**Presidential Campaigns**

1. **Introduction –**

**Provide an introduction of the time period- who is the current president?**

**What is happening around the country?**

1. **Goals of the (YEAR) Presidential Campaigns**
   1. Presidential candidates must meet two goals in order to be successful.  The first is gaining their parties’ nomination by winning a sufficient number of delegates at the national convention. This is done usually through state primaries, but sometimes with state conventions and caucuses. The second goal is that after being nominated, the candidate must gain a majority of seats in the Electoral College, in which each state is given a certain number of seats depending on population size, and winner-take-all contests in each state determines who gains the seats.
   2. There are situations in which these two goals conflict with one another. Voters in primaries and at state conventions and caucuses are usually much more idealistic and expect their potential nominees to adhere strongly to the party line. The important votes to gain in the general election are usually moderate voters who are much more centrist in their beliefs, so the candidates must devise a strategy, either by slightly changing their message or by finding a consistent middle ground, that does not alienate these voters.
2. **Winning the Nomination – The primary elections. How did this go?**
   1. Before a candidate gains their party nomination, they must first acquire the most delegates at the national convention by campaigning in each state in primary elections, conventions, or caucuses. The structure of the elections, the way a state allocates delegates to candidates, how the delegates are selected, and the order in which the states hold their elections all impact who the candidate must approach each separate state.
      1. Some states use caucuses to determine which delegates will go to the convention.  Caucuses are closed meetings in which those registered as official party members can vote to select delegates who are “pledged” to support one candidate at the convention. In order to be successful in caucus states, candidates must have a committed group of followers willing to attend and vote in the caucuses, wherever they are held in the state.
      2. Primaries, which are the more popular type of elections in states, can have different sets of rules, but fundamentally ask voters to vote for a party candidate in one political party election statewide and no other. In the case of almost all primaries, the states allocate delegates proportionately to the percentage of the vote won by the candidate—this is mandated by the Democratic Party and winner-take-all models are being phased out by the Republican Party. Different roles in how and from where delegates are chosen change the way candidates must interact with different states.
      3. Not all the delegates attending and voting in the national convention are elected—roughly one-quarter are office-holders in government or have certain positions in the political party. Known as “superdelegates,” they can change the outcome of a convention vote, and candidates must also cater to them as they campaign from state to state.
      4. The order in which the states select their delegates also places importance on some elections—such as early contests in Iowa and New Hampshire—which then causes more attention and funding to be moved to those states. Because of this, many states have tried to schedule their primaries earlier in order to reap the benefits of the system, which the national committees have attempted to discourage in recent elections.
   2. Candidates running in these primaries usually follow certain strategies in order to take advantage of these conditions. They must decide whether they have the resources to surmount the primaries—some of which occur on the same day—before they even decide how to divide their resources. Then, candidates must decide which primaries to try and win and which to spend less time and money on. Many candidates try to win early primaries and caucuses in order to gain momentum, while others focus on winning a larger group of primaries in order to show generally broad support. In both cases, however, candidates must always also consider what states they have a good chance of winning in the first place, as there is only so much they can do to sway their constituents.
3. **Choosing a Running Mate**
   1. Explain how the choice was made on the Republican and Democratic sides. It is important for any presidential candidate with the party’s backing to choose the right vice-presidential candidate. The presidential candidate and their campaign generally have five different types of candidate that they can choose from: a candidate whose strengths compensate for any weaknesses on the part of the main candidate; a candidate who can carry an important state or region; a candidate who can carry a specific interest or demographic group; a candidate who can heal wounds within the political party; or a candidate who reinforces the image the campaign is trying to convey.
   2. The timing of the announcement of who the vice-presidential candidate is can also be important—sometimes announcing a long time before the national convention ensures that the vice-presidential candidate choice will get a lot of coverage and media attention, while announcing right before the convention can sometimes maximize the hype of the choice, as well as put a lot of focus on the convention itself.
4. **The National Convention**
   1. Conventions were historically a large part of the process, because debate and bargaining continued to occur until the end of the convention when the nominee was chosen. Contemporary conventions are now used more to gain attention from the media and the people and to gain support for the nominees, who are almost always obvious long before the convention is held.
   2. Political parties try to schedule conventions as late as possible to give their nominees time to campaign and to pinpoint what issues should be addressed at the convention to capture the most media attention. They also try to choose a location for the convention that is strategically important in the general election, but, because they must choose both the date and location of their convention far in advance, this is not always possible, especially when it is unclear will be winning the nomination.
   3. The main goals that campaigns have at the convention are to relay to voters how they should think about both the past four years and the current political and economic climate; to differentiate between the candidates; and to offer a “vision” or message that they want to use in the upcoming general election campaigns. These goals are usually conveyed by well-known politicians in speeches throughout the convention.
   4. Nominees do garner support after the convention. The convention offers more support than any other event in the presidential election process. This is probably because conventions occur relatively early in the process, when citizens have yet to decide, and there is greater potential for persuasion, and also because conventions tend to produce very favorable news stories about the candidates.
5. **The General Election: The Electoral College**
   1. The general election campaign is structured around the realities of the Electoral College, which has changed historically over the years through constitutional amendments.  It currently consists of 587 seats that are broken up between states based on state population, and of which the winning candidate must win a majority. Because of this, the presidential election does not function as a popularity contest.
      1. The Electoral College is generally unpopular with the majority of the country, and certain states have taken steps to circumvent the Constitution and have the president elected by a plurality of the popular vote, but in most cases bills in state legislatures have not been passed, and some have been vetoed by the state’s governor. It does not look as if the Electoral College will be changed in the next few election cycles.
      2. Because of the winner-take-all style of votes in the Electoral College, many states’ votes are usually already decided one way or the other before elections. The true campaigning takes places in a few battleground states in which the electoral seats are up for grabs by either the Democratic or Republican nominee. The decennial census has changed the distribution of seats to certain states, with Democratic states losing six seats to Republican states, though this would not have changed the results of the 2008 election, and it might not harm or help either party in the upcoming election.
      3. The Electoral College gives candidates a goal to work towards—270 electoral votes are needed to win the election. Strategy usually revolves around a certain number of states that will get the candidates past that 270-seat mark, and candidates focus their attention and funding on the states that are most cost-effective in that light. Candidates must decide whether to target states that usually lean toward their political party in order to ensure their support, or to “play offense” and campaign hard in states that usually swing towards the opponent’s political party. In general, however, the realities of the Electoral College focus a large amount of attention on a very small handful of states.
      4. Other than the Electoral College, there are three other realities that have substantial effects on a presidential election. Incumbent presidents have natural advantages, including not needing to spend time campaigning before the primaries, and general familiarity with the electorate. Other factors that affect elections include wars, which usually have a negative impact on incumbent presidents, and the economy, which is the most powerful influence on the election. There is a strong relationship between the incumbent party’s success and the growth of the economy.
6. **The General Election: The Fall Campaign**
   1. Going into the general elections, campaigns try and further develop their message to be one that appeal to the necessary groups of voters, relying on polls and focus groups to help them. Candidates must try to appeal to their base as well as to centrist swing-voters, and must be careful not to be seen as flip-flopping on an issue by changing their stance too much or going against their previous actions. They can do this in part by targeting different groups by using different types of media—sending specific niche voters information in the mail, while appealing to a broader crowd over the television, for example.
   2. What did the polls say? What type of polls did they use? Campaign managers and candidates also understand how outside factors can immediately change the opinions of voters, and so campaigns are very sensitive to constant changes in the field, using **polls** in order to see if they need to tweak their messages, or take a bigger step, such as pursue negative campaigning—usually done by candidates who are behind in the polls.
   3. Timing is also important when deciding how to campaign—**whether to spend more time and funds at the end of the campaign season, or during a specific periods such as the presidential debates.** There is no evidence that one strategy for timing works better than another—studies have shown that many voters make up their minds early in the election process—but other evidence suggests that many citizens do not pay attention to the election until it is closer to the election itself.
   4. **Who what when where did they debate? Who was the moderator? What significant was said?**Candidate **debates** are organized by a bipartisan committee who present a schedule to both parties’ candidates publicly, and which most candidates accept in order to sidestep any bad press about trying to dodge the debates, which are the most viewed events of the campaign season. The goals of the campaigns during the debates are to, first and foremost, do no harm to the campaign, and to emphasize the issues and stances that benefit their candidate while gaining the crucial media support the candidates seek. In the end, however, the debates rarely have large effects on an election as they occur late in the process when most people have already made up their minds.
   5. **How much money did they spend? Who donated the money? What did they spend it on?**
7. **Campaign Slogans for both sides in your election**
8. **Political Cartoons about your campaign and/ or candidates**