

5CLIR Spring 2020

2020 Presidential Primary and Caucus Season

A Feast for “Political Junkies”

Moderators: Jay Russell and Nancy Mihevc

Thursdays 9:30-11:30

Smith College Campus Center, Room 102

By the time of this seminar's first meeting next year on Thursday, February 27th, the Iowa caucuses (Feb. 3rd), New Hampshire primary (Feb. 11th), and Nevada caucuses (Feb. 22) will have been decided, and we will know the results from South Carolina (Feb. 29th) and Super Tuesday primaries (Mar. 3rd) before the second meeting. How will the cast of candidates have changed from now, will the leaders in the polls now still be leading then, will new contenders have emerged, will the issues dominating the campaigns now still be the major issues v days from now? When the seminar concludes in May, will the Democratic nomination be all wrapped up or will that battle not be determined until the party convention in Milwaukee in mid-July?

The moderators expect the seminar to provide members **objective and non-partisan** analyses and discussion of topics including aspects of the primary and caucus processes, including “open” vs “closed” contests, states’ jockeying for early primary/caucus dates, how voters make decisions in caucuses and primary elections, etc.; the candidates (their biographies, qualifications and experience, their positions on the issues and how those positions may have changed over time, their potential general election strengths and weaknesses, etc.); issues being discussed (or ignored) by the candidates; profiles of likely swing states; aspects of the political process (e.g., the role and impact of news, opinion and social media, campaign tactics, polling, campaign finance, etc.) that shape the conduct and perhaps determine the outcome of the campaign; and the structure and rules of the party conventions.

Each seminar member will give a 20-25 minute presentation on a topic related to the pre-general election campaign . Each week there will be two presentations followed by a roundtable discussion of campaign developments and members' responses to survey questions circulated by the moderators prior to each session.

Suggested Readings: *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America* by John Sides, et al. and/or *Primary Politics* by Elaine C Kamarck. Other resources will be provided by the moderators with their “Welcome to the Seminar” letter.