questions:

1. Campaign Planning: September 6, 2007:

In Chapters Two and Three in the Thurber and Nelson book, William Sweeney Jr. and Joel Bradshaw discuss the importance (and difficulty) of planning in a campaign. They both argue that the most effective campaigns are those that plan effectively. Read their discussion of this issue and then discuss the role of planning in your campaigns. How central is it? Do they do it well? In what ways? Do they have a well-formed message? Do they have a clear plan? Note that I am not asking about the substance of the message or the plan. Rather the question is the process of planning itself. We will have plenty of time later in the semester to think about the substance of campaigns. Here we want to look at the process and the context within which that substance is formed. (Please also remember to pay attention to what others are writing. The best blogs are interactive in nature. We will not, I hope, have twenty separate monologues on the topic, but a more connected wide-ranging discussion. While you will want to discuss "your campaign," try to do so in relationship to both the reading – which you all share – and the insights of others.

2. Fieldwork: September 16, 2007:

Fieldwork is essential in any campaign. Paul Herrnson (in Thurber and Nelson, chapter 11), notes: "Field work is an important element of campaign politics. Even though contemporary campaigns, particularly those in high office, rely heavily on the electronic media, spin doctors and other modern electioneering techniques, field activities continue to be important in voter identification and targeting, message development and communications, and voter mobilization. Anecdotal as well as systematic evidence demonstrates that field activities can influence election outcomes." But if field work matters in most elections, in the Iowa caucuses, at least according to the traditional wisdom, it is even more important than usual. Look at what Herrnson (in chapter 11) and Robinson (in chapter 10, both in Nelson and Thurber) say about fieldwork and what Wayne says about voter mobilization (chapter 2 of his book). Then discuss fieldwork in your campaigns. How important is it? How does it adapt to the environment of the Iowa caucuses? I encourage you to comment based upon your experiences doing fieldwork or what you see others in your campaign doing. And be attentive to how other campaigns, as described by classmates, may be similar or different from the one for which you are an intern.

3. Free Media: October 7, 2007:

In Chapter Nine of the Thurber and Nelson book, John Petrocik discusses how the patterns of media coverage can affect a campaign and voter reaction to that

campaign and the candidates running. He finds less of an affect than some media critics would expect, but he is also focusing on the general election where what he calls "hard facts" may have maximum influence. By his own logic, the media impact will be larger in a primary campaign. And certainly, campaigns spend much effort trying to shape the kind of coverage they receive. I want you to discuss how campaigns in Iowa, in particular the campaigns you are working in, try to shape the coverage they receive, the successes and frustrations they face, and how this interaction of campaigns and the media may affect voters. Do not be concerned with either paid media – political ads – or the Internet. We will blog about those topics later in the campaign. Here think about traditional media – TV, Newspaper, Radio. The focus should be how campaigns try to shape the coverage they receive and how they interact with the reporters who cover the campaign.

4. Campaign Ads: October 21, 2007:

Chapters seven and eight in the Thurber and Nelson book, by Jay Bryant (7) and Leonard Steinhorn (8), discuss the role of advertising in political campaigns. This blog will focus on that issue. Think about the advertising (or lack thereof) on television in the campaign you are working with and how it might relate (or disprove) what the authors say. If your campaign is not yet advertising, think about how they should advertise when they do so. Those of you not working in campaigns can think about the overall impression that you think the ads you have seen create. And all of you can also think about the effectiveness of the advertising done so far by your won candidate or by others.

5. Fundraising: November 5, 2007:

In Chapter 5 of the Thurber and Nelson book, Norman Cummings and Grace Cummings discuss the strategies and tactics that campaigns use to raise needed money. And in Chapter 6, Candice Nelson briefly discusses what difference it makes to parties when they do – or do not – have money. For this blog topic, I want you to think about the role of money in two ways. First, think about the strategies and tactics that seem most central to your campaign's fundraising activities. And second, and more importantly, think about how your campaign's resources (or lack of resources) shapes the activities of the campaign. (Note that this is a topic where comparisons may be particularly useful, so pay attention to what others write about how their campaigns deal with these issues.)

6. The Internet: November 26, 2007:

With each passing election, the Internet becomes a more central part of the campaign process. Candidates use their websites in a variety of ways, some with more success than others. I want you to discuss the ways in which your candidates use web-based resources. What "works?" What does not? And also think about

other, non-candidate based websites. Are there some that seem particularly useful as resources in the nomination campaign?

7. Campaign Ethics: December 10, 2007:

In chapters 13 and 14, Carol Whitney and Linda Fowler discuss the issue of ethical campaigning. As they note, the public thinks most politicians and campaigns are unethical. But both Whitney and Fowler note how difficult it is to hold candidates to formal ethical standards. Think about the caucuses up to this point – and if appropriate, the campaign for which you are an intern in particular. How serious an issue has this been? Has your campaign dealt with this issue? Are volunteers given any training that discusses what might or might not be ethical in a campaign? (In responding, please do not write that “my candidate is ethical, but none of the other candidates are.” As Whitney notes: “Every one of us knows that our candidate is by far the best choice for the job and that the election of the opponent would be a terrible loss to society and the public good.” (p. 200) And this will lead us to both find other campaigns to be of questionable ethics and excuse the behavior of our won. This does not mean that all candidates are equally ethical or unethical - but it does make it highly unlikely, especially in a multi-candidate race, that we have a choice between one ethical and multiple unethical candidates. So try to keep the broader perspective discussed by the authors in mind as you think critically about this issue.)

8. Final Bonus Blog: December 18, 2007:

Participation in this Blog is not required. But if you do participate, it will count as “extra credit” that can make up for (or add to) your performance in the blogging section of the class. If you had late or missing entries, you may want to make posts responding to this post. (And you are not limited to a single post!) As the campaigns speed toward the end of the caucuses, the pressure and intensity will build. Use this blog to comment upon how your campaign is reacting to this pressure. What are they doing? How well are they doing it? And if you are no longer (or were not ever) working on a campaign, you can comment upon what you see in the media (or hear from other sources) about the final drive to caucus night and what seems to be making a difference, and what is not.