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PSC 341.01: Political Parties and Elections

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Political Science 341
Political Parties
Fall 2003

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Office Hours: MF, 4:00-5:00; W 9-10

Content

This course analyzes the role of parties in American democracy. Parties are ubiquitous in our politics—recruiting and financing candidates, organizing coalitions, and promoting cooperation in government. Yet parties are hard to define and their effect is hard to measure. Thus a basic purpose of this class is to define parties, identify their functions, and trace their influence.

To accomplish these goals, this course develops a theoretical framework for understanding parties as cooperative solutions to basic democratic problems. As a countervailing view, we discuss the normative view that parties should be “responsible.” We trace the historical development of American parties and their current status to understand variation in party strength, and the relationship between strong parties and responsible parties.

Required Texts

There are three required texts: *Why Parties* by John Aldrich, *Responsible Partisanship* by Green and Herrnson (editors), and *The Life of The Parties* by James Reichley. In addition, I will periodically provide supplemental readings drawn from contemporary politics, e.g. newspaper articles. Students are strongly encouraged to read these extra readings as soon as possible, since they may be the topic of class discussions. Course examinations will draw on the textbook readings, supplemental assignments, and class lectures.

Students are required to read all assigned readings, attend all lectures, participate in class, take a midterm, and complete a short and long paper. The grade breakdown is:

Participation: 10%
Midterm: 30%
Short paper: 30%
Long paper: 30%

Papers are due at the start of class. Late papers are docked a **full grade** for each day late. Students may schedule a make-up exam with documentation if illness or family death prevents attendance at the midterm. *No excuses* will be accepted for late papers; students are responsible for beginning their papers early, avoiding computer problems, and getting papers to me in a timely fashion.

TIMELINE

Key: RP = Responsible Partisanship; WP = Why Parties; LOTP = Life of the Parties

Week	Topics	Readings
Sept. 2, 4	Introduction. RPG.	RP 1
Sept. 9, 11	Aldrich Theory.	WP 2
Sept. 16, 18	History: Founding and Jackson.	LOTP 1; WP 3, 4, 5
Sept. 23, 25	History: Gilded Age and Progressives	LOTP 2
Sept. 30, Oct. 2	History: New Deal and Republican Resurgence	LOTP 3; RP 3
Oct. 7, 9	Midterm. Party Organization (guest?).	Masket 2002*
Oct. 14, 16	Voters and Parties. Parties and Interest Groups.	RP 9, 10
Oct. 21, 23	Electoral Rules. Campaign Finance.	RP 4, 5
Oct. 28, 30	Presidential Elections. Congressional Elections.	Cohen et al.*
Nov. 4, 6	Presidency and Parties.	RP 8
Nov. 13	Congress and Parties. Long Paper Due	WP 7
Nov. 18, 20	Congress and Parties 2; Divided Government	RP 7
Nov. 25, 27	Thanksgiving	
Dec. 2, 4	Parties and the Judiciary	Readings will be provided
Dec. 9, 11	Reform Options SHORT PAPER Due Dec. 9!	Mann, "Reform Agenda";* Bach, "Filibusters and Cloture in the Senate"* O'Beirne "Let Em Talk"*