

TEACHER'S MANUAL

ELECTION SIMULATION GAME

OFFICIAL RULES OF PLAY

CAMPAIGN: 2025 NYC ELECTIONS

MAYOR, COMPTROLLER,
PUBLIC ADVOCATE, CITY COUNCIL, ETC.

ONE CLASSROOM VERSION



The Taft Institute
FOR GOVERNMENT & CIVIC EDUCATION



TOWNSEND HARRIS HIGH SCHOOL

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our project began as part of a discussion in 1996 on what students know about the election process, political campaigns, and the responsibilities of the media in an election. The Game was created out of the collaborative effort of Dr. Michael Krasner, Queens College Department of Political Science and Co-Director of the Taft Institute for Government and Civic Education; Dr. Marvin Leiner, Queens College Preparatory Programs; Lynne Greenfield, Townsend Harris High School Assistant Principal Supervision – Humanities Department and Nancy Leib, Myron Moskowitz and Anthony Scarnati, Townsend Harris High School Humanities Department. More recently, Rafal Olechowski, Townsend Harris’s Assistant Principal for the Humanities, and Social Studies teachers Jaime Byrne Baranoff and Charlene Levi have provided stellar leadership for the simulation.

Our program is made possible by the support and leadership of Mr. Brian Condon, Principal of Townsend Harris High School, and the skill, dedication, and enthusiasm of the Townsend Harris High School Humanities teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

The simulation that follows is based on the unique simulation GAME developed and refined by teachers at Townsend Harris High School and the Taft Institute for Government. Since 1996 this simulation model has been adapted each year to correspond to whatever election is taking place, whether it's the presidential elections and Congressional elections: New York City Mayoral elections: gubernatorial, state legislative and Congressional elections; or presidential primaries. Numerous high schools, middle schools, and even elementary schools in New York City, Connecticut, and elsewhere have played the GAME with great success.

At Townsend Harris the GAME is usually played by the entire school for a period of two months that coincides with the last two months (September-October) of the real-world election. The teacher's manual and sourcebook for that long and elaborate full school version of the GAME may also be found on this web site.

This version of the GAME is much shorter and simpler and requires fewer resources—it assumes one classroom of approximately 25-30 students and a duration of two weeks. The essence of the GAME is to combine structure, freedom, and accountability. Students are assigned roles that simulate the real world of politics, but they have the freedom to play those roles as they see fit. Students welcome the freedom from classroom routine, but operate within a structure that emphasizes accountability. Competition, creativity, and fun drive the game.

If possible, the simulation should be scheduled to coincide with the last two weeks of the real-world election campaign. The simulation election should take place on the Monday before the real-world election on Tuesday. This allows the simulation election to take place without being influenced by the results of the real-world election and then allows comparisons to be drawn during the debriefing discussion after the real-world election.

But you can play the GAME any time, and it will still work very well.

The purpose of The Election Simulation Game is to create a total political campaign experience that is enjoyable and parallels the real world of politics. Our experience in this area has shown that through widespread participation in The GAME, all players, including those participating as voters, experience American electoral politics firsthand and gain important skills and understanding.

The fundamental rule of the election simulation game is KEEP IT REAL!

The simulation game works as a teaching tool ONLY if all players play their roles seriously and participating teachers insist that all players mirror, as closely as possible, actual campaign roles. In fact, we tell our students that it's like other games—it only works, and it's only fun if you take it seriously.

The Ethos of the Simulation Game and the Role of Teachers

As noted earlier, the simulation game works by creating a structure of rules, assignments, responsibilities, and accountability within which the players exercise their creative (and competitive) abilities. Students must be given the opportunity to succeed or fail on their own.

Teachers should provide feedback, assessing the quality, timeliness, and effectiveness of the students' efforts, whether it is a campaign rally, a debate performance, or the media's stories. Teachers may also point out the failure of a campaign, or a media institution to respond adequately to a certain issue or event.

Teachers should avoid advocating a particular strategy or direction for a campaign, or interest group or media outlet. The students must play the roles; if the teacher plays the role, then the point of the simulation—for the students to have the experience of politics first hand—is lost.

It would be entirely appropriate for a teacher to say that a campaign was losing steam; it would be entirely inappropriate for a teacher to say that the campaign should run a negative ad about the opposition's stand on homelessness. A teacher should tell a media group if their reporting has missed an important issue, but should not tell them what language to use or which people to interview.

STRUCTURE AND RATIONALE:

Because this version works with 25-30 students, teachers are asked to preside over the election by playing the role of the Election Commission. Two campaigns with three to four roles apiece are stipulated (for the sake of balance between the campaigns and the voters, but the Sliwa campaign could be added) along with one media group, with three roles. The total of full-time roles, including the two campaigns and the newspaper roles, is 10.

This leaves about two-thirds of the class to play the role of the electorate. The choice to focus on campaigns and the media reflects the modern American reality-- elections have become media-centric. Candidates mainly reach voters through the media, rather than through political parties as they did a hundred years ago. This happens in three ways—through advertising (paid media) and through news coverage (sometimes referred to as “earned media”) and through social media. Over the years, as the role of political parties has declined and voters rely more on their own perceptions of candidates and issues, perceptions that are considerably influenced by media coverage, advertising, and social media.

Overview of Simulation Activities (Details follow)

Week One—Provide background on politics, campaigns and elections, Distribute roles, Begin research

Day One—Brainstorm on politics

Days Two and Three—See excerpts from the film “The War Room” (or any other appropriate film such as “Trump’s Road to the White House” or “Knock Down the House”) and discuss campaigns, voting, and the media’s role in elections

Day Four— Research Candidate Platforms

Day Five— Distribute roles and begin campaign preparation

Week Two—Playing the Simulation Game

Day One—Kickoff Rally

Day Two—Candidates Town Meeting or informal campaigning

Day Three—Candidates Debate

Day Four—Newspaper distributed Day

Five-- Election takes place

Results tabulated

Debriefing

Student papers collected and discussed. Students playing the full-time political roles write on their experience. Voters write the media literacy assignment. Both are described below.

GETTING STARTED

Week one

You and your students are about to be immersed in the world of electoral politics. Begin by discussing what politics means to them.

DAY 1

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY #1: Politics from the Students' Perspective.

AIM: What is politics?

MOTIVATION: Post the word POLITICS on the board.

- Brainstorm a list of words and images in response to the word politics.
- Write the students' responses on the board.

DEVELOPMENT: Analyze the list as you lead the class through a discussion of the following:

APPLICATION:

- Why or why not is this list an accurate description of American politics?
- What do you see as a strength of the American political system? Explain.
- What do you see as a weakness in the system? Explain.
- What do you feel needs to be done to improve American politics?

In a well-developed paragraph, respond to following: If you were given the opportunity to run for political office, would you "Play the political game" or "Take the political high road"?

DAYS 2-3 (note homework assignment for day 4)

Your students are going to be participating in an election campaign. They will be playing roles in a campaign organization or media outlet.

In preparation, students need to develop some insight into how these groups, and their operatives, work in a real world setting. An effective method of accomplishing this task is to provide students with an opportunity to view excerpts from the 90- minute political documentary *The War Room* - an insider look at the 1992 Clinton Campaign. The film can help your students develop a sense of what will be expected of them over the next several weeks. SUGGESTED ACTIVITY #2: Electoral Politics

AIM:

To view the film *The War Room* (or *Primary Colors* or *Trump's Road to the White House* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=SMwXKl0odq8&t=802s>) or

Knock Down the House, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCSo2hZRcXk>)

PROCEDURE: As students view the film, they take notes to help them answer the following:

- How might the media affect the ultimate success or failure of a political campaign?
- Which is more important to winning an election: campaign strategy or the candidate's ideas?
- How can special interests affect the ultimate success or failure of a political campaign?
- Which campaign strategy is more effective: demonstrating why voters should vote for your candidate or demonstrating why voters should NOT vote for the other candidate(s)?
- NOT vote for the other candidate(s)?
- Do campaigns discuss the issues most important to the American people and the world? Why or why not?
- Why do certain issues seem to get left out? Whose interests are served by this pattern? Whose interests are left out?

APPLICATION: Discuss student answers.

Homework Assignment for Day 4

- Create 5 ISSUE GROUPS
- Assign each ISSUE GROUP one of the issues from the chart.
- Each ISSUE GROUP is to use materials such as web sites to complete one row of the chart and become 'an expert' on that particular issue.

DAY 4 ASSESSING ISSUES/CANDIDATE PLATFORMS

The objective is to familiarize the students with the positions of each candidate. Every student must be well versed in the platforms of each candidate.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY #3: Candidates' Positions

AIM: Where do the candidates stand on the issues?.

MAYORAL CANDIDATES 2025

CANDIDATES:

CUOMO

MAMDANI

ISSUES:

Affordable Housing

Overall Cost of Living

Crime

Affordable Health Care

Public Transportation

PROCEDURE:

- The ISSUE GROUPS reorganize into CANDIDATE GROUPS.
- Each CANDIDATE GROUP will contain at least one member from each ISSUE GROUP.
- Each member of the CANDIDATE GROUP teaches the other members of the group about the candidate's position on their particular issue.

APPLICATION:

Each student writes an essay entitled: "The Candidate with a Platform on which I Can Stand".

DAY 5 ROLES AND RULES

The students are now ready to be introduced to the Election Simulation Game. They will be receiving a great deal of information and will require class time to start their reading and discussion of the material. The remainder of the readings should be assigned for homework over the next few days.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY #3: Playing the Election Simulation Game

AIM: How will we simulate a 2024 American presidential election?

PROCEDURE:

- **Assign a specific role randomly to each student. We allow students from different racial, gender, or ethnic groups to portray a candidate, but this is a decision you need to make for yourself.**
- Distribute the following materials:
 1. ELECTION SIMULATION ROLES:
 2. THE RULES OF THE GAME
- Allow students some time to read the ROLES and RULES.
- Discuss the readings with the class.
- Review with each group its particular responsibilities.

APPLICATION: Help each group prepare for the first activity of the simulation GAME—
THE KICKOFF RALLY!

PLAYING THE GAME: RULES

1: VOTING

VOTER REGISTRATION

As is true in the real world, all citizens must register to vote. For the purposes of the simulation, all students are assumed to be citizens. The Election Commission (the teacher) establishes a process by which students register to vote. Campaigns should encourage and recruit citizens to register and to vote. The Election Commission must also develop a means for insuring that only registered voters cast ballots on Election Day.

ELECTION DAY

RATIONALE: to simulate the role of the voter and to assess the impact of the simulation on the voting public, the actual voting will not take place during class time. Students need to make an effort to vote by going on their own time to a specific polling place.

ELECTION DAY: The election will be held on A DATE CHOSEN BY THE ELECTION COMMISSION. The polls will be open in an area designated by the Election Commission during the times set by the Election Commission.

- While the polls are open no person shall do any electioneering within the polling place, or within an area designated by the Election Commission; and no political banner, button, poster or

placard shall be allowed in or upon the polling place or within the surrounding area as defined by the Election Commission.

It is incumbent upon the campaigns to get out the vote.

RULE 2: CAMPAIGN FINANCE

RATIONALE: Issues related to campaign finance, including raising, spending, and monitoring of funds, are not usually included in simulations. The simulation GAME emphasizes the raising and spending of money as key strategic activities and decisions. SIMBUCKS are The Game's currency.

- Each campaign begins with a treasury that roughly reflects the relative amount of money that each controls in the real world.
- Citizens also receive SIMBUCKS accounts; most receive 10 SIMBUCKS, but three (chosen at random) receive 50 SIMBUCKS and act the parts of "*fat cats*." These students will be selected and notified of their accounts by the Election Commission. All citizens may donate their SIMBUCKS to campaigns or not, as they see fit. They may also use SIMBUCKS to form Political Action Committees (PACs). PAC's may run campaigns advancing their political agenda in the same manner as a real world special interest groups. PACs must follow the same rules as the campaigns and are regulated by the Election Commission.

TREASURIES

| | |
|------------------|---------------|
| Cuomo Campaign | 2000 SIMBUCKS |
| Mamdani Campaign | 1400 SIMBUCKS |

FUNDRAISING

RATIONALE: As noted above, to generate excitement and stimulate greater participation by citizens, additional SIMBUCKS are in accounts controlled by select citizens. While the typical student controls 10 SIMBUCKS, 3 students will be designated *fat cats* and each *fat cat* will control 50 SIMBUCKS. They can use them as they see fit. The party campaigns can increase their treasuries by convincing underclassmen to contribute to them.

RULE 3: CAMPAIGN COSTS

RATIONALE: Each campaign will have to carefully plan how to best use its resources to reach the maximum number of voters.

ADVERTISING

NEWSPAPER ADS: 1 full page 100 SIMBUCKS and others in proportion

CLASSROOM POSTERS: 1 sheet oak tag 50 SIMBUCKS per day.
All other sizes are billed proportionately.

PERSONAL APPEARANCES: Candidates are encouraged to speak directly to voters in the classroom. These appearances are billed as either **speeches** or **town meetings**. A Speech is not followed by a Q and A Session. A Town Meeting is a speech followed by a Q and A session. The length of a personal appearance will be set by the Election Commission (5 minutes is a suggested length).

Cost per personal appearance—50 SIMBUCKS

All other campaign techniques are free of charge.

RULE 4: RECORD KEEPING

All groups that spend and/or receive SIMBUCKS are required to keep accurate financial records. The Election Commission will randomly audit records. Failure to comply with the rules will result in fines and/or injunctions that the Election Commission deems it appropriate.

RULE 5: FINES

The Election Commission can fine any group if it is responsible for littering, vandalism, excessive noise or disruption of the academic environment.

RULE 6: RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

Each campaign is required to actively engage the electorate.

Each must not only get its message out, but must also creatively use as many of the techniques as possible to energize the electorate.

Campaigns must use available resources to utilize campaign techniques such as:

- press conferences
- poster campaigns
- TV advertisements
- radio advertisements
- print ad campaigns
- 'stump' speeches
- town meetings
- personal appearances
- rallies
- volunteers
- 'local' campaign offices
- web site development
- other social media
- slogans

Each campaign must define its message and convince the electorate to buy it!!!

Campaigns are not limited to this list of methods. The only limits (in addition to good taste and political reality) are those of imagination and creativity.

Campaigns must also respond to real world events such as reports of economic conditions, scandals, court appearances, etc.

ENFORCEMENT--THE ELECTION COMMISSION

- The ELECTION COMMISSION (EC) is responsible for auditing the finances of all campaigns
- The EC adjudicates, as it sees fit, all alleged violations.
- The EC is called on to respond as an independent, non-partisan group to respond to allegations.
- The EC is responsible for running the election in a manner as nearly akin as possible to real election procedures.

- **THE EC IN THIS VERSION OF THE SIMULATION IS PLAYED BY THE TEACHER.**

CAMPAIGN ROLES and ACTIVITIES

TWO CAMPAIGNS—CUOMO and MAMDANI— WITH THREE ROLES EACH: THE CANDIDATE; THE CAMPAIGN MANAGER/PRESS SECRETARY; THE POLICY ANALYST/SPEECH WRITER

THE CANDIDATE:

- The candidate is the most visible member of the Campaign and is the ultimate authority in the campaign.
- The candidate must be affable and knowledgeable. He/She is the public face of the campaign.
The candidate needs to attend rallies, hold press conferences, speak to classes, appear on television and radio shows, appear at fund raisers, debate his/her opponent, and in short, do all those things the real candidate does.

THE CAMPAIGN MANGER/ PRESS SECRETARY:

- The campaign manager is the person most directly responsible for the operation of the campaign.
- The campaign manager must keep the members of the campaign focused. He/She must be able to delegate responsibility. All campaign business goes through the campaign manager.
- The Press Secretaries prepare and deliver press releases to the media.
- They help to keep the campaign in a positive light in the press.
- They attempt to direct press coverage of the campaign and to make the candidate as visible as possible in the press.
- The press secretaries will be directly responsible for arranging each of the candidate's press conferences.

POLICY ANALYST/SPEECHWRITER: The policy analyst/speechwriters are responsible for

- conducting research on the issues. The campaign needs to know the candidate's position on all relevant domestic and foreign policy issues as well as those of its opponents. The analysts' primary responsibility is to provide the campaign with all the information necessary to conduct a winning campaign. The analysts will be relied upon to formulate questions that the candidate may be asked at the candidate debate and for writing for the

candidate. Speeches are necessary for rallies, press conferences, public appearances and debates.

- the policy analyst/speechwriters prepare a number of speeches for the campaign's public figures. They begin with the most basic 'stump' speeches and also work to prepare candidates for press conferences and town meetings by briefing them on issues and suggesting ways of responding to questions from the media and the voters.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

Each campaign is required to complete a variety of campaign activities in addition to the scheduled major events. The goal of each activity is to win votes for the candidate. The following is a list of suggested activities. Campaigns are not limited to the activities on the list, nor are they limited, by rule, to one of each. A campaign, for example, may choose to hold three press conferences.

PRESS CONFERENCES:

- The candidate should take this opportunity to address a particular issue.
- He/She should make a brief speech and then field questions.

The candidate can choose to field any and all questions or just those related to the topic of the press conference.

Hints:

- Take steps to ensure that the press is in attendance.
- Give the press plenty of advance notice and follow up to be sure they will attend (they don't have to).

RALLY: This should be colorful and FUN!!!

- The rally(s) need to be staged in a way that creates enthusiasm among potential voters
- The rally must be carefully orchestrated fun without being foolish, a very fine line.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE!

- This is the classic hand-shaking event. "Hi, I'm _____ and I'd like your vote on Election Day."
- The candidate can appear anywhere with large numbers of voters are likely to pass.
 - Campaign staff may use this opportunity to distribute campaign literature to prospective voters.

AD CAMPAIGN:

- Ad campaigns contain different types of ads and develop throughout the campaign.
- The first ad should be designed to introduce the candidate to the voters. It should include a slogan or something that viewers will associate with the candidate throughout the campaign.
 - The next ads should focus on reasons why viewers should vote for the candidate. They should provide viewers with information about the candidate's stand on the issues as well as the candidate's record. They should be upbeat and positive.
- Negative ads may also be useful if they contain honest, issue-based reasons why viewers should NOT vote for the opposition, such as the opposition won't help the middle class. Negative ads of this type are **not** examples of *mudslinging or smears*.
- **Mudslinging** refers to personal attacks based upon lies or innuendo, such as the Swift Boat campaign against Senator John Kerry in 2004 . Saying that a candidate has sex with goldfish would be an example of mudslinging or smear tactics.
- The use of mudslinging as a campaign tactic must be addressed from an ethical standpoint. The ultimate decision as to the use of mudslinging, however, is up to the campaign management team. Mudslinging is NOT against the rules.

FUNDRAISER: Candidates often create events such as dinners and rallies at which to raise monies. Campaigns should creatively adapt such practices to the school setting.

SPEECH:

- Speech making is the politician's stock-in-trade.
- An entourage should accompany a candidate. The entourage may include the campaign manager, and policy analyst/speechwriter
- The time and date of the speech should be arranged with the teacher/EC.

Once the date and time for a speech is arranged with the classroom teacher the campaign management team **MUST** ensure that either the candidate or another representative of the campaign keeps the appointment.

TOWN MEETING: Same as above except the candidate will be allowed to conduct a question-and-answer segment with the students in the class.

GRASS ROOTS CAMPAIGNING: Impromptu meetings with individual voters or groups in the cafeteria, corridors, or other places.

TEACHING THE CAMPAIGN GROUPS: ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

STATUS REPORTS:

The campaign takes on a life and momentum of its own as the days progress. The teacher's role will be to keep the campaign focused on the tasks at hand and also on the tasks yet to come. Time should be set aside during each classroom session to speak to the groups as a whole in the manner of a coach motivating his/her team. Both formal and informal status reports are included on a weekly basis. A formal approach requires the students to stand and deliver a brief statement as to what the campaign has done that week and plans to accomplish in the following days. An informal approach would take the form of private updates given to you by the members of the campaign.

DAILY LOG:

Students must keep a daily *log* of their activities as a member of the campaign. Entries into the journal should *focus on* what the student did that day to help the candidate get elected. Students may choose to respond in the daily *log* to issues and topics ultimately covered in the final paper.

CULMINATING PAPER:

The final activity in the GAME is the writing of a culminating paper. An effective culminating paper is a serious discussion of the process of electoral politics in general and the student's specific role in particular. A detailed description of the content, format and grading rubrics for the paper are distributed at the beginning of The GAME to enable students to prepare to write the paper as the activity progresses. The paper is about five pages long and includes many of the following:

- A description of the student's particular role.
- A discussion of what the student did.
- A description of the student's greatest accomplishment.
- A description of the student's greatest frustration.
- A discussion of how playing the Election Simulation Game affected the student's knowledge *of*, awareness *of* and attitude toward American politics. What's good and what's bad?
 - Offer a few sage words of wisdom for future game players.
 - Offer suggestions for reforming the American electoral process.

The paper is submitted shortly after Election Day.

DEBRIEFING:

The days immediately following Election Day focus on an analysis of both the real election and the Game

- The election returns are reviewed and parallels discussed.
- The elements of the culminating paper should serve as the basis for a detailed discussion of electoral politics in America.
- A panel discussion involving representatives of each campaign and the media is conducted with all participants in attendance.
- A question-and-answer period follows. This approach allows the players to express their feelings toward and reactions to other players. It gives candidates, for example, a chance to express their frustration with the media while allowing the media an opportunity to respond.
- The teacher must carefully moderate this discussion.

GRADING:

While a political campaign is a team effort and is graded as such, acknowledgement of individual accomplishment must also be built into the grading process. Each student's grade reflects the success of the campaigns as well as individual successes. Rubrics are distributed to the students to provide guidelines for activities as well as to help the teacher to make a final evaluation.

- Each campaign is graded based upon the degree to which it successfully completed the campaign activities described above as well as on participation in the appropriate major events.
- Grades are based on an individual participation in the campaign, scores on tests such as the test on the Rules & Sourcebook test (see *Getting Started*), daily performance, daily log entries and the culminating paper.
- Each student's grade for the Game is an average of campaign and individual grades.

MEDIA ROLES AND ACTIVITIES: NEWSPAPER—THE NEW YORK TIMES (Note: The newspaper may be only online)

Three Roles

Maintaining the proper balance between *style and substance* and *horseshoe* (defined below) and *substance* is the greatest challenge in teaching the media group. Students learn of the power and

importance of the media first-hand. They will also learn real lessons in the difficulties inherent in covering politics and politicians. The electorate will be influenced by the media's coverage of events and will be confounded by the presence of *soft news* coverage. The question of why cover *fluff* when issues of real importance abound is sure to be raised.

Why, indeed? The lesson, of course, is a simple one: Soft media, while entertaining and fun, is of little use in the education of a voter. Becoming an informed voter requires effort and a focus on the more issue conscious *hard news media*.

The media must also consider how much coverage to devote to *horseshoe news*, meaning news concerning the competitive aspects of the campaign (like sports coverage—who's winning, who's losing), and how much to give to *substantive coverage* of the candidate's qualifications and positions on the issues.

Keep in mind that the entire class will be required to consume and evaluate whatever the media class produces. The teacher's guidance, from start to finish, is crucial to the media's success.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

We know that there is no substitute for a quality newspaper as a source of information for a voter and that reading a newspaper requires quite a bit more effort than watching television. The Game seeks to teach that lesson to students *before* they become actual voters. Our *New York Times*, like its actual counterpart, contains coverage of both hard and soft news.

ROLES: The publication of *New York Times* requires the completion of a number of tasks. Students need to be assigned to each of the following roles:

- Editor-in-Chief/Reporter
- Layout Editor/Reporter
- Reporter

Note: Because of the small number of roles, two combine the general role of reporter with a more specific role that emphasizes a function and a position in the hierarchy of the newspaper .

Editor-in-Chief

- The editor-in-chief is responsible for each weekly issue of *New York Times*.
- The editor-in-chief proofreads and edits every piece of writing that will appear in *New York Times*.
- The editor-in-chief assigns reporters to cover major events, rallies, press conferences, etc.

- The editor-in-chief writes an editorial for the paper, which endorses a candidate.

Layout Editor

- The layout editor is responsible for putting the paper together in an appealing and space-efficient manner.
- The layout editor designs *New York Times's* masthead and, if feasible, provides a political cartoon for each issue.
- The layout editor is responsible for all artwork and photographs needed for each week's *New York Times*.

Reporters

- The reporters are responsible for finding the hard news stories and writing the articles that will appear in each week's *New York Times*.
- The reporters' focus is on the candidates and the issues that are shaping the election. They must be non-partisan and unbiased in their reportage of the news. They must attempt to cultivate reliable sources within campaigns and interest groups.
- Reporters attend press conferences and cover major events as assigned by the editor-in-chief.

CONTENTS: *New York Times* may be a weekly publication containing a total of 4-5 pages printed on both sides of 8 ½ by 11 size paper. Or it may be an online publication. Every edition contains the following:

- A masthead
- A political cartoon
- An editorial
- Political advertisements
- News articles (hard news)

TEACHING THE MEDIA GROUP

STATUS REPORTS:

The teacher's role is to keep the media focused on the tasks at hand and on the tasks yet to come. Because of the short duration, it is important that the media begin defining story topics and researching and reporting stories promptly. While the events of the campaign provide obvious topics, the students should be encouraged to develop other stories that analyze policy or leadership issues. The teacher should bring to students' attention any imbalance in horse race versus substantive coverage.

DAILY LOG:

Students keep a daily log of their activities as members of a particular media outlet. Entries into the journal should focus on what the student did that day to help cover the election campaign. Students may choose to respond in the daily log to issues and topics ultimately covered in the final paper.

CULMINATING PAPER:

The final activity in the *Game* is the writing of a culminating paper. An effective culminating paper is a serious discussion of the process of electoral politics in general and the student's specific role in particular. A detailed description of the content, format and grading rubrics for the paper are distributed at the beginning of the Game to enable students to prepare to write the paper as the activity progresses. The paper is in the range of 5 pages in length and encompasses much of the following:

- A description of the student's particular role.
- A discussion of what the student did.
- A description of the student's greatest accomplishment.
- A description of the student's greatest frustration.
- A discussion of how playing the Game impacted upon the student's knowledge of, awareness of and, attitude toward American politics.
- An offer of a few sage words of wisdom for future game players.
- An offer of suggestions for reforming the American electoral process.

The paper is submitted shortly after Election Day.

DEBRIEFING: The days immediately following Election Day focus on an analysis of both the real election and the Game.

- The election returns are reviewed and parallels discussed. The elements of the culminating paper serve as the basis for a detailed discussion of electoral politics in America.
- A panel discussion involving representatives of each campaign, interest group and the media is conducted with all participants in attendance.

- A question-and-answer period follows. This approach will allow the players to express their feelings toward and reactions to other players. It gives candidates, for example, a chance to express their frustration with the media while allowing the media an opportunity to respond.
- The teacher must carefully moderate this discussion.

GRADING

The production of the newspaper is a team effort and should be graded as such, however, an element of individual accomplishment should also be built into the grading process. The students' grades should reflect the success of their group as well as their own individual success. Rubrics are distributed to the students to provide guidelines for production as well as to help the teacher to make a final evaluation.

- The newspaper is graded upon the quality of the product it produced.
- Individuals are graded based upon their own performance as demonstrated by his/her: score on the Rules and *Sourcebook* test (see *Getting Started*), daily performance, daily log and, culminating paper.
- Each student's grade for the Game is an average of his or her group and individual grades.

GENERAL ASSIGNMENTS FOR STUDENTS PORTRAYING CITIZENS

1. MEDIA LITERACY

HOW FAIR IS THE MEDIA'S COVERAGE OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN?

Real-world media and Simulation media are both important components of the simulation process. As students become immersed in creating and consuming their mock media, they become more observant (and more critical) about the real-world coverage of the campaign.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY #6: A Media Evaluation Project (This exercise is aimed mainly at the students playing the role of voters and should be done several times during the simulation)

DEFINITIONS:

- **CLIPPING FILE** — A collection of articles cut from newspapers and magazines on a subject of interest.
- **FAIR REPORTING** - Relating the news in a balanced, unbiased manner. This is the ideal for the news reporter.
- **BIAS** - Partiality; prejudice in favor of one point of view. A news story can reflect bias through editorializing, slanting or both.
- **EDITORIALIZING** - A reporter's expression of his/her own opinion in a news story. Reporters are supposed to avoid this practice.
- **SLANTING** - Deliberate or unintentional distortion of the news in such a way as to favor a point of view, a party or a candidate. Intentional slanting aims to influence the reader's (or listener's) opinion through such subtle means as unbalanced quotations and sources, selection of flattering or unflattering photographs, and placement of story. Reporters, editors, photographers, headline writers and layout personnel can all contribute toward slanting a story toward a favored candidate.
- **NORMALIZING**—A kind of slanting in which extreme behavior is made to seem normal or incoherent statements are made to seem reasonable.
- **BALANCE** - The fair presentation of the most important sides of a story. It is achieved by including quotations that represent all the relevant points of view.
- **FALSE EQUIVALENCE**—Treating different things as though they were the same. For example, "Candidate A was convicted of armed robbery and candidate B got a parking ticket so both are criminals."
- **ISSUE** - A controversial subject that gives rise to discussion and debate.

ISSUE COVERAGE – News stories that focus on the substance of the issues in the campaign.

HORSE RACE COVERAGE – News stories that focus on which candidate is winning and which is losing and why.

- **NEWS ARTICLE** - A printed story about a recent event or issue.
- **EDITORIAL** - An *unsigned* opinion article that expresses the view of the newspaper, magazine, or news program on a current issue. Near an election, it is common to see editorials endorsing specific candidates.
- **COLUMN** — a *signed* opinion article that expresses the individual opinion of the author, who is an employee of the newspaper. A column often appears with a photograph of the columnist. A column may appear in the same paper with an editorial taking the opposite side on an issue.
- **OP ED ARTICLE**—a *signed* opinion article by a guest writer who is not an employee of the newspaper, usually selected because of expertise or position.

PROCEDURE:

- Choose a daily metropolitan newspaper to be your newspaper for the duration of this project. Suggested newspapers include *Newsday* the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Daily News*, and the *Post*.
- Clip one NEWS ARTICLE from your paper (or select one from TV or radio and take notes on it).
- Clip additional NEWS ARTICLES on the **same story or issue** from another newspaper and, when possible, from a Townsend Harris mock media publication (or select a simulation broadcast and take notes).
- Using the **FAIRNESS AND ACCURACY CHECKLIST (next page)**, evaluate each of the articles. Compare your findings in a paragraph.

FAIRNESS AND ACCURACY CHECKLIST

NAME OF NEWSPAPER/T.V. /RADIO BROADCAST _____

HEADLINE/LEAD: _____

DATE: _____ TIME: _____

1. **BALANCE:** Are the candidates quoted equally? YES ___ NO ___ Are the quotations chosen fairly? YES ___ NO ___
Is each candidate's point of view given equal weight?
YES ___ NO ___
Are the other sources balanced? YES ___ NO ___
2. **NEUTRALITY:** Is there editorializing? YES ___ NO ___ 3. **VISUAL IMAGES:** Does the choice of photographs favor one candidate over the other? YES ___ NO ___
4. **STORY PLACEMENT:** Does it correspond to the importance of the story? YES ___ NO ___
5. **FAIRNESS TEST:** Can you tell from this article or broadcast, which candidate is favored? YES ___ NO ___
6. **CITIZEN'S TEST:** Does this article give you as a prospective voter the information you need to cast an informed vote? YES ___ NO ___

To answer this question systematically, try measuring by column inches or by seconds how much of the story is devoted to fluff, how much to horse-race coverage, and how much to coverage of issues or leadership qualities.

2. CITIZEN'S LOG

Each student who is playing the role of a voter should keep a daily log of all contacts with the campaigns or the media, and any conversations or other contact with other voters that bears on the campaign. Students should also record any thoughts, feelings or observations about the campaign and the election, both the simulation and the real world versions. Students should keep track of

- which candidate they favor, that is,
- how they think they will vote, **and why**,
- what they think of the campaign's events and the candidate's efforts on any particular day,
- what they think is the most important issue of the election.

3. CULMINATING PAPER:

As for the other roles, the final activity for voters in the *GAME* is the writing of a culminating paper. An effective culminating paper is a serious discussion of the process of electoral politics in general and the student's specific role in particular. A detailed description of the content, format and grading rubrics for the paper are distributed at the beginning of the Game to enable students to prepare to write the paper as the activity progresses. The paper is in the range of 5 pages in length and encompasses much of the following:

- A description of the student's particular role.
- A discussion of what the student did.
- An account of how the student's feelings and perceptions changed during the course of the simulation.
- A description of the student's greatest accomplishment.
- A description of the student's greatest frustration.
- A discussion of how playing the Game impacted upon the student's knowledge of, awareness of and, attitude toward American politics.
- An offer of a few sage words of wisdom for future game players.
- An offer of suggestions for reforming the American electoral process.

The paper is submitted shortly after Election Day.

**For help with any aspect of creating your own simulation,
Please contact Professor Michael Krasner at
makrasner@gmail.com.**

NOTES