

Political Parties in American Politics

POL 358, Fall 2015

Instructor: Matthew Atkinson
Office: Harrison 7
E-mail: atkinsm@muohio.edu

Class: T Th 11:30 - 12:50, Harrison 204
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10 to 11:20; Wednesday 1 to 2

Description

Political scientists are nearly unanimous in their belief that mass democracy is impossible save for parties. Parties facilitate democratic representation and accountability. This class is about party institutions and organizations, and the behavior of actors who work within party institutions and organizations. In this course, we will study how parties organize political conflict in America and how party coalitions shape public policy outputs.

Learning Objectives

- The parties are the most important mechanism of interest aggregation in American politics. Therefore, the foremost objective of this course is to develop the student's ability to critically evaluate the process of representation in democratic societies and understanding of the institutions and behaviors mediating interest representation in the United States.
- The student will be able to describe the basic features and functions of a political party and explain the process of partisan change over the course of American history.
- The student will be able to critically assess the parties' role and effectiveness in addressing problems of collective action and collective choice throughout American history.
- The student will develop an understanding of how contemporary actors work to shape the political parties' issue positions and policy priorities as well as the ability to think analytically about why some actors succeed and others fail in this effort.
- Throughout the course, small group activities and in-class discussions will encourage students to interact with each other and with the instructor. The class will be a venue for exchanging perspectives that engage critical questions of representation, marginalization, and governance.

Course Materials

- You must bring a pen and paper to each class meeting. We will have in-class exercises that involve turning in written work.
- Green, Coffey, and Cohen (eds.). 2014. *The State of the Parties*, 7th Edition. Rowman & Littlefield.
 - Make sure to buy the 7th edition. The articles in earlier editions are completely different.
- Hopkins and Sides (eds.). 2015. *Political Polarization in American Politics*. Bloomsbury.
- Additional **required** reading will be made available on the Canvas site for this class.

Grading

Final course grades will be determined by the following:

- Midterm Exam 1 (27.5 percent)
 - Tentatively scheduled for October 6.
- Midterm Exam 2 (27.5 percent)
 - Tentatively scheduled for November 10.
 - Midterm 2 will address material covered after midterm 1.
- Final Exam (30 percent)
 - Scheduled for December 8.
 - The final exam will address all material covered in the course but will emphasize material covered after midterm 2.
- Class participation (15 percent)
 - Attendance itself is not participation.
 - Points will be deducted from the participation grade for violating course policies or not obeying instructor requests.
 - The most important component of the participation grade will be participation in **in-class small group exercises** and completing the write-ups associated with those in-class exercises.
 - The instructor reserves the right to administer in-class quizzes on assigned reading and incorporate those quiz scores into the class participation grade. Quizzes will be administered if the instructor suspects students have not completed the assigned reading.

Grading Scale

A = 94-100, A- = 90-93,
B+ = 87-89, B = 84-86, B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79, C = 74-76, C- = 70-73
D+ = 67-69, D = 64-66, D- = 60-63
F = Below 60

Course Policies

- First and foremost, please be mindful that your behavior affects the learning experience of other students in the class. When you nap, surf the internet or talk in class, you are a distraction to other students and the instructor has an obligation to intervene.
 - Students are expected to be courteous and considerate of the instructor and one another. This consideration includes, but is not limited to, not engaging in activities that draw your attention away from class – including sleeping, texting, talking at inappropriate times, surfing the internet, reading, doing homework, listening to headphones, etc.
- **Attendance.** Class attendance is required.

- If you miss class due to a medical emergency or due to a University-sanctioned excused absence, you **must promptly** provide written documentation from a medical doctor or from a university administrator if you want me to excuse the absence (and excuse you from that day’s in-class exercises). Please don’t bother to contact the instructor regarding excusing an absence without the appropriate written documentation.
- Excused absences will not be granted for meetings of clubs, Greek organizations, or other extracurricular activities. So, for example, if the president summons you to the White House for a personal consultation, your absence would be understandable but nevertheless **not** excused.
- Religious observances: If a religious observance will require your absence from class during the semester, you must notify the instructor in writing within the first two weeks of class that you are requesting an excused absence due to a religious observance. The instructor reserves the right to determine whether or not the request warrants an excused absence.
- **Quizzes.** The instructor reserves the right to administer in-class quizzes on assigned course material.
- **Computers and Cell Phones**
 - **Laptops.** Students are provisionally permitted to use their computers for course-related activities. However, the instructor reserves the right to ban laptop use during lecture for **any reason**. In particular, laptop use will be banned if the stipulation that laptops are used only for course-related activities is violated. **The instructor has no interest in policing computer use, so either the entire class will have laptop use privileges or nobody will.**
 - **Cell Phones.** Students are not to access their cell phones during class – even for the purpose of taking notes.
- **Posting slides and handouts.** Power Point slides shown in lecture will not be posted online, and in order to encourage lecture attendance, in-class handouts will generally not be posted online.
- **Grade disputes.** I will not discuss grade disputes in person, via email, or on the telephone. Requests for a grade change must be made in writing within seven days of the date when the graded assignment was returned in class. The written request should explain the specific reasons for the dispute and must be accompanied by the original assignment in its entirety. A hard copy of both the written request and the original assignment must be delivered to the instructor. Note that when an assignment is re-graded, the entire assignment is regraded, not just the component under dispute.
- Grade changes of any kind will not be considered after final grades are reported the Registrar’s Office.
- **University policy on academic dishonesty.** Any form of cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the sections addressing academic dishonesty in the University’s Student Handbook.

Contacting the Professor

Email is the best way to get in contact with me. In general, you can expect that I will respond within 24 hours to email messages sent during business hours and on the next business day to email

messages sent during weekends and holidays. Though you will likely get a response sooner, you should plan according to these parameters.

All students are invited and encouraged to visit office hours.

Course Topics and Schedule

Note: The instructor reserves the right to alter readings and dates contained in this syllabus.

- August 25: Introduction to the Course and Review of the Syllabus
- August 27: Future of the GOP
 - Audio: Intelligence Squared Debate: *The GOP Must Seize the Center or Die* (50 minutes; link posted on Canvas)
 - CQ Researcher, “Future of the GOP” (posted on Canvas)
- September 1 and 3: What is a political party? Why do political parties form?
 - Schattschneider, “The Semisovereign People” (posted on Canvas)
 - Hershey, “What are political parties?” (posted on Canvas)
- September 8, 10, 15, 17: Partisanship, opinion leadership, and political attitudes in the electorate
 - September 8 and 10
 - Kuklinski and Peyton, “Belief systems and political decision making” (posted on Canvas)
 - Berinsky, “Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites, and American Public Support for Military Conflict” (posted on Canvas)
 - September 15 and 17
 - Abramowitz, “Partisan nation: The rise of affective partisanship in the American electorate” (pp. 21-36 in Green et al.)
 - Kimball et al., “Political identity and party polarization in the American electorate” (pp. 37-54 in Green et al.)
 - Carmines et al., “Why American political parties can’t get beyond the left-right divide” (pp. 55-72 in Green et al.)
 - Shea, “Separated we stand? The impact of ideological sorting on local party dynamics” (pp. 303-322 in Green et al.)
- September 22 and 24: Partisan Polarization
 - Hopkins and Sides (eds.), *Political Polarization in American Politics*
 - Ensley et al., “Are these boots made for walking? Polarization and ideological change among U.S. House members” (pp. 107-120 in Green et al.)
- September 29 and October 1: The Electoral College
 - McCormick, *The Presidential Game* (selections posted on Canvas)
- October 6: **Midterm 1**
- October 8: Partisan Realignment

Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States*, Chapters 1, 2, 3 (posted on Canvas)

- October 8, 13, 15: Development and Evolution of the American Party Systems

Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States* (selections posted on Canvas)

- October 20 and 22: Theories of parties

Aldrich, *Why Parties?* (selections posted on Canvas)

Bawn et al., “A theory of political parties: Groups, policy demands, and nominations in American politics” (posted on Canvas)

Masket, *No Middle Ground: How Informal Party Organizations Control Nominations and Polarize Legislatures* (selections posted on Canvas)

- October 27 and 29: Party Nominations and Candidate Recruitment

Binning et al., “A report from Mahoning County: Consequences and causes of local party endorsements” (pp. 323-338 in Green et al.)

Jewitt, “Republicans and reform: The 2012 nomination rules” (pp. 273-286 in Green et al.)

“Tea Party Politics” section of Green et al.’s *The State of the Parties*

– Rapoport et al., “The Tea Party, Republican factionalism, and the 2012 election”

– Francia and Morris, “The divided Republicans? Tea Party supporters, establishment Republicans, and social networks”

– Miller and Burton, “Allies and antagonists: The Tea Party impact on the Republican Party”

- November 3 and 5: The Party Organizations

Hershey, “The state and local party organizations” (posted on Canvas)

Hershey, “The parties’ national organizations” (posted on Canvas)

Roscoe and Jenkins, “Changes in local party structure and activity, 1980-2008” (pp. 287-302 in Green et al.)

- November 10: **Midterm 2**

- November 12 and 17: Campaign Finance

Skinner et al., “527 Committees, Formal Parties, and Party Adaptation” (posted on Canvas)

“Super PACs and Partisan Resources” section of Green et al.’s *The State of the Parties*

– Dwyre and Kolodny, “Political party activity in the 2012 elections: Sophisticated orchestration or diminished influence”

– Magleby, “Classifying super PACs”

– Beck and Heidemann, “The ground game from the voter’s perspective: 2012 and before”

- November 19 and 24: The Parties in Congress, the Party in the Executive Branch, and How Parties Shape Policy Outputs

Hetherington and Larson, “The congressional party and the formation of public policy” (posted on Canvas)

Stonecash, “A perfect storm: Presidential-House elections, policy, and congressional polarization” (pp. 73-86 in Green et al.)

- November 26: Thanksgiving (No Class)

- December 1 and 3: Ideology and Responsible Party Government

Rae, “Be Careful What You Wish For: The Rise of Responsible Parties in American National Politics” (posted on Canvas)

Connelly, “Partisan, polarized, yet not dysfunctional?” (pp. 89-106 in Green et al.)

Recommended: Muirhead, “A defense of party spirit” (posted on Canvas)

- December 8: Final Exam (12:45 to 2:45)