

POLITICS AS USUAL

INTRODUCTION

Politics as Usual is a family card game for two to six players. Each player takes on the role of a politician on the campaign trail for the US presidency.

The object of the game is to play campaign cards and trade favors to win as many campaign issues as possible. The player who has the most votes at the end of the game wins the election.

COMPONENTS

POLITICS AS USUAL INCLUDES:

One eight-page rules book

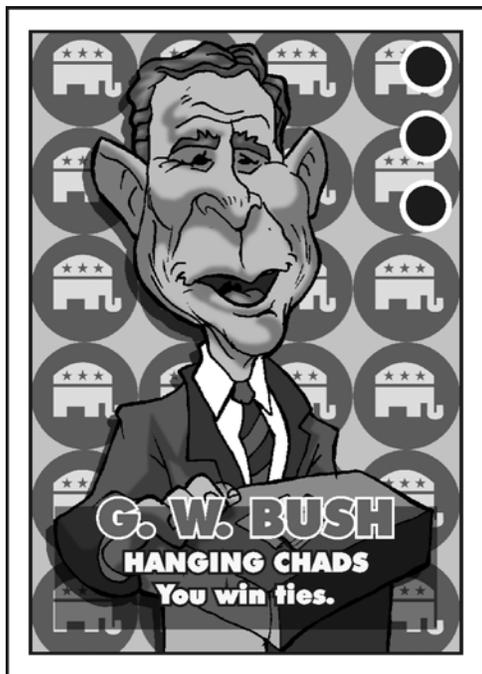
One deck of 108 playing cards

18 Favor tokens

SETTING UP THE GAME

SEPARATE THE DECKS

The game contains 108 playing cards composed of three decks. There are eight Candidate cards, 16 Issue cards, and 84 Momentum cards. Separate the cards into three piles based upon their respective types.



CANDIDATE CARDS

Each player selects a Candidate card from those provided. Each Candidate card gives the player a special power that is unique to that Candidate. Each Candidate also begins the game with a specific number of favor tokens. Players place their respective Candidate cards face-up in front of themselves, such that each player can see which player controls each Candidate. Players may wish to familiarize themselves with the Candidates' respective powers before play begins.

The Candidate card to the left is G.W. Bush. The circles in the upper-right corner denote that he begins with three Favors. His special power is that he wins ties.



ISSUE CARDS

Shuffle the Issue cards and set them in a stack in the center of the playing area, face-down. Remove the top four cards and put them back in the game box. No one should know which Issues were removed from the deck.

Each Issue card has a name, a special effect, a Vote value (represented by yellow check-marks for positive votes, or red X's for negative votes), and a Sidestep value in a green arrow.

For the Issue card at left, the Vote value is four, and the Sidestep value is one.

The Vote value is a measure of how important the card is to win. Vote values range from negative three to positive five.

CAMPAIGN CARDS

Shuffle the Campaign cards and deal each player seven. The remaining Campaign cards are placed in a pile near the center of the playing surface, face-down.

Winning Issue cards is necessary to win the game. Campaign cards are played to win Issue cards, to maximize one's chances of winning, one must master play of Campaign cards.

Players begin with seven Campaign cards, and gain an additional two or three at the end of every Round.

Good players manage how many cards they play to ensure they have enough to compete for higher value Issues as the game progresses. Less experienced players play too many cards in one Round, leaving them vulnerable in subsequent Rounds.

If you are going to commit to playing most of your cards in a Round to win an Issue, you can expect to not be competitive for the next two or three Rounds while you rebuild your hand.

If you are not sure you can win an Issue, you are probably better off holding onto your cards. This way, you build up your hand until you are sure you can win an Issue on a subsequent Round. It is no good to burn through your hand trying to win a high-value Issue unless you actually win it.

You may wish to trade Favor tokens (see below) to other players to entice them to play cards to help you win an Issue, or you may offer to play some of your cards to help one (or more) of your opponents in exchange for some of their Favor tokens. This latter strategy allows you to gain Votes even when you can't win the current Issue.

There are three types of Campaign cards: Momentum, Slander, and Edge.



MOMENTUM CARDS (BLUE BANDS)

Momentum Cards may be played face-up in front of any Candidate. The total of the Polling numbers on the Momentum cards played for a Candidate during the current Issue are added together. At the end of the round, the player with the highest Polling amount wins that Issue card.

Each Momentum Card also has a special effect. A Momentum card may be played for its Polling value or its special power, never for both.

This Momentum card has a polling value of two denoted by the number in top right corner.

SLANDER CARDS (RED BANDS)

Slander cards are played against opponents to keep them from winning an issue. You may even play a Slander card on yourself, if the card does not forbid it.

EDGE CARDS (GREEN BANDS)

Edge cards are powerful and beneficial. They are played to reduce the effect of opponents' Slander cards or to give the player a temporary special power.

FAVOR TOKENS

Each Candidate begins the game with a number of Favor tokens. These tokens can be traded between players at any time, for any reason.

Tokens a Candidate begins the game with are placed on the Candidate's card. Tokens acquired during play are placed below the Candidate's card in each player's respective Vote stack. This placement is important to record the source of each Favor token.



Tokens acquired from other players count as Votes, each token behaving essentially like an Issue card with a Vote value of one.

The tokens that Candidates begin the game with do not count as Votes. Either type can be traded, but only Favors received from another player count for Votes at the end of the game.

The Favor Tokens are red, white, and blue. The colors have absolutely no effect on game play.

WHO GOES FIRST

Shuffle the Campaign deck. Choose a player to go first by any means desired. Dueling pistols, rock-paper-scissors, die rolls, and arm wrestling are all good methods. Place the Issue deck in front of that player.

PLAYING THE GAME

The game is played in Rounds. Each Round is a contest for one Issue worth a specified number of Votes. These Votes count toward victory in the election (and the game).

THE SPEAKER

The Speaker is the player currently in possession of the Issue deck. The Speaker acts first during a Round, and has the exclusive option of Sidestepping Issues. At the conclusion of a Round, the Speaker deals additional Campaign cards, and passes the Issue deck (and Speakership) to the player to his or her left.

The player who goes first moves the Issue stack close to his or her Candidate card. This player is “The Speaker” for the first Issue.

The Speaker raises the current Issue by turning over the top card and reading the Issue’s name, Vote value, and special effect out loud.

The Speaker then decides whether or not to Sidestep the current Issue. If the Speaker declines to Sidestep the Issue, the Issue card’s special rule takes effect. Play now begins, with the Speaker taking his or her turn first.

SIDESTEPPING ISSUES

Each Issue card has a Sidestep value. The Sidestep value is the number of cards the Speaker must discard if he or she chooses to bypass the Issue.

To Sidestep the issue, the Speaker discards the specified cards, then moves the Sidestepped Issue to the bottom of the deck, face-down. The Speaker then turns over the next Issue card and continues play. If an Issue is Sidestepped, its special effect is ignored.

The decision to Sidestep must be made as soon as the Issue card is turned face-up. An Issue can’t be Sidestepped after the Speaker plays a card or passes.

The Speaker can Sidestep as many Issues as he or she desires and can pay for.

TAKING A TURN

During his or her turn, a player may play a Campaign card from his or her hand or pass. If the player plays a card, a chance to React to the card is offered to the other players. (Technically, each player is given an opportunity to React in clockwise order around the table. In normal play, players React in the order of who shouts first.)

Play passes clockwise, allowing each player a turn to play one Campaign card (Momentum, Slander, or Edge) from his or her hand to boost or reduce any candidate's chances to win the current Issue. Each card's effect is printed on it.

When the effect of a Campaign card is resolved, it is discarded. Some Campaign cards have an immediate effect, while some have an effect that lasts until the end of the current Round.

Momentum cards played for their Polling points are placed face-up in front of a candidate, and their values are added to that Candidate's Polling total. These cards stay face-up in play until the end of the Round. Most other card plays have an instant effect, and are discarded immediately after play. Play passes from one player to the next, as many times as necessary, until all players choose not to play anymore Campaign cards. Choosing not to play a Campaign card is indicated by saying "pass." Once all players pass consecutively, the contest for the Issue card is over. The player who has the highest total Polling points is the winner of the current Issue, and takes the Issue card into his or her possession. See "Resolving Ties," below.

REACTION

A Reaction is a card play that takes place during another player's turn. Unless a card specifies that it can be played at a particular time, or that it Cancels or Redirects a card, it may only be played on your turn. Such a card may not be played as a Reaction. Cards played to Cancel or Redirect another card may be played as a Reaction.

CANCELING

Some cards can Cancel other cards. A card already in play may be Canceled. Such a card is discarded with no further effect on play. A card may also be Canceled while it is being played. Canceling such a card prevents the Canceled card from having any effect whatsoever. Both cards are placed in the discard pile.

If a card was Canceled as it was being played, the player of the Canceled card is still considered to have played a card. The Canceled card would still count as the card played for the player's turn. To Cancel a card as it is being played, a player plays the Canceling card as a Reaction.

REDIRECTION

Some cards Redirect the most recent card played. Usually, these cards can only Redirect a card of a particular type. Redirection allows the player of the Redirecting card to take possession of the card to be Redirected, and immediately play it on a target of the Redirector's choosing.

A card played to Redirect another is played as a Reaction.

FREEZING CARDS

Some text on the cards requires a player to Freeze some of his or her cards. A player cannot use Frozen cards for the remainder of the current Issue.

Frozen cards are placed face-down on the table on the left side of their respective owner's Candidate card. The cards are picked up and placed back into their respective owners' hands at the conclusion of an Issue.

CANDIDATE SPECIAL POWERS

Every Candidate has a special power or ability listed on his or her Candidate card. These abilities may be used at any time, even during another player's turn.

WINNING AN ISSUE

When a player wins an Issue, players must undertake the following steps, in the following order.

The winning player takes the current Issue and places it in his or her Vote stack.

Gather up all Campaign cards played during this Round and place them in the discard pile.

All Frozen cards are returned to their respective owners' hands.

The Speaker deals out Campaign cards for the next Round. All players are dealt two cards. The Speaker deals an extra card to the player who won the Issue.

The Issue pile is moved to the player to the Speaker's left, and that player becomes the Speaker for the next Issue. A new Round begins.

RESOLVING TIES

In the event of a tie, the winner is determined from the players who are tied for the lead. The winner is the player who is both tied for the lead and closest to the Issue stack, starting with the Speaker, and moving clockwise around the table. If George W. Bush is controlled by one of the players tied for the lead, GWB's owner wins. (George W. Bush's special ability is that he wins all ties.)

To recap, only players tied for the lead can win. From the tied players, G.W. Bush's owner wins, then the Speaker, then the player to the Speaker's left, then the player to *that* player's left, etc.

END OF GAME

When the contest over the last Issue card is complete, the game ends. Each player totals the Votes of all Issue cards, plus tokens they have accumulated during the campaign. The player with the highest total wins the game. G. W. Bush wins if tied for the lead.

ADVANCED RULES

POLITICAL PARTIES

Each Candidate belongs to one of three Political Parties (Democrat, Independent, or Republican). Each of these parties is represented by a particular colored symbol. The Democrats are represented by a blue donkey, the Independents are represented by a green star, and the Republicans are represented by a red elephant.

If a Momentum card is played in front of a Candidate containing the symbol of that Candidate's party, increase the Momentum card's Polling point value by two.

If an Issue card enters play with a political party symbol, all players whose Candidates belong to the same party draw two Momentum cards.

TWO PLAYER GAME

Politics as Usual relies heavily on the unique special powers and political favors of each candidate to create flavor and balance. In a heads-up contest, there is no practical mechanism for the trading of Favors, making them worthless. This has a dramatic and negative impact on play balance. However, the game can be played with only two players with the imposition of the following two rules. First, play is only for six Issues, not twelve. Remove ten Issues from the shuffled Issue deck at the start of the game, not just four. Second, the Favors that each player begins the game with count as Votes at the end of the game.

SAMPLE PLAY DIAGRAM



In the following diagram, the game is in full swing. These are the cards arrayed in front of one player. The top-most card is the current Issue, so this player must be the current Round's Speaker.

Closer to the player, we find all of the Momentum cards he or she has in play. These two add up to a Polling Point total of ten. A player may play Momentum cards in front on any player, to help that player win the current Issue card.

The next row closer to the player holds the player's Candidate card. Notice the four Favor tokens on the Candidate card. This player has not given any of his initial Favors. The stack of three cards to the left of the Candidate are Frozen cards from the player's hand.

Finally, we find the Issues this player has won. The player has also earned two Favor tokens from other players, so he has a Vote total of seven (One for Immigration, four for War on Terror, and two Favor tokens earned from other players).

OPTIONAL RULES

No-NAME CANDIDATE

A player may wish to forego using one of the Candidate cards and instead choose to run as a No-Name Candidate. The No-Name Candidate player declares his or her Political Party (Republican, Democrat, or Independent) and begins the game with three Favors. Each Favor token acquired from another player counts as two Votes at the end of the game.

LANDSLIDE RULE

If any player has 10 more Votes than the next closest Candidate, that player immediately wins.

SUPPORT

You may direct all rules questions and comments to: oss_rules@yahoo.com

You may also find new candidates, rule suggestions, and player aid sheets for your enjoyment at our website: www.ossgames.com

CREDITS

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Disclaimer: *Politics as Usual* is a parody. All events, persons, and issues presented are done so for satirical content. Any similarities are purely coincidental.

This fine game was brought to you by the wonderful folks at:

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