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Abbreviated

Running for Office

The Politics of Elections

(Three Simulations)



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Running for President – The Politics of Elections

Introduction

Author’s Note

I hope you and your class¹ enjoy the simulation (I always had fun with mine). In looking ahead to the 2016 election, it occurred to me that the hallmarks of the 2008 and 2012 elections (and, I believe, those in the foreseeable future) were the use of social media and sophisticated GOTV (Get Out the Vote) tools, so I’ve included ways to simulate those processes here. To be as thorough as possible, and to mirror, where practical, what a real candidate would have to do, this simulation contains many in-class activities and roles. Feel free to delete, change or add to them. Student Instructions are embedded as follows:

Where the Student Instructions differ
from the teacher’s they are shown in this typestyle.

§

Instructions for both you and your students are indicated by the symbol § before the instructions and ¶ after them (as shown here).

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Time Required

Because the simulation is designed to take place over a two- to three-week period, and because some of the activities don’t take a full class period, it works well to intersperse lectures and quizzes throughout, rather than do the activities every day. I combine *Running for President* with my units on the executive branch and the electoral process.

Objectives

- Give students hands-on experience in how a presidential election campaign works.
- Help students understand the electoral process.
- Promote discussion, interest and understanding about current issues.
- Demonstrate how the Electoral College functions.
- Show the importance of voting.

Student Roles – Overview

There are 10 student roles as follows:

- Candidate
- Campaign Strategist
- Finance Chair
- Wordsmith
- Poll Taker
- Ad/Graphic Designer
- Webmaster
- Social Media Maven
- GOTV Specialist
- Media

¹ This simulation works especially well with two classes, since more students means more candidates and a better opportunity to have multiple-candidate primaries.

Running for President – The Politics of Elections

Student Instructions

Where Do You Stand?

Think about where you stand on today's issues. On *Class Political Survey* day, you'll have a chance to see if you're liberal, conservative or moderate, as well as determine your political position within your class.

Registering To Vote

What's it like to run for president? How does a campaign work? You'll find out as your class participates in *Running for President – The Politics of Elections*.

Your teacher will pass out the voter registration forms used in your state. You must register as a Democrat, a Republican, or any other designation listed on the voter registration form. Once registered, you will be assigned to vote in a specified region of the country.

So You've Decided to Run – Instructions for Presidential Candidates

If you take the plunge into political waters, you'll need to hire a two-person staff to help you. Then you must pick six platform issues—two domestic, two foreign and two economic. Think of six issues that are important to you and how you feel about each of them. Frame your campaign around them and create a theme and a slogan. Your emails, printed mailers, commercials, ads, website and speeches, etc., will be based upon these stances and issues. Remember, until the primary you are running only against other members of your own party and not against the other party's candidates.

Campaign Task List for All Candidates

Here's what you need to do:

- Hire a two-person staff (Campaign Strategist and Finance Chair) and your consultants.
- Fill out the Campaign Setup Form. Hand it in on the date specified.
- Manage and control campaign activity, making sure your staff and consultants are working productively.
- Lead discussions.
- Help analyze the polls.
- Be interviewed by the media.
- Make speeches and answer questions at fundraisers and other events.
- Help decide on the overall look of the campaign materials.
- Work with the Webmaster and Social Media Maven to develop an online strategy.
- Help draft the printed campaign mailer and fundraising email.
- Work with the GOTV Specialist in writing two phone-banking scripts to suss out voters' political leanings and figure out how to appeal to both ***base*** and ***undecided*** voters.
- Work on the convention.

Sample Voter Registration List – Primary Election (Democrats)

Name	Party	Address (Region)	Signature
Emma Goldman	D	West	<i>Emma Goldman</i>
Ralph Kramden	D	Pacific Coast	<i>Ralph Kramden</i>
LaKisha Johnson	D	New England	<i>LaKisha Johnson</i>

Sample Voter Registration List – General Election (Pacific Coast)

Name	Party	Address (Region)	Signature
Maria Flores	DS	Pacific Coast	<i>Maria Flores</i>
Nan Gates	R	Pacific Coast	<i>Nan Gates</i>
Ralph Kramden	D	Pacific Coast	<i>Ralph Kramden</i>

Sample Voter Registration List – General Election (West)

Name	Party	Address (Region)	Signature
Emma Goldman	D	West	<i>Emma Goldman</i>
Navid Rahn	R	West	<i>Navid Rahn</i>
Alex Razinkoff	DS	West	<i>Alex Razinkoff</i>

Use the blank forms on the following pages to create your voter lists. Have one list per party for the primaries. For simplicity, there is only one primary election rather than one in each region. For the general election have one list per region. Students vote in their regions. The candidate that gets the most votes in a given region (popular vote) gets that region's electoral votes. In case of a tie, no one gets the electoral votes. This is why it is better to assign an odd number of students to a region.