

# W&M in Washington

## Spring 2012

### *The 2012 Election: Parties, Campaigns, Consultants and Elections* *Taught by Professor Ron Rapoport*

The focus of this semester is the interaction of individuals, groups and organizations which make up the electoral context and which are particularly evident during presidential election years. Students will see how party and candidate organizations, think tanks, interest groups, campaigns consultants and pollsters all interact around the primary goal of shaping the agenda and winning elections. Through speakers and site visits spanning all facets of the 2012 election, students will see what few people – let alone undergraduate students – have the opportunity to witness and participate in firsthand.

#### **Washington Program Internship**

- *6 credit hours: INTR 499*

Students will intern at a wide variety of Washington political institutions – with party organizations like the RNC and DNC, media outlets such as NPR, think tanks like the Heritage Foundation and Center for American Progress, interest groups like the AFL-CIO, Americans for Prosperity, primary presidential campaigns for Republicans, the President's reelection campaign, and political pollsters and organizations such as PEW, Lance Tarrance Associates, and Lake Research Partners. These internships will form the basis of a major seminar paper and will allow students to serve as resources on the areas of their internships for class discussion.

#### **Public Opinion and Voting**

- *4 credit hours: GOVT 465*

This course will introduce students to the role of public opinion in the context of political campaigns. The focus will be on the economic, psychological, sociological and political dimensions of political attitudes at the individual level, as well as how these attitudes are aggregated to form public opinion. We will embed the discussion of the readings in the context of the 2012 election, looking at how the processes of opinion formation, voter persuasion, voter mobilization, and voter representation are affected by election campaigns. This discussion will include a focus on media and negative campaigning, as well as web campaigns and turnout drives. We will look at voter decision-making and voter participation in presidential primaries (which will be happening throughout the course), as well as the particular role of young voter outreach and voting in the electoral process. We will also examine how the mobilization of voters and activists through the process of presidential nominations impacts the political system as a whole.

#### **The 2012 Election: Parties, Campaigns, Consultants and Elections**

- *4 credit hours: GOVT 491*

This course is intended to provide an introduction to the interplay of party organizations, candidate organizations, think tanks, consultants and activists around the context of an election year. Rather than examining any one of these important sets of players in the American political system, the focus will be on how each interacts with and takes into account the other sets of players. The course will emphasize the different perspectives of these players and will do so through readings, reliance on student intern experiences and the weekly guest speakers and round tables of experts.