

AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

PSCI 344-001

Fall 2012

2:00-3:15 PM MW

SS 134

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Office hours: 2-4 T; 3:30-4:30 W and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of the history, function and leadership of political parties and the role they play in the operation of national, state, and local governments in the United States and a study of the role of group politics and voting behavior in the American political process.

This course is designed to provide an understanding of the origins, development, and contemporary function of the major political parties in the United States as well as the continuing evolution of the American electoral process.

Therefore, this course is organized around two broad themes. The first is the place of political parties in democratic governance. Here we ask why parties exist and explore the defining characteristics of parties relative to other political organizations. We also study the history of US political parties and party eras, and the relationship between electoral rules and party systems. The second theme is parties in elections. Here we study the mechanics of American electoral processes and political behavior. Topics considered here include the relationship between parties and political participation, voter choice, and candidate and party electoral strategies.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

For students to demonstrate an understanding of the political parties and be able to critically think, speak, and write about electoral politics. Upon completion of this course students should be able to:

1. Understand the origins of the American political parties and party systems.
2. Identify characteristics and functions of political party organizations.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the role played by the party in government.
4. Describe the electoral coalitions of the two major parties and how they appeal to a variety of groups of voters.
5. Understand voter behavior in the primary and general election.
6. Demonstrate understanding about the current state of party polarization in the American political system.
7. Apply knowledge about political parties and elections in real-world discussions of contemporary political affairs.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

The following book is required for the course. Please make sure that you get the proper edition. I have included the ISBN number in case you would like to purchase the book online.

Schaffner, Brian F. 2011. *Politics, Parties, and Elections in America* (7th edition). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning (ISBN: 978-0-49589-916-7).

Jacobson, Gary C. 2013. *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (8th edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson (ISBN: 978-0-205-25176-6).

Additional readings may be supplied on the web or in class.

CLASSROOM CIVILITY

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment which is conducive to learning. In order to assure that all students have an opportunity to gain from time spent in class, unless otherwise approved by the instructor, students are prohibited from using electronic devices, challenging instructor's authority, eating or drinking in class, coming in late or leaving early, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in, minimally, a request to leave class. No student should expect to raise his or her hand more than three times during any class period. This policy is to ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate. To this effect, no student will be allowed to "dominate" any class period.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Please arrive at class on time and mute (or switch off) cell phones, pagers, and alarms during class. You may only use the laptop to take notes in a word processing program. No surfing or instant messages are allowed. Any student who uses the laptop for any purpose other than taking notes will not be allowed to use that laptop in my class for the rest of the term.

Tape recorders, camera and video phones, and all other visual and auditory recording or retention devices, are strictly prohibited in this class. Please do not bring or use those devices.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism occurs when a student purposefully or unintentionally takes information directly from a source without proper citation. For example, forgetting to cite an author and page number with a quote is plagiarism, as is direct copying and pasting from a website. Plagiarism will result in an F for the course and notification to the Dean of Students. Plagiarism is often a result of improper citation and/or acknowledgement of sources; therefore, we will be going over plagiarism in class so you can avoid common pitfalls (and an F!). If a student needs additional assistance, please consult me during my office hours.

CLASS FORMAT

Class sessions will consist of a mix of lecture, full-class and small-group discussion, and in-class exercises and simulations. In order to participate fully in each class session and to get the most out of the course that you can, you should:

1. Read the assigned materials before class,
2. Attend class ready to engage the material,
3. Participate in classroom discussions and activities, and
4. Read the assigned materials again after class.

NEWSPAPER AND WEB SOURCE

If you want to use the Internet to keep abreast of what's happening in politics, I recommend the following sites:

Media

<http://www.cnn.com>
<http://www.foxnews.com>
<http://www.nytimes.com>
<http://www.washingtonpost.com>
<http://www.latimes.com>

Advertising

<http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/index.php>
<http://polisci.wisc.edu/tvadvertising/Index.htm>

Campaign Spending

<http://www.fec.gov>
<http://www.opensecrets.com>
<http://www.followthemoney.org>
<http://www.opensecrets.org>
<http://www.fecinfo.com>
<http://www.brook.edu/campaignfinance>

Election Data

<http://uselectionatlas.org>
http://www.umich.edu/_nes/index.htm
<http://www.tlc.state.tx.us/redist/redist.htm>

Parties

<http://www.democrats.org>
<http://www.rnc.org>

Texas Parties

<http://www.txdemocrats.org>
<http://www.texasgop.org>

Third Parties

<http://www.greenpartyus.org>
<http://www.lp.org>
<http://www.reformparty.org>

Polling

<http://www.pollingreport.com>
<http://www.pollster.com>

GRADING

The final grade will be determined on the following basis:

Attendance/Participation	10%
Quizzes	10%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Final Exam	20%
Research Paper	20%

Grading Scale

Excellent	A = 100-90
Good	B = 89.9-80
Average	C = 79.9-70
Below Average	D = 69.9-60
Unacceptable	F = 59.9-0

I will do my best to help students with any other needs they may have. Do not wait until the end of the semester to see assistance as that will be too late to make a difference. In all cases, it is necessary for the student to discuss their concerns with me as soon as possible after the concern develops. There is little that can be done at the end of the semester to compensate for earlier difficulties.

Note: I am not responsible for your scholarships, academic eligibility in extracurricular activities, or graduation eligibility. Do not come to me pleading that you “need” or “have to” get a certain grade. The grade YOU earn is the grade you will get. Under no circumstance will I arbitrarily change a grade, so do not ask. NO exceptions! Also, there will be NO extra project for this class regardless of the situation. Also, I am not allowed to dispense or discuss grades over the phone or via email, but grades will be posted on the class web.

ATTENDANCE

“Eighty five percent of success is merely showing up.” — Woody Allen —

Attendance is mandatory. Class attendance is crucial to your understanding of the concepts, issues, processes and not all of them will be covered in the assigned texts. Attendance is part of the course experience the same as lectures, texts, exams, and other course elements. Attending class can only help your grade so I strongly suggest you show up to class on a regular basis.

Attendance is defined as being on time and being mentally as well as physically present. Students sleeping, talking, text messaging or otherwise not paying attention in class will be marked absent. Students may occasionally need to arrive a bit late or leave a bit early. This is not a problem. However students abusing this through a large number of late arrivals or early departures will have these counted as absences.

Class attendance counts 10% toward your final grade. Roll will be taken regularly. Repeated absence will be detrimental to your final grade, as will repeated tardiness, which is disruptive to your classmates. All excused (illness, University business) absences require documentation to verify the excuse. Documentation should be turned in on the final day of class. You are

responsible for all work assigned for any class regardless of the number of absences, whether excused or unexcused. Ask your classmates for notes and other important information you miss if absent. Please do not call or email me regarding absences. Your written documentation will suffice.

QUIZZES

I will give random in-class quizzes in order to gauge student understanding and to promote student participation during lecture. In order to take a quiz, students are responsible for bringing scantron sheets to all classes. Questions for the quizzes will come primarily from the assigned readings so it is important to read assigned materials before class. No makeup quizzes will be given but I will drop one quiz with the lowest scores in calculating overall quiz scores. Quizzes count 10% toward your final grade.

EXAMINATIONS

There will be three exams (two midterms and a final). The exams will be primarily objective: multiple choice, true-false, or matching. The exams will cover material from the assigned readings, lectures, and class discussion. The exams will always include material from the readings that have not been discussed in lectures. Each exam is comprised of 33 (or 40) multiple choice questions worth 100 points each. Bring scantrons and pencils. Store all materials beneath your seat during the exam. Once the first exam is turned in, no more exams will be distributed so show up on time.

Students must take the final exam at the date and time scheduled. The final exam is the cumulative exam that covers from the first to the last chapter discussed in this course. However, emphasis will be placed on the material covered following the second midterm.

Exams are the property of the instructor and will not be returned to the student. However, copies of each exam will be available in my office and for review at any appropriate time. Students are encouraged to review their exams after they have been graded. Such reviews should be soon after each exam. After each exam full grade information will be posted on the class web. This information will be updated after each exam and immediately before the final exam period. It is each student's responsibility to check this grade information after each exam and notify the instructor if they believe it contains any errors. Errors can be corrected if brought to the instructor's attention promptly. Do not wait weeks or until the end of the semester to discover or mention errors. By then it is probably too late.

MAKEUP EXAMS

I expect that students will take exams on the day that they are given. All students who missed any exam before the final will be required to take the makeup exam for that particular exam on December 5. Any absence on an exam day requires written documentation (doctor's note, sanctioned school function, etc) and I reserve the right not to permit you to take a makeup. If an exam is missed, you must contact the instructor within three days. It is your responsibility to provide me with documentation noting your absence and to notify me that you need to take a makeup exam on the day reserved (December 5). If you have an excuse that is documented and have been verified by me and do miss the exam, all make up exams will be held on the last day of class (December 5) in this classroom during the scheduled class time. In addition, students

will not be permitted to make up more than one exam on this day. If you fail to make up a missed exam after December 5 you will receive a zero on the exam. No makeup exam will be given for the final.

RESEARCH PAPER

A major portion of this class will be the completion of a research paper focusing on **partisan polarization**. This research paper requires students to develop analytic arguments, to provide empirical evidence, and to develop writing skills. You should check with me on the subject of your paper before writing it in order to make sure it will fit the requirements. I will try to write comments on your research proposal and research paper and return them to you. A late paper (including the research proposal) will be penalized. Any late paper will be docked a complete grade (e.g. a B paper will receive a C), for each day the research proposal or paper is late. The research proposal should be one page in length and due by 4 pm, Tuesday, October 16. A research paper should be 9-10 pages in length (A paper should not exceed 11 pages) and it is due by 4 pm, Tuesday, November 27.

Research paper will be graded based on the following criteria:

- Overall soundness of argument
- Quality of research
- Writing: organization, grammar, word choice, writing style
- Presentation and formatting: margins, font, page numbers, bibliography

A handout with details on the research paper will be distributed later.

STUDENT CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE

I expect all students to maintain the highest level of personal responsibility and academic honesty which is discussed in Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedures A13.12 Academic Honesty. “Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another and passing them off as one’s own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material.”

Academic dishonesty affects all individuals at the University and accordingly will not be tolerated. For this class, academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic work. Any and all instances of academic dishonesty will be referred to the appropriate offices on campus and may result in significant penalties.

Faculty have the authority to request students who exhibit inappropriate behavior to leave the class and may refer serious offenses to the University Police Department and/or the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. Failure to comply with the commonsensical directions listed above may result in a verbal request to cease inappropriate behavior, your immediate removal from the class and/or a review by an appropriate university disciplinary agency. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this

legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library Room 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu

INSTRUCTOR-STUDENT COMMUNICATION: OFFICE HOURS AND EMAIL

The best way to contact me is to stop by my office during office hours or to schedule an appointment. Outside of class email is also the dominant means of communication between the instructor and students. The instructor can usually be reached by email with little difficulty. Due to the vast increase in spam email, any email sent to me MUST include a subject line such as "PSCI 344-001" identifying it as class related. Without such a subject line, it is likely to be deleted without being read.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is the anticipated course schedule, but it may be subject to minor revisions as the semester progresses. Additional readings are marked with an asterisk (*).

Aug. 27

Introduction and Organizational Meeting

Aug. 29 & Sep. 5

Overview: Principles of Politics

Lowi. Principles of Politics

Sep. 3

Labor Day

Sep. 10 & 12

Parties, Politics, and Elections

Schaffner Ch. 1

* Aldrich. Why Parties Form. *Why Parties?*

* Maisel. American Political Parties: Still Central to a Functioning Democracy?

American Political Parties: Decline or Resurgence?

* Stone & Pietryka. Party, Constituency, and Representation in Congress. *The State of the Parties*

Sep. 17 & 19

The American Two Party System

Schaffner Chs. 2 & 3

* Green, Donald, Palmquist & Schickler. Party Realignment in the American South.

Partisan Hearts and Minds

Sep. 24 & 26

Party Organization

Schaffner Ch. 4

* Damore & Hansford. The Allocation of Party Controlled Campaign Resources in the House of Representatives, 1989-1996. *PRQ*

* Coleman. Party Organizational Strength and Public Support for Parties. *AJPS*

Oct. 1

Exam #1

Oct. 3 & 8

Nominations

Schaffner Chs. 5 & 6

* Johnson, Petersheim & Wasson. Divisive Primaries and Incumbent General Election Performance: Prospects and Costs in U.S. House Races. *APR*

* Norrander. The Attrition Game: Initial Resources, Initial Contests and the Exit of Candidates During the US Presidential Primary Season. *BJPS*

Oct. 10 & 15

General Elections

Schaffner Ch. 8; Jacobson Chs. 5 & 6

(Simulation: The Redistricting Game)

* Liscio, Stonecash & Brewer. Unintended Consequences: Republican Strategy and Wining and Losing Voters. *The State of the Parties*

* Abramowitz. Terrorism, Gay Marriage, and Inc incumbency: Explaining the Republican Victory in the 2004 Presidential Election. *The Forum*

Oct. 17, 22 & 24

Campaigns and Campaign Finance

Schaffner Ch. 8; Jacobson Ch. 4

Film: *Last Man Standing: Politics, Texas Style*

(Film questions will be distributed in class)

* Meirowitz. Electoral Contests, Incumbency Advantages, and Campaign Finance. *JOP*

* Erikson & Palfrey. Equilibria in Campaign Spending Games: Theory and Data. *APSR*

Oct. 29

Incumbency Advantages

Jacobson Ch. 3

* Levitt & Wolfram. Decomposing the Sources of Incumbency Advantages in the U.S. House. *LSQ*

* Stone, Fulton, Maestas & Maisel. Incumbency Reconsidered: Prospects, Strategic Retirement, and Incumbent Quality in U.S. House Elections. *JOP*

Oct 31

Exam #2

Nov. 5 & 7

Political Participation

Schaffner Ch. 7; Jacobson Ch. 5

Sides. Campaigns & Elections Ch. 11

* Plutzer. Becoming a Habitual Voter: Inertia, Resources, and Growth in Young Adulthood. *APSR*

* Valdez. Political Participation Among Latinos in the United States: The Effect of Group Identity and Consciousness. *SSQ*

Nov. 12 & 14

Ideology, Party Identification, and Vote Choice

Schaffner Ch. 7

* Hershey. Party Identification. *Party Politics in America*

* Bartels. Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996. *AJPS*

* Erikson. The American Voter and the Economy. *PS*

Nov. 19 & 26

Legislative Parties

Jacobson Ch. 13; Schaffner Ch. 9

* Theriault. Party Polarization in the US Congress: Member Replacement and Member Adaptation. *Party Politics*

* Brady & Buckley. Governing by Coalition: Policymaking in the U.S. Congress. *The Parties Respond*

Nov. 21

Thanksgiving Holiday

Nov. 28 & Dec. 3

Polarization and the Future of American Political Parties

Schaffner Ch. 10; Jacobson Ch. 7

* Layman, Carsey & Horowitz. Party Polarization in American Politics: Characteristics, Causes, and Consequences. *ARPS*

Dec. 5

Presentation / Makeup Exam for those who missed Exam 1 or 2

Dec. 10 (Monday)

Final Exam, 1:15 p.m.—3:15 P.m.

IMPORTANT DATES

Oct. 1 Exam 1

Oct. 16 Research Proposal

Oct. 31 Exam 2

Nov. 27 Research Paper

Dec. 5 Makeup Exam for those who missed Exam 1 or 2

Dec. 10 Final Exam