

Session 8: Election Consequences
L707: Analysis of 2012 Election

This class will, of course, be the day before the election. Although the outcome will not be known, we will be able to discuss some possible consequences based on two general scenarios.

Scenario A: Obama ekes out an electoral-college win (perhaps losing the popular vote), the Democrats keep a slight Senate majority, and Republicans keep control of the House (with a 10-12 loss of seats).

Scenario B: Romney ekes out an electoral win and a slight majority of the popular vote, the democrats keep control of the Senate, and the Republicans keep control of the House (with 10-12 less seats).

General Political Consequences:

1. Will the victor be able to claim a “mandate?”
2. Will the current gridlock continue unabated?
3. Is the United States governable?

Specific Issues:

1. How will Congress and the president handle the “Fiscal Cliff” before the 31 December deadline? Is it more desirable to let it happen, as an article in the 27 October Post suggest, or will that throw us into a second recession? In the latter case, analysts differ on how severe the consequences would be. Some consider the consequences to be rather benign; others say it would be a calamity.
2. In a series starting on 13 October, the Associated Press published a list of issues that provide a basis for a detailed discussion. I will distribute the 13 October article as food for thought.
3. A 27 October article in the Washington Post by Ezra Klein zeroes in on health care as one of the most important issues at stake. He maintains that the Affordable Health Care Act, which goes a long way in providing universal health care for all Americans, is most at risk if Romney wins. He maintains that if Obama wins, the change will be permanent and represent the single most important policy achievement of Obama’s presidency and history will accord him a transformative legacy. I urge all to read that article if you have not done so.

This last session will be difficult to handle in more than a cursory manner and it will be highly speculative. Who knows what Romney will do if he is elected? If Paul Ryan is Romney's real economic philosopher, the prognosis is clearer. In spite of the rosy review of Ryan's talk in Cleveland about restoring social mobility given (by Michael Gerson in his 26 October Post column, which I will distribute), the actual budget plan proposed by Ryan betrays his campaign rhetoric. As I read the Cleveland rhetoric, it is campaign camouflage for his earlier speech at Georgetown, where 19 faculty members, in a letter to Ryan, said his views reflected the Ayn Rand philosophy more than Catholic teachings.

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