There are lots of yarns and war stories when it comes to running winning political campaigns. But, consider the following two job advertisements put out by the Obama presidential campaign in spring of 2011:

Ad 1

Running a national grassroots campaign means keeping track of a ton of moving parts - we have to make sure every dollar is spent as efficiently as possible. That means finding people with the skills we need to build this campaign and win in November. We’re hiring experienced Quantitative Media Analysts to help make sure we’re spending our time, energy, and money in the smartest, most effective way possible. If you or someone you know has the experience and skills we need, please visit us online to find out more and apply.

Quantitative Media Analysts will study data to inform our television and other media programs throughout the campaign. We're looking for creative, data-experienced individuals with media analytics, online analytics or other media experience, data visualization skills and a deep analytical tool kit. The ideal candidate will have experience with Tableau or other data visualization software. Experience with SQL query languages and any major statistical package would also be helpful. He or she should be a proven problem solver and strong team player

Requirements include:

* Four-year college degree or graduate degree in economics, media analytics, programming, computer science, mathematics, statistics, data visualization or related field
* Experience with Tableau or other data visualization software
* Experience organizing and working with complex data sets
* Proven creativity and problem-solving skills
* Strong MS Excel skills
* Experience with one or more of the following: - Any SQL-based query language - Media data such as Nielsen, CMAG, Ar-
Ad 2

We are looking for both junior and senior web analysts to join our digital team. We're going to run the most effective, creative, and innovative digital campaign in the history of politics, and our digital team will be core to achieving the communications, fundraising and organizing goals of the cause.

Analytics will be the backbone of our multi-faceted web design, email, content, video and advertising efforts. We'll rely on the analytics team not only to track progress, but to develop and deliver performance-enhancing recommendations that will guide and continually optimize our strategies along the way.

We'll be hiring people at all levels, from team directors to junior staffers. So whether you're a seasoned digital veteran or are new to the field but hoping to apply your skills to a worthy cause, we hope to hear from you.

If you're right for this team, some or all of the following will be familiar to you: Writing queries in SQL, Google Analytics, Google Website Optimizer, Optimizely, SPSS, R, Stata, Omniture, Webtrends. And you will have a very intimate relationship with Excel.

As these ads show, although energy, hard work, creativity, and political instinct cannot be taught, there are specific technical skills that are crucial in modern campaigns. Furthermore, there are basics about the electorate and the mechanics of campaigns that anyone who hopes to pursue a career in politics – or just be a good citizen -- should be familiar with. These include knowledge of the fundamental factors that drive elections and public opinion as well familiarity with survey research, research design, statistical analysis, media relations, video production techniques, new media, media buying, fundraising, accounting, and political law.

This class will teach you how to better understand the fundamental factors that drive elections in America and to learn some of the skills employed by political professionals. Many of your assignments will require you to apply the lessons of this class to real time events.

Pundits and other observers have already generated a phenomenal amount of analysis and commentary about the 2012 election – and occasionally they have even been right. The goal in this class is to go beyond the spin and hyperbole of many election commentators and understand how voters decide and how strategists persuade. And, to give you some of the technical skills to get an interesting job with a campaign.
This class will combine the insights of campaign professionals with insight from the study of previous campaigns and core academic knowledge. It will combine theory, practice, and exploration, taking the insights of political scientists and political practitioners and rolling them into one.

**READINGS**
The readings in this class will come from refereed academic journals as well as media and non-scholarly accounts of campaigns and elections.

Most of the journal readings are available on JSTOR (jstor.org) and the other readings are widely available on the web. I will send along copies of additional readings by e-mail.

Also, you should not take this class unless you are deeply interested in American politics and keep up with it on a daily basis. There are obviously a slew of cites available to follow politics and political news. I typically read *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* as well as www.politico.com every morning. I also check in with Pollster.com to keep up to date on current polling information. “The Note” from ABC News and Politico’s “Playbook” provide excellent daily summaries every morning.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**
The assignments in this class represent the sort of work product that campaign strategists must do or must prove they can do to get a job in the first place. I will outline expectations in more detail in class. Some have set due dates and others have flexible times. There will also be an in-class participation requirement and in class exercises.

**Mid-Term Exam** – Analytical “Job” Exam (30 Points)

**Final Case Study** (40 points)
Using a hypothetical case you will create a strategic media plan for a hypothetical public policy issue in a special election. Although the focus of the assignment will be on the particulars media buying, you will need to bring in information from many different topics from the class and use the analytical tools that have been outlined in lecture and readings. This assignment is due on **Due May 8**, the last day of class. There will be many more details to follow.

**Class Participation and Exercises** [30 Points] Before each class, I will send around a question or two. We will take a few minutes during each class to discuss these questions – or more accurately for you to provide the answers you have prepared. You can and should certainly have a point of view, but evidence is crucial. Prepare yourself for the discussion and don’t just be a pundit. Gather evidence and be a smart analyst of real time events. In addition, from time to time, we will have exercises that will require you to do written or quantitative analysis in class of the sort that you would be asked to do in real time if you were working on a campaign.
TOPICS AND READINGS

January 23
Introductory Meeting

  http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/12/06/041206fa_fact
  http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/12/10/071210fa_fact_gawande

January 30
The 2012 Campaign – Overview and Empirical Claims

- Rosenberg, Sasha. “How Obama’s Team Used Big Data to Rally Voters”
- Rosenberg, Sasha. “A Vast Left-Wing Competency.”
  “http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/victory_lab/2012/11/obama_s_victory_how_the_democrats_burned_by_karl_rove_became_the_party_of.2.html”

February 6
Party Identification and The Nature of the Times

- 2012 Forecasting Recaps -- PS: Political Science & Politics, Volume 46, Issue 01, January 2013, pp 37-47

February 13
Turnout and Mobilization – Presidential Elections, Mid-Terms, and Primaries

- http://elections.gmu.edu/voter_turnout.htm
February 20
Survey Research Fundamentals 1

- Literary Digest Article from 1936 - http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5168/
- http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2340/likely-voters-registered-poll-samples
- http://www.npr.org/blogs/itsallpolitics/2012/08/22/159588275/are-independents-just-partisans-in-disguise

February 27
Survey Research Fundamentals 2


March 6
Election Rules, Political Laws, and Campaign Finance


March 13
Developing Messages - Opposition Research, Message Testing, and Persuasion


March 20 Mid-Term Exam

April 3
Micro-targeting

- Readings TBA
April 10
Media Buying - Television

April 17
Media Buying – New Media
- http://mobile.businessweek.com/articles/2012-11-29/the-science-behind-those-obama-campaign-e-mails

April 24
Earned Media

May 1
Video Production Techniques

May 8
Final Presentation