

# Political Parties and Elections

## Political Science 311

### Fall 2013

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#### **Books:**

*Party Politics in America*, 15th Edition by Marjorie Hershey  
*The Logic of Collective Action*, by Mancur Olson  
*An Economic Theory of Democracy*, by Anthony Downs  
*Partisan Hearts and Minds*, by Donald Green, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler

#### **Introduction**

Political parties are key institutions in the political process in the United States and other democracies. They are present in one form or another in every forum of democratic politics. In the United States, political parties appear in three forms:

- (1) the legally recognized and regulated organizations under political party names that have appeared in the localities, the states, and the nation;
- (2) the coalitions of voters who are united in professing loyalty to the same party; and
- (3) the teams of politicians who organize under the same label to contest and hold public office.

Over the course of this class, we will analyze the role and behavior of political parties in the United States. We will study how voters form their party attachments, how political parties play a role in government, and the role of political parties in American elections.

Through this course we will also discuss the role of interest groups in American democracy, as well as how they interact with political parties in the political and policy-making process.

#### **Course Rules**

**The Syllabus:** READ THE SYLLABUS! I am always happy to answer questions regarding either the material or the class structure, but please read the syllabus first to determine if your question is already answered.

**Attendance:** I will take attendance in the course. Students may miss up to two classes over this course and face no penalty. I will subtract points from a student's participation grade for every class missed beyond two.

**Etiquette:** As a courtesy to me and other students, please refrain from making any unnecessary noise during class. This includes talking to other students and making calls on cell phones. If you arrive late to class, please enter and take your seat as quietly as possible to avoid disturbing other students.

### **Academic Dishonesty:**

All students in attendance at the University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing or intentional help or attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student.

The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.

### **Assignments and Exams**

**Political news of the day:** For each class session, specific students will be tasked with finding a copy of a news story dealing with contemporary elections. This can be about presidential politics, a U.S. Senate or House election, state-level election, or local election. You have broad discretion regarding the specific topic – it can be about polling data, candidate platforms, scandals or potential scandals, policy debates, demography and politics, or any other issue relating to contemporary electoral politics. If the story is about a specific public policy, discuss how that policy may influence election outcomes.

I request that you bring news stories rather than opinion pieces or editorials. Please focus on American politics for these assignments – if you use a story that examines foreign politics, you must explain how this story could influence American electoral politics.

On days when you are presenting, you must bring a copy of the news story, as well as write at least two paragraphs summarizing the story. You will also be asked to briefly explain to the class what your article was about and how it relates to the topic of this class.

I request that you try to find stories that relate to the specific topic we are covering in class. I recognize that this may not always be possible.

There are multiple online sources for political news. Any of the below sources will be fine, though you may use others:

*Birmingham News:* <http://www.al.com/birminghamnews/>

CNN: <http://www.cnn.com/>

Fox News: <http://www.foxnews.com/>

MSNBC: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/>

Drudge Report: <http://drudgereport.com/>

*The Washington Post:* <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>

## Pop Quizzes

I will not have regularly scheduled quizzes in this course, but I reserve the right to hold a pop quiz in class at any time throughout the semester. Pop quizzes are a useful way to guarantee students complete their assigned readings.

## Midterm and Final Exam

About halfway through the course you will take a midterm exam covering all of the material we have considered up to that point.

At the end of the course you will take a final exam that will cover all of our readings in the second half of the course.

Both will be multiple choice exams. I will provide a study guide several days before we hold the exam.

## Research Paper

The research paper is to be an original paper of no more than 10 pages in length that analyzes the electoral setting and prospects for a 2012 presidential candidate in one of the 49 American states **other than Alabama**. You are to play the role of a campaign advisor for the 2016 presidential aspirant of your choice in the state of your choice **other than Alabama**. At this point, it we have no idea who the two candidates from the major party will be, so you can choose any plausible candidate from either major party or a third party. I advise you to choose someone that has a realistic chance to secure his or her party's nomination.

Your specific job for now is to prepare a briefing paper of no more than 15 pages that analyzes your candidate's prospects in that state in the contest for the November 2016 general election. This requires you to become an expert on contemporary party and electoral politics in the state you have selected and to know something about your candidate and his or her characteristics as well.

As you work on this project, begin from the assumption that your candidate has already won the party's nomination and can begin to focus on the general election. Presidential elections are won by gaining a **majority** of the fifty states' and District of Columbia's electoral votes, which in turn are accumulated by winning a **plurality** of the popular vote state by state. This requires a fifty-state electoral strategy, and you are expected by your candidate to provide the analysis that will be the foundation of such a strategy for your state. You should analyze your candidate's prospects for winning a plurality in the state's general election given its recent voting history, the characteristics of the state's voters, the strength of the major party organizations, and the possibilities for third parties – all bearing in mind your candidate's strengths and weaknesses in the state. Based on that analysis, you are to recommend what share of limited campaign resources should be devoted to winning this state relative to other states where resources might be invested.

The best papers will demonstrate: (1) understanding of key concepts and election and party characteristics from the course's required readings and lectures; (2) knowledge of the state's party/electoral politics based on your own primary and secondary research; (3) appreciation for how the nature of your state affects your candidate's prospects and what the campaign can do to deal with them; and (4) an ability to address these topics thoughtfully and cogently in your report.

The essays are expected to be free of spelling and grammatical errors (use your spell- and grammar-checks!) and well written; the quality of the writing will affect the paper's grade. Students who have selected the same state are welcome to work together in doing the basic research on their state, but **the final draft must be entirely their own work** (see the section on Academic Honesty above). Papers on the same state will be compared to make sure they were written independently of one another.

Your paper should contain information on the following important aspects of a state, its parties and their supporters:

- background and recent history of the state's electoral and party politics.
- level of electoral competition between the major parties and factionalism within the party of your candidate (see the discussion of the Ranney Index in your textbook to learn more about this).
- strength of state and local party organizations and what role they can play in the nomination and general election phases of the campaign.
- what the limits are for your state on candidate spending and how the nature of the state's media markets may affect spending needs and decisions. What are the state's major newspapers? Which candidates did they endorse in the last election?
- how the electoral college works, especially with reference to that state.
- distribution of party identifiers in the state and their likely turnout.

There are a number of sources where you can find information regarding these issues. One very useful source is the *The Almanac of American Politics*. A new edition of this book is released every election year, and it provides a detailed description of every state's political landscape.

CNN also provides exit polls for each state from the most recent presidential election: <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/president/>. This may be a good place to start to see the state's distribution of voters, as well as how different demographic groups within your state voted.

At the end of the course each student will give a brief presentation on his or her state, as well as recommendations regarding how to campaign in that state.

### **Extra Credit**

For this course, you may earn extra credit for doing a research summary of recent research in political science published by a peer-reviewed scholarly journal. You can earn **a one percentage point increase in your final grade for each review, with a maximum of five points**. The

article must have been published within the last five years and specifically examine American politics.

In your review I want you to provide a brief summary of the research question, the method used the test the question (was it quantitative or qualitative?), the findings, and any critiques you may have of the research. Each paper should be between **four and six pages, double spaced, with a 10-12 point font.**

Again, you must use an article peer-reviewed scholarly article, and the research must focus on American politics. I recommend any of the following journals.

*The Journal of Politics; American Political Science Review; American Journal of Political Science; American Politics Research; Political Research Quarterly; Party Politics.*

They are available in hard copy form from your library or electronically through the library website.

### **Grading:**

Your final grade in this course will be determined by your performance on the following:

Participation (including “news of the day”): 20 percent

Midterm Exam: 25 percent

Final Exam: 25 percent

Research Paper: 30 percent

### **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990**

The American with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires that the university make reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities as defined in the act. Students who feel they need assistance under the ADA guidelines should approach the instructor to discuss such consideration.

### **Course Schedule**

Please note that this is not set in stone and I reserve the right to change our schedule or add and subtract readings as the course progresses. I will try to give you a heads up several days in advance if I make a major change.

August 21: First day of class. No readings.

#### **Part 1: Foundations and Political Parties as Organizations**

August 23: Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 1: “What are political parties?”

August 26: Hershey, Chapter 2: “The American Two-Party System.”

August 28: Maurice Duverger, "Factors in a Two-Party and Multiparty System," in *Party Politics and Pressure Groups*  
<http://janda.org/c24/Readings/Duverger/Duverger.htm>

August 30: Hershey, Chapter 3: “The State and Local Party Organizations”

September 2: Labor Day (no class)

September 4: Hershey, Chapter 4: “The Parties’ National Organizations”

## **Part 2: Party Identification and the Party in the Electorate**

September 6: Hershey, Chapter 6: “Party Identification”

September 9: Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Chapter 3, “The Basic Logic of Voting”

September 11: Downs Chapter 7, “The Development of Political Ideology as Means of Getting Votes”

September 13: Downs, Chapter 8: “The Statics and Dynamics of Party Identification”

September 16: Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, *Partisan Hearts and Minds*, Chapter 2: “Partisan Groups as Objects of Identification.

September 18: Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, Chapter 3: “A Closer Look at Partisan Stability”

September 20: Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, Chapter 8: “How Partisan Attachments Structure Politics”

September 23: Hershey, Chapter 5: “Party Activists”

Sept. 25 & 27: Hershey, Chapter 7: “Party Coalitions and Party Change

\*\*\*\*\* Paper Topics Due September 25<sup>th</sup> \*\*\*\*\*

## **Part 3: Elections and Political Parties**

September 29: Hershey, Chapter 9: “How Parties Choose Candidates”

October 2: Hershey, Chapter 10: “Choosing the Presidential Nominee”

Oct. 4 & 7th: Hershey, Chapter 11: “The General Election”

October 9: Hershey, Chapter 12: “Financing the Campaign”

October 11: Cherie D. Maestas, et. al. 2006. “When to Risk It? Institutions, Ambitious, and the Decision to Run for the U.S. House.” *American Political Science Review*. 100(2). This reading is available online through the UA library. Visit JSTOR.

October 14: No reading. Video, “So you want to run for office.”

October 16: \*\*\*\*\* MIDTERM EXAM \*\*\*\*\*

October 18: No class, the professor is presenting at an out-of-state conference

#### **Part 4: Interest Groups and the Political Process**

October 21: James Madison, Federalist 10, <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm>

Daniel Tichenor and Richard A. Harris. 2002. "Organized Interests and American Political Development." *Political Science Quarterly*. 117(4). This reading is available online through the UA library. Visit JSTOR.

Oct. 23 & 25: Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, Chapter 1 "A Theory of Groups and Organizations."

October 28: Olson, Chapter 2: "Group Size and Group Behavior."

#### **Part 5: The Party in Government**

Oct. 30 & Nov. 4: Hershey, Chapter 13, "Parties in Congress and State Legislatures"

November 6: David Mayhew, *Divided We Govern* (excerpt to be distributed)

November 8: Edmund Burke, Speech at Bristol, 1774  
<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch13s7.html>

November 11: Federal Farmer #7  
<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch13s22.html>

November 13: James Madison, Federalist #57

Nov. 15 & 18: Hershey, Chapter 14, "The Party in the Executive and the Courts"

November 18: Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, excerpt to be distributed.

#### **Part 6: Are the Parties Polarized?**

November 20: Hershey, Chapter 15, "The Semi-Responsible Parties"

November 22: Morris P. Fiorina and Samuel J. Abrams. 2008. "Political Polarization in the American Public." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 11. This reading is available online through the UA library. Visit JSTOR.

November 25: Alan I. Abramowitz and Kyle L. Saunders. 2008. "Is Polarization a Myth?" *The Journal of Politics*. 70(2). This reading is available online through the UA library. Visit JSTOR.

December 2: Bill Bishop, "The Schism in U.S. Politics Begins at Home." *Austin-American Statesman*.  
<http://mo.statesman.com/specialreports/content/specialreports/greatdivide/0404divide.html>

December 4: Hershey, Chapter 16, "The Place of Parties in American Politics."

December 6: Wrap and review.

\*\*\*\*\* Research Paper Due on Last Day of Class \*\*\*\*\*

**Final Exam**