

James Madison University is a community dedicated to diversity and inclusivity. As faculty, we believe that learning environments should support diversity of thoughts, perspectives, experiences, and identities. We invite you to share anything with us that might help create a more inclusive and welcoming learning environment.

## Hacking 4 Democracy: Elections 2020

**FALL 2020** Regular Academic Session August 26–December 18, 2020

Mo/We 9:45–11AM Lakeview Hall

POSC 351-0003 Topics in American Politics and WRTC 328-0004 Practicum

## Faculty Leaders

Dr. Carah Ong Whaley, JMU Civic, POSC, [whaleycl@jmu.edu](mailto:whaleycl@jmu.edu), (202) 378-3334, Office Hours by appoint, please text

Professor Cathy Copeland, WRTC, [copelaca@jmu.edu](mailto:copelaca@jmu.edu), Virtual Office Hours: T/Th 10am-12pm

Professor Adrienne Hooker, SMAD, [hookeram@jmu.edu](mailto:hookeram@jmu.edu) Virtual Office Hours: MW 2-4pm, F 11:30am-12:30pm

## Course Description

“Hacking for Democracy” is an education initiative of JMU XLabs and JMU Civic that applies an interdisciplinary approach to addressing complex challenges facing our society and democracy. To do this, student teams will: communicate with a variety of experts and stakeholders at the local, state and national level; gather and analyze a variety of data; design, plan and implement solutions; and refine their knowledge and skills through collaboration and problem-solving.

The course will examine and address complex issues and challenges for the 2020 elections, including: how the presidential nominating process and Electoral College structure the game; and the impact and role of political parties, superPACs, interest groups and the media, with a special focus on the increasing role of social media. We will also examine the role and impact of campaign strategy, tactics and operations, polling, campaign finance, presidential debates, and the importance of who turns out and why.

Teams of students will develop and implement solutions around: educating about the importance of voting for democratic self-governance; ensuring ballot access and voting rights, especially for traditionally marginalized and underserved communities; and mobilizing “Get Out The Vote” initiatives on campus and in surrounding communities for full participation in the 2020 Elections.

The course will draw on expertise from a variety of disciplines, including political science, computer science, media arts and design, technical communication, marketing and psychology. Theoretical and empirical scholarship will be required and made available in modules on Canvas. Readings and discussions will also draw on contemporary news and analysis, as well as a range of data sources used by political scientists.

## Key Partners

Harrisonburg Electoral Board

Rockingham County Electoral Board

Virginia Department of Elections

Campus Vote Project

ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge  
 Students Learn Students Vote Coalition  
 National Conference on Citizenship  
 AASCU's The American Democracy Project

## Key Dates

Date	Event
M 9/5, 5 pm	<a href="#">6th District Congressional Democratic Candidate Town Hall</a>
9/11	Civic Learning Democratic Engagement (CLDE) Conference
9/17	Constitution Day
9/18	In-person Voting Begins in Virginia
9/22	National Voter Registration Day
T 9/29	First Presidential Debate
W 10/7	Vice Presidential Debate
10/13	Deadline to register to vote in Virginia
Th 10/15	Second Presidential Debate
Th 10/22	Third Presidential Debate
10/23	Deadline to Request an Absentee Ballot in Virginia by mail to local registrar by 5:00 pm
10/24	National Vote Early Day
10/31	Request an absentee ballot by appearing in person by: 5:00 pm
11/3	Election Day
TBD	Virginia Senate Debate or Town Hall
TBD	6th District Congressional Debate or Town Hall
TBD	City Council Debate or Town Hall
TBD	Post-Election Expert Panels

## Assignments and Products

Assignment	Due Date	Points
Training/Workshop: 4Quad Diagnostic	8/26	5
I am a Voter because..."	8/26 (in class)	5
Training/Workshop: Virginia Voter Registration Training Online	8/26	10
Training/Workshop: Attend CLDE Conference Session Individual Assignment: Respond on Discussion Board	9/11	10 each

Training/Workshop: How to write good questions and conduct interviews with candidates	9/9	10
Training/Workshop: Assist City Registrar stuff envelopes	by mid September	10
Major Project Team Assignment: Issue Primer for Watching Presidential Debate with Questions for Discussion	9/23	100
Debate Individual Assignment: Attend <b>1st Presidential Debate</b> and live Tweet w/ #H4D or discuss live on Discord	9/28	10
Major Project Team Assignment: draft questions for and interview selected candidate; edit interview for JMU Civic nonpartisan voter education guide	9/30	100
Debate Individual Assignment: Attend <b>Vice Presidential Debate</b> and live Tweet w/ #H4D or discuss live on Discord	10/7	10
Training/Workshop: Assist with voter registration and education at JMU Civic event (in person or virtual)	by October 13	25
Debate Individual Assignment: Attend <b>2nd Presidential Debate</b> and live Tweet w/ #H4D or discuss live on Discord	10/14	10
Debate Individual Assignment: Attend <b>3rd Presidential Debate</b> and live Tweet w/ #H4D or discuss live on Discord	10/21	10
Debate Individual Assignment: Draft a question for and attend <b>Virginia Senate</b> Debate or Town Hall	TBD	10
Debate Individual Assignment: Draft a question for and attend <b>Third Party Presidential Candidate</b> Debate	TBD	10
Debate Individual Assignment: Draft a question for and attend <b>6th District Congressional</b> Debate or Town Hall		10
Debate Individual Assignment: Draft a question for and attend <b>City Council</b> Debate or Town Hall	TBD	10
Readings: Participation in Canvas / class discussions	ongoing	5
Training/Workshop: Election Day Poll Worker and Experience Reflection	11/3	25
Training/Workshop: Individual Assignment: Draft a question for and attend Post-Election Expert Panels		10
Major Project: Develop questions and election analysis for Democracy Matters podcast and Educating for Democracy Blog	12/9	100

## Course Calendar and Readings

Reading and listening assignments must be completed before in-class meetings.

Date	Description	Due
<b>Wednesday, August 26</b>	Course overview; surveys, assessments, and problem preferences	Take the Virginia Voter

	<p>Read: Thomas, Gismondi, and Upchurch, Election Imperatives 2020, Institute for Democracy and Higher Education, <a href="https://idhe.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/EI2020.pdf">https://idhe.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/EI2020.pdf</a></p> <p>In Class: Ideology Diagnostic</p>	<p>Registration Training Online: <a href="https://www.elections.virginia.gov/registration/registration-drives/voter-registration-training-video/">https://www.elections.virginia.gov/registration/registration-drives/voter-registration-training-video/</a></p>
<p><b>Monday, August 31</b></p>	<p><b>Planning Voter Education and Engagement at JMU</b></p> <p>Read:  JMU Voter Engagement Plan 2020-2021, Ong Whaley, Connole, Ritter, et. al., JMU Civic, <a href="http://www.jmu.edu/civic/_files/2020-Voter-Engagement-Action-Plan1.pdf">www.jmu.edu/civic/_files/2020-Voter-Engagement-Action-Plan1.pdf</a></p> <p>JMU NSLVE 2014 &amp; 2018, IDHE, <a href="https://www.jmu.edu/civic/_files/JMU-2018-NSLVE-Report.pdf">https://www.jmu.edu/civic/_files/JMU-2018-NSLVE-Report.pdf</a></p> <p>JMU NSLVE 2016, IDHE <a href="https://www.jmu.edu/civic/_files/2012-and-2016-NSLVE-Report-James-Madison-University.pdf">https://www.jmu.edu/civic/_files/2012-and-2016-NSLVE-Report-James-Madison-University.pdf</a></p> <p>Voting FAQs: <a href="http://www.jmu.edu/vote/voting-guide.shtml#Set-1-A-absentee-deadline">www.jmu.edu/vote/voting-guide.shtml#Set-1-A-absentee-deadline</a></p>	
<p><b>Wednesday, September 2</b></p>	<p><b>Ideology Diagnostic Lecture + Discussion</b></p> <p>Poll: Young People Believe they Can Lead Change in Unprecedented Election Cycle, CIRCLE, Tufts University, <a href="https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/poll-young-people-believe-they-can-lead-change-unprecedented-election-cycle">https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/poll-young-people-believe-they-can-lead-change-unprecedented-election-cycle</a></p> <p>Election 2020: Voters Are Highly Engaged, but Nearly Half Expect To Have Difficulties Voting, Pew Research Center, <a href="http://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/08/13/election-2020-voters-are-highly-engaged-but-nearly-half-expect-to-have-difficulties-voting/">www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/08/13/election-2020-voters-are-highly-engaged-but-nearly-half-expect-to-have-difficulties-voting/</a></p> <p>Bernard Fraga and Hans Hassell, Are Minority and Women Candidates Penalized by Party Politics? Race, Gender, and Access to Party Support, <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912920913326">https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912920913326</a></p> <p>Listen: Why Minority Voting Turnout Matters, Bernard Fraga on Tell Me More, Tufts, <a href="https://now.tufts.edu/articles/tell-me-more-why-minority-voting-turnout-matters">https://now.tufts.edu/articles/tell-me-more-why-minority-voting-turnout-matters</a></p>	

<p><b>Monday, September 7</b></p>	<p><b>How the Presidential Nominating Process and Electoral College Structure the Game</b></p> <p>George C. Edwards III, <i>Why the Electoral College is Bad for America</i>, Chapters 2 &amp; 3, New Haven : Yale University Press (2019)  <a href="https://search.lib.jmu.edu/permalink/01JMU_INST/uamkl/cdi_jstor_books_j_ctt1npxbp_12">https://search.lib.jmu.edu/permalink/01JMU_INST/uamkl/cdi_jstor_books_j_ctt1npxbp_12</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.270towin.com/">https://www.270towin.com/</a></p> <p>Listen: “The American Presidency in Trouble and What Voters Can Do,” John Dickerson on Democracy Matters,  <a href="https://www.jmu.edu/news/civic/2020/08-11-democracy-matters-episode-33.shtml">https://www.jmu.edu/news/civic/2020/08-11-democracy-matters-episode-33.shtml</a></p> <p>Workshop: How to write good questions and conduct interviews with candidates</p>	<p>Assignment: Draft interview questions for candidates and letter requesting interview</p>
<p><b>Wednesday, September 9</b></p>	<p>Interviews with School Board candidates</p> <p><b>Voting Rights and Voting Laws</b></p> <p>“How voter suppression threatens our democracy,” Timothy Smith, Washington Post, September 20, 2018  <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/how-voter-suppression-threatens-our-democracy/2018/09/20/c1dd3b8a-aad3-11e8-b1da-ff7fa680710_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/how-voter-suppression-threatens-our-democracy/2018/09/20/c1dd3b8a-aad3-11e8-b1da-ff7fa680710_story.html</a></p> <p>Joaquin Gonzalez, Fighting Back to Protect Student Voting Rights, Yale Law Journal, Vol. 129,  <a href="https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/fighting-back-to-protect-student-voting-rights">https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/fighting-back-to-protect-student-voting-rights</a></p> <p>Listen: Democracy Matters, Mark Pfeifer</p> <p>Watch: Rigged: “The Voter Suppression Playbook”  <a href="https://www.riggedthefilm.com/">https://www.riggedthefilm.com/</a></p> <p>Provide CLDE20 Sept 11th session links</p>	
<p><b>Monday, September 14</b></p>	<p><b>Issues and Vote Choice</b></p> <p>“Wedge issues in presidential campaigns,” from <i>The Persuadable Voter</i>, DS Hillygus and TG Shields</p> <p>Important issues in the 2020 election,” Pew Research Center, August 2020  <a href="https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/08/13/important-issues-in-the-2020-election/">https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/08/13/important-issues-in-the-2020-election/</a></p> <p>“Tracking the Issues in the 2020 Election,” NPR,  <a href="https://www.npr.org/series/758097234/election-2020-issue-tracker">https://www.npr.org/series/758097234/election-2020-issue-tracker</a></p>	

	<p>2020 Election Issues, Gallup,  <a href="https://news.gallup.com/topic/election_issues.aspx">https://news.gallup.com/topic/election_issues.aspx</a></p> <p>Workshop: How to write non-partisan issue primers to foster learning and conversations</p> <p>Discuss CLDE20 Sept 11th sessions</p>	
<b>Wednesday, September 16</b>	<p>Workshop: How to facilitate and have tough political conversations, led by Dr. Kara Dillard, Institute for Constructive Advocacy and Dialogue</p>	
<b>Monday, September 21</b>	<p><b>Partisanship and Political Polarization</b></p> <p>“The rise of negative partisanship and the nationalization of U.S. elections in the 21st century,” Alan Abramowitz and Steven Webster</p> <p>“United States: Racial Resentment, Negative Partisanship, and Polarization in Trump’s America,” Alan Abramowitz, Jennifer McCoy</p> <p>Polarization and the Decline of the Floating Voter, Corwin Schmidt</p> <p>“Voters Rarely Switch Parties, but Recent Shifts Further Educational, Racial Divergence,” Pew Research Center,  <a href="https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/08/04/voters-rarely-switch-parties-but-recent-shifts-further-educational-racial-divergence/">https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/08/04/voters-rarely-switch-parties-but-recent-shifts-further-educational-racial-divergence/</a></p>	
<b>Wednesday, September 23</b>	<p><b>Other elements of voter choice and identity</b></p> <p>“The Declining Relevance of Candidate Personal Attributes in Presidential Elections,” by Martin P. Wattenberg</p> <p>The Reasoning Voter,” Samuel L. Popkin</p> <p>“How Birth Year Influences Vote Choice” Amanda Cox  <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/07/08/upshot/how-the-year-you-were-born-influences-your-politics.html">https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/07/08/upshot/how-the-year-you-were-born-influences-your-politics.html</a></p>	<p>Due: Issue Primer for Watching Presidential Debate with Questions for Discussion</p>
<b>Monday, September 28</b>	<p><b>How Do Debates Matter?</b></p> <p>“Debates and Voters” from Schroeder, A. (2016). <i>Presidential debates : risky business on the campaign trail</i> (Third edition). Columbia University Press.</p> <p>“How much will the debates matter?” C. Ong Whaley,  <a href="https://millercenter.org/issues-policy/governance/how-much-will-the-presidential-debates-matter">https://millercenter.org/issues-policy/governance/how-much-will-the-presidential-debates-matter</a></p> <p>“Do Presidential Debates Matter? Examining a Decade of Campaign Debate Effects,” by Mitchell McKinney and Benjamin Warner</p>	

	Introduce Discord Debate Watch Platform and things to look for	
<b>Wednesday, September 30</b>	<p>“To Unite and Divide: The Polarizing Effect of Presidential Debates,” by Mitchell McKinney and Benjamin Warner</p> <p>“Presidential Debates, Partisan Motivations, and Political Interest,” by Kevin J. Mullinix Jennings, F. J., Coker, C. R., McKinney, M. S., &amp; Warner, B. R. (2017).</p> <p>Tweeting Presidential Primary Debates: Debate Processing Through Motivated Twitter Instruction. <i>American Behavioral Scientist</i>, 61(4), 455–474. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764217704867">https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764217704867</a></p> <p>Discuss: First Presidential Debate</p>	Due: Finalized candidate interviews for nonpartisan voter education guide
<b>Monday, October 5</b>	<p><b>Voter Mobilization and Turnout</b></p> <p>“Why Voter Mobilization Matters,” Brookings Institution</p> <p>“Voter Mobilization” Melissa R. Michelson and David W. Nickerson</p> <p>Google Political Ad Archive: <a href="https://transparencyreport.google.com/political-ads/region/US">https://transparencyreport.google.com/political-ads/region/US</a></p> <p>Design workshop for social media voter mobilization</p>	
<b>Wednesday, October 7</b>	<p><b>Online Campaigning, Digital and Social Media</b></p> <p>“Social Media, Political Marketing and the 2016 U.S. Election,” Christine B. Williams</p> <p>“The digital commercialisation of US politics — 2020 and beyond,” Kathryn Montgomery and Jeff Cheste <a href="https://www.democraticmedia.org/article/digital-commercialisation-us-politics-2020-and-beyond">https://www.democraticmedia.org/article/digital-commercialisation-us-politics-2020-and-beyond</a></p> <p>“How Social Media Services Handle Political Ads,” <a href="http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-advertising-factbox/factbox-how-social-media-services-handle-political-ads-idUSKBN1Z824O">www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-advertising-factbox/factbox-how-social-media-services-handle-political-ads-idUSKBN1Z824O</a></p> <p>Workshop: Analyzing Digital Ads and Social Media</p>	
<b>Monday, October 12</b>	<p><b>Campaign Tactics and Strategies</b></p> <p>“The New Media Designs of Political Consultants: Campaign Production in a Fragmented Era,” Michael Serazio</p> <p>Review the staff and organization structures for President Donald Trump, Joe Biden, Jo Jorgensen, Howie Hawkins</p>	

	<p>Panagopoulos, C. (2016). All about that base: Changing campaign strategies in U.S. Presidential elections. <i>Party Politics</i>, 22(2), 179–190. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068815605676">https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068815605676</a></p> <p>2020 Presidential Campaign Tracker: <a href="https://2020campaigntracker.com/">https://2020campaigntracker.com/</a></p> <p>Discuss: Vice-Presidential Debate</p>	
<p><b>Wednesday, October 14</b></p>	<p>“Negative Campaigning,” by Richard R. Lau and Ivy Brown Rovner</p> <p>Voters’ evaluations of the campaign, Pew Research Center, <a href="https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2016/11/21/voters-evaluations-of-the-campaign/">https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2016/11/21/voters-evaluations-of-the-campaign/</a></p>	
<p><b>Monday, October 19</b></p>	<p><b>Role of the News Media</b></p> <p>“News Coverage of the 2016 General Election: How the Press Failed the Voters,” Thomas E. Patterson, Shorenstein Center, <a href="https://shorensteincenter.org/news-coverage-2016-general-election/">https://shorensteincenter.org/news-coverage-2016-general-election/</a></p> <p>Alon Zoizner, “The Consequences of Strategic News Coverage for Democracy: A Meta-Analysis,” <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650218808691">https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650218808691</a></p> <p>“The News Media and the Rise of Negativity in Presidential Campaigns,” by John Geer</p> <p>LexisNexis Presidential Campaign Tracker: <a href="https://www.lexisnexis.com/en-us/products/newsdesk/presidential-tracker.page">https://www.lexisnexis.com/en-us/products/newsdesk/presidential-tracker.page</a></p> <p>Discuss: Second Presidential Debate</p>	
<p><b>Wednesday, October 21</b></p>	<p><b>News Media Continued</b></p> <p>“The COVID-19 pandemic is forcing networks to reinvent TV election coverage,” Stephen Battaglio, July 31, 2020, Los Angeles Times <a href="https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/business/story/2020-07-31/tv-networks-election-coverage-social-distancing-pandemic">https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/business/story/2020-07-31/tv-networks-election-coverage-social-distancing-pandemic</a></p> <p>“The Role of the Press and Media in American Presidential Elections,” by Jeffrey Pasley in William G. Shade, Ballard C. Campbell, and Craig R. Coenen, eds., <i>American Presidential Campaigns and Elections</i> (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), updated through 2009*</p> <p>Listen: Evaluating Political News in an Election Year, Democracy Matters, <a href="http://www.jmu.edu/news/civic/2020/02-24-democracy-matters-episode-16.shtml?utm_source=link&amp;utm_medium=web&amp;utm_campaign=jmush">www.jmu.edu/news/civic/2020/02-24-democracy-matters-episode-16.shtml?utm_source=link&amp;utm_medium=web&amp;utm_campaign=jmush</a></p>	



	<a href="#">ortlink&amp;utm_term=jmushortlink-passthru-web-link&amp;utm_content=passthru</a>	
<b>Monday, October 26</b>	<p><b>Voting During Pandemic: How did the states measure up?</b></p> <p>“Fair Elections During a Crisis,” Ad Hoc Committee for 2020 Election Fairness and Legitimacy,  <a href="http://www.law.uci.edu/faculty/full-time/hasen/2020ElectionReport.pdf">www.law.uci.edu/faculty/full-time/hasen/2020ElectionReport.pdf</a></p> <p>Voting by mail in a pandemic: A state-by-state scorecard, Brookings Institution:  <a href="http://www.brookings.edu/research/voting-by-mail-in-a-pandemic-a-state-by-state-scorecard/">www.brookings.edu/research/voting-by-mail-in-a-pandemic-a-state-by-state-scorecard/</a></p>	
<b>Wednesday, October 28</b>	<p><b>Super PACs, Dark Money and Interest Groups</b></p> <p>Center for Responsive Politics Outside Spending  <a href="https://www.opensecrets.org/outsidespending/">https://www.opensecrets.org/outsidespending/</a></p> <p>Wesleyan Media Project: <a href="https://mediaproject.wesleyan.edu/">https://mediaproject.wesleyan.edu/</a></p> <p>Discuss: Third Presidential Debate</p>	
<b>Monday, November 2</b>	<b>Campaign Ad Extravaganza: The Best and Worst from 2020</b>	
<b>Wednesday, November 4</b>	<p>Election Hangover Begins</p> <p>Workshop: how to analyze turnout from Virginia Department of Elections Data  <a href="https://www.elections.virginia.gov/resultsreports/">https://www.elections.virginia.gov/resultsreports/</a></p> <p>Create turnout comparisons by precincts across presidential elections</p>	
<b>Monday, November 9</b>	<p>Workshop: how to analyze turnout from Virginia Department of Elections Data  <a href="https://www.elections.virginia.gov/resultsreports/">https://www.elections.virginia.gov/resultsreports/</a></p> <p>Create turnout for local candidates comparisons by precincts across presidential election years</p>	
<b>Wednesday, November 11</b>	<p>Analyzing what mattered and why in the 2020 elections  Readings TBD</p>	

<b>Monday, November 16</b>	Assessing JMU's Campus Voter Education and Engagement Plan	
<b>Wednesday, November 18</b>	Workshop: Writing and producing engaging podcast  Develop questions and analysis for Democracy Matters podcast and Educating for Democracy Blog	
<b>November 21-30</b>	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	
<b>Monday, November 30</b>	Assessing how partisanship and polarization influenced election  Revisit Ideology Diagnostic Tool	
<b>Wednesday, December 2</b>	Podcast recording Group 1	
<b>Monday, December 7</b>	Podcast recording Group 2	
<b>Wednesday, December 9</b>	Conclusions Knowledge and Experience Assessment	