POLITICAL PARTIES & ELECTIONS, FALL 2012

**CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS**

Nelson chapters 5 (Jacobson) and 6 (Hershey)

Friday, November 2

**Chapter 5 terms**: how the “Bush legacy” affected 2008 congressional voting; why more Republican members chose not to run for reelection in 2008; Democratic success in attracting high quality candidates; resource advantages enjoyed by Democratic Party campaign committees over Republicans, and ways Democrats used their resources more effectively; overall effects of economic crisis on election results; Republican structural advantage in House elections, how Democrats can overcome this advantage; why Obama had short coattails (if any)

**Chapter 6 terms**: mainstream media’s major themes in coverage of McCain, Obama (124-130); ways that race was discussed in 2008 campaign coverage; Republican charges that media was biased toward Obama; amount of media coverage received by Obama, McCain; positive and negative tone of media coverage; citizen perceptions of biased media coverage; why the media worked harder at fact checking in 2008; types of new media utilized in 2008; ways that Obama campaign used new media far more often and more effectively than McCain campaign

5.1 Summarize Jacobson’s arguments in Nelson chapter 5 for why the Democrats gained seats in the House and Senate in 2008. Does Jacobson identify any factors that B&F do not discuss? How important was money to the 2008 congressional election outcomes?

5.2 Summarize the importance of district boundaries and/or gerrymandering in explaining House election outcomes. What specific effects of gerrymandering does Jacobson identify as important in 2008?

5.3 Should states change procedures for drawing district boundaries? Put another way, what are the most important criteria to take into consideration when drawing boundaries of congressional districts (besides equal population, which is a criterion imposed by Supreme Court rulings)? Should partisan considerations be a factor?

5.4 Jacobson notes major Democratic gains in the Mountain West states (Idaho, Montana, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, Alaska, Utah, Wyoming), where Democrats held 28% of House seats after 2004 but now hold 59% of the seats (Jacobson 114). Speculate: what factors might explain this increase in Democratic seats/decrease in Republican seats?

6.1 Consider Hershey’s evidence in Nelson chapter 6 – was the mainstream media campaign coverage in 2008 biased, and if so in what directions and why? If not, why was there such a strong public perception of bias about the coverage of the 2008 campaign? (This question should reference the material on pp. 124-130 and 133-137)

6.2 What evidence does Hershey present in Nelson chapter 6 about the role of “new media” in 2008 and what conclusions should we draw from it?

6.3 In what ways does race enter into 2008 campaign coverage, and why does Hershey conclude that “media audiences deserved more than they received” (141)?

x. Pose your question here!