

# POLI 100DA: Voting, Campaigning, and Elections

Taylor N. Carlson

## Campaign Website Justification Memo

Due: Friday, August 3, 5:59pm  
Submit to Turn it In; 15% of Total Grade

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this assignment is to justify the decisions you made in developing your campaign website. This assignment, thus, serves the following primary goals:

1. Learn to concisely communicate the reasoning behind the design and content of your website
2. Apply concepts from class, readings, guest speakers, and your research to explain why your decisions will best position your candidate to win the election
3. Integrate written content from the bullet points on previous assignments into a coherent final product
4. Demonstrate evidence of critical thinking as you justify which aspects of your candidate were pertinent to feature on the website and in what ways

### **Assignment:**

Your task is to write a 1-2 page (500-750 words) memo that justifies the decisions you made in developing your candidate's website. Use concepts from class, readings, guest speakers, and your research from previous assignments to explain the reasoning behind the decisions that you made in designing the website. The memo should also address any potential drawbacks of your design and your recommendations for addressing those drawbacks. Reviewing the strategy bullet points from previous assignments should help you write this memo efficiently.

### *Memo Formatting*

- Times New Roman, 12 point font, single-spaced, 500-750 words (1-2 pages)
- Follow the memo structure used on the Campaign Spending Plan and Response memo assignments (e.g. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/03/>, sample here: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/04/>)
- Address your memo to your colleagues on the campaign
- Use in-text citations, either parenthetical or footnotes, when referencing course material (readings, lectures, guest speakers, videos) or your own research (e.g. [opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org), FEC data, Social Explorer, news articles, etc.)
- Include a Works Cited page at the end of your memo. This does not count toward the page limit / word count limit.

Virtually every decision you made in developing your candidate's website should have been strategic in some way. Everything, from the colors and images you chose to feature on the website to the issues you chose as your candidate's priorities, should be justified using concepts you have learned in this class. For example, did you choose to use red font on your website to represent the Republican Party, considering the psychological theory of voting? Did you choose to show specific groups, such as religious or labor organizations, that have endorsed your candidate, based on the sociological theory of voting? Did you consider which issues might be most important to constituents in your district and tailor your issue selection and policy positions around that, in light of the rational actor theory? Did you consider the state of the economy and run a clarifying or insurgent campaign, considering retrospective theory? Did you consider political heuristics? Participation patterns? Institutional constraints on participation?

TO: All Staff, \_\_\_\_ for Congress  
FROM: Taylor Carlson, \_\_\_\_ for Congress  
DATE: August 3, 2018  
SUBJECT: Campaign Website Strategy

[Introduction: ~100-200 words, single spaced, complete sentences]

- Explain the purpose of the memo
- Inform your colleagues that you have completed your candidate's website and that this memo explains how it reflects the underlying campaign strategy and how it will help your candidate win
- Summarize in 1-2 sentences the key strategy you employed
- Note any broad aesthetic features of the website as a whole (e.g. placement or ordering of each section, colors and fonts, imagery)
- Preview the remaining parts of the memo
- **INCLUDE LINK TO YOUR WEBSITE** (make sure that I have permissions to view it)

### **About Me: Introducing [Candidate's Name]**

[Justify the About Me Section: ~100-200 words, single spaced, complete sentences]

- Explain the strategy behind the About Me section of the website
- Make clear connections between at least one course concept and the About Me section
  - A vague example might be: "I chose to emphasize that Diane Harkey is a Republican because of the psychological theory of voting."
  - A clearer example might be: "I chose to emphasize that Diane Harkey is a Republican by referencing her dedication to the Republican Party in the first sentence of this section. Emphasizing her partisan affiliation is important because the psychological theory of voting suggests that individuals have a strong, psychological attachment to their party and tend to support candidates that match their partisan identity (Green et al. 2002). Furthermore, Lau and Redlawsk (2001) show that party identification is a strong heuristic, allowing individuals to choose candidates to support without gathering additional information about them."

### **Issue Priorities**

[Justify the Issue Priorities Section: ~200-300 words, single spaced, complete sentences]

- Explain the strategy behind the Issue Priorities section of the website
- Make clear connections between at least one course concept and the Issue Priorities section
  - A vague example might be: "I chose to focus on the economy because it has been shown to be a strong predictor of how people vote." Or "I chose to focus on the economy because of the retrospective theory of voting."
  - A clearer example might be: "I chose to feature [Candidate's Name]'s economic policies because the economy has improved since the last election and [Candidate's Name] shares the same party as the retiring incumbent. The retrospective theory of voting suggests that individuals will support the incumbent's party if the economy has improved, but will do the opposite if the economy has gotten worse. Because Vavreck (2009) suggests that when the economy is strong, members of the incumbent party should run a clarifying campaign, emphasizing the economic growth, I chose to feature [Candidate's Name]'s economic policies."
- You should explain the strategy behind why you chose each issue, as well as how you chose to feature that issue. If you chose to feature the candidate's policy position on that issue, you should explain the justification for that as well.
- Make sure that you discuss all three issues

## News

[Justify the News Section: ~50-150 words]

- Explain the strategy behind the News section
- Make clear connections between at least one course concept and the News section
  - A vague example might be: “I chose to include an article about Mike Levin’s victory in the primary to highlight his success to potential voters.”
  - A clearer example might be: “One heuristic that voters use when choosing candidates to support is the viability heuristic, meaning that they are more likely to support candidates who are polling well (Lau & Redlawsk 2001). Assuming that voters use the viability heuristic, I chose to include a news article that highlighted Mike Levin’s recent victory in the Primary to remind voters that he has widespread support.”

## Interactive Features: Contact, Donate

[Justify the Contact and Donation Sections: ~100-150 words]

- Explain the strategy in the Contact and Donate sections
- Make clear connections between at least one course concept or background research and the Contact and Donate sections
  - A vague example might be: “I chose to specifically mention small donations on the Donate page because this is a common way to raise funds.”
  - A clearer example might be: “Our fundraising goal is \$350,000 and, as detailed in the campaign spending memo, we are specifically targeting small donations. Thus far, 77% of our contributions have been small donations of less than \$200 (opensecrets.org). In an effort to encourage small donations, I chose to specifically highlight smaller amounts on the Donate page.”
- Note that the explanation for your contact section might be very brief. But, you should try to come up with some creative way to use class concepts to encourage individuals to contact the campaign. Are you trying to recruit volunteers? Solicit feedback? Hear their opinions?

## Summary

[Conclusion: ~50 words, single spaced, complete sentences]

- Summarize the main point of your campaign strategy and how you implemented it on the website

## Grading:

	F	D	C	B	A
Introduction and Summary 10%	Introduction and Summary sections are missing	One of the two sections (Introduction, Summary) are missing	Introduction and Summary sections are there, but incomplete. They do not clearly summarize the overarching strategy, explain the purpose of the memo, preview the memo, etc. Discussion does not match the rest of the memo	Introduction and Summary sections are there and complete. They summarize the overarching strategy, explain the purpose of the memo, and preview the memo. The discussion is somewhat unclear and does not structure the content of the rest of the memo	Introduction and Summary sections are there and complete. They summarize the overarching strategy, explain the purpose of the memo, and preview the memo. The discussion is clear and structures the content of the rest of the memo
About Me 20%	About Me section is missing	About Me section is there, but severely incomplete. Justification does not match the content on the website nor make reference to class concepts or research from previous assignments	About Me section is there, but fairly incomplete. Justification somewhat matches the content on the website, but there are some mis-matches (e.g. justifying things that are not on the website). Justification attempts to reference class concepts or research from previous assignments, but does not do so clearly or accurately	About Me section is there and complete. Justification matches the content on the website. Justification attempts to reference class concepts or research from previous assignments, but does not always do so clearly or accurately. Does not show strong evidence of originality.	About Me section is there and complete. Justification matches the content on the website. Justification references class concepts or research from previous assignments clearly and accurately. Shows strong evidence of originality.
Issue Priorities 25%	Issue Priorities section is missing	Issue Priorities section is there, but incomplete (e.g. only 1-2 issues are explained). The issues are not discussed thoroughly, showing no evidence of applying research on the district to the issue selection. Does not reference class concepts	Issue Priorities section is there and fairly complete. Three issues are discussed, but the justification does not match the content on the website. The issues are not discussed thoroughly, showing no evidence of applying research on the district to the issue selection. Does not reference class concepts.	Issue Priorities section is there and complete. Three issues are discussed, and the justification matches the content on the website. The issues are discussed thoroughly, showing some evidence of applying research on the district to the issue selection. Justification attempts to reference class concepts or research from previous assignments, but does not always do so accurately. Does not show strong evidence of originality.	Issue Priorities section is there and complete. Three issues are discussed, and the justification matches the content on the website. The issues are discussed thoroughly, showing some evidence of applying research on the district to the issue selection. Justification references class concepts or research from previous assignments clearly and accurately. Shows strong evidence of originality.

News 15%	News section is missing	News section is there, but incomplete. Justification does not match the content on the website nor make reference to class concepts or research from previous assignments	News section is there, but fairly incomplete. Justification somewhat matches the content on the website, but there are some mis-matches (e.g. justifying things that are not on the website). Justification attempts to reference class concepts or research from previous assignments, but does not do so clearly or accurately	News section is there and complete. Justification matches the content on the website. Justification attempts to reference class concepts or research from previous assignments, but does not always do so clearly or accurately. Does not show strong evidence of originality.	News section is there and complete. Justification matches the content on the website. Justification references class concepts or research from previous assignments clearly and accurately. Shows strong evidence of originality.
Interactive Features: Donate and Contact 10%	Donate and Contact section is missing	Donate and Contact section is there, but incomplete. Justification does not match the content on the website nor make reference to class concepts or research from previous assignments	Donate and Contact section is there, but fairly incomplete. Justification somewhat matches the content on the website, but there are some mis-matches (e.g. justifying things that are not on the website). Justification attempts to reference class concepts or research from previous assignments, but does not do so clearly or accurately	Donate and Contact section is there and complete. Justification matches the content on the website. Justification attempts to reference class concepts or research from previous assignments, but does not always do so clearly or accurately. Does not show strong evidence of originality.	Donate and Contact section is there and complete. Justification matches the content on the website. Justification references class concepts or research from previous assignments clearly and accurately. Shows strong evidence of originality.
Writing 20%	Writing does not meet the length requirement; includes severe grammar or spelling errors	Writing is close to the length requirement; includes many grammar or spelling errors	Writing meets the length requirement but includes many grammar or spelling errors	Writing meets the length requirement, may include some grammar or spelling errors, but is generally clear	Writing meets the length requirement, is free of grammar or spelling errors, and is clearly written