

PS275 American Political Parties

This seminar seeks to understand the origin, importance, and consequences of political parties (especially, the two major political parties) in the United States. The typical kinds of questions we will investigate include, "Why are there political parties?" "When and how might they 'matter,' and, if they do, to whom?" and "How, if at all, are they related to the workings of democracy?" Political parties likely have attracted and continue to attract as much normative as scientific questioning (to the extent these are separable domains). Here, we will focus primarily on the scientific. Doing so is especially appropriate in this case. That is because political parties are not -- at least in the U.S. -- institutions separate from the politics of this republican democracy. In rational choice parlance, political parties are "endogenous" to democracy, that is to the citizens and politicians. To ask normative questions about parties, therefore, is actually to ask normative questions about democracy. Thus, to attach normative values to political parties, per se, requires a "scientific" understanding of their role in democracy. As a result, whether your interest is normative or scientific or both, you must understand political parties scientifically and you must do so first before you can judge them normatively.

There are, it seems to me, two ways to study the major American political party. One could study them in comparison to political parties elsewhere, or one could study them in historical perspective. Both ways are valuable. We will examine them in (cross-national) comparative perspective in an early section that examines different kinds of "party systems" (in quotes, because that phrase has several meanings) and their relationship to the larger governmental and electoral settings. There remains, of course a lot more to the (cross-national) comparative study of political parties. We will assess the major U.S. party in historical perspective (which is, after all, a "longitudinal" rather than "cross-sectional" version of comparative politics). I do so because a) I enjoy doing so, and b) it is my belief that historical sequencing (aka "path dependence" or "political development") is important -- probably in general in politics, but likely to be especially so in the case of political parties.

We will begin with an introductory section that includes consideration of some of the current views of the problems of American politics and by some definitions of (American, major) political parties. We will then look at three topics in comparative parties: some basic perspectives; electoral institutions and party systems; and democratic forms and political parties. The two major topics, then, are first the relationship between elections and the number of political parties; what is commonly called "Duverger's Laws." The second examines the relationship between the larger set of governmental and constitutional rules, using the (slightly dated but still major) work of the immediate past President of APSA (Arend Lijphart).

We then examine a portion of the actual history of American parties, but do so in a way that raises three themes, the topics of the three subsections. The first is the importance of ideas, especially in the formation of republican-democratic institutions. The second looks at "time's arrow," that is looks at institutional development and change in a way more or less monotonic with time. The third topic is "time's cycles," or repetition, cycling, or at least discontinuities in history that fundamentally break the

monotonic "march of history."

The next three sections look at a political party in its contemporary guise (the parts that I find substantively interesting, and about which most have been written). First, we look at various theories of party identification and the possibility that party in elections means something different from party in the electorate, touching also on so-called party "decline" and its possible resurgence. The next section looks at theories and applications of said theories about parties in governance. The final section actually builds on the preceding and is fully empirical. It looks at what parties in government are presumed to do while governing -- make policy. Here we will look at some of the evidence that appears to argue that parties may not make much difference in policy making in the U.S., especially the argument of David Mayhew.

Assignments: We will discuss these in class, but expect grading to be based on seminar participation and a substantial paper (or a jointly agreed upon substitute, such as three shorter not-original-research papers). The former requires having completed the readings in advance of the class, and thus, you are graded in part by how successful the class is. The original research paper would be circa 25-30 pages. The topic, on a subject arising out of the course, must be approved and a proposal turned in prior to November 1. The paper (or alternative) must be turned in by the regularly scheduled final.

Readings: I have ordered nine books (all in paper). You may want to consider alternative strategies, especially with respect to Niemi and Weisberg (we are selecting only a portion of the collection reprinted here, these are excerpts rather than full reprints, and you may have already or want the full length, feature versions), the Gimple (recommended) and the Shafer books (these are not particularly "keepers on the shelf" type of books, or things you will need to review for Ph.D. exams, but topical books), and the Shepsle and Weingast reader (we are reading only a few of the selections, all were published in LSQ). Articles are also to be arranged. The books are:

Aldrich, John H. Why Parties? (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995);

Brady, David Critical Elections and Congressional Policy Making (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988).

Cox, Gary W. Making Votes Count (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Gimple, James G. Fulfilling the Contract (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996).

Hofstadter, Richard, The Idea of a Party System (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

Lijphart, Arend, Democracies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

Mayhew, David R. Divided We Govern (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

Niemi, Richard G., and Herbert F. Weisberg, eds., Classics in Voting Behavior (Washington: CQ Press, 1993).

Shafer, Byron E., ed. Present Discontents (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1991).

Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Barry R. Weingast, eds. Positive Theories of Legislative Institutions (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

A coursepack should also be available.

Readings

I. Introduction

A. The Current State of the American Government?

Readings: Chapters in Shafer by Barone, Edsall, Ehrenhalt, and Shafer.

B. Definitions of, and Understandings about, American Political Parties

Readings: Aldrich, Why Parties?, Chapters 1 and 2.
Fiorina, "The Decline of Collective...", pp. 25-45.
Schlesinger, "On the Theory of Party...", pp. 367-400.

* Epstein, "The Scholarly...", pp. 127-54.

* Schlesinger, "The New American Political Party," pp. 1152-69.

II. Political Parties in Comparative Perspective

A. Basic Themes in Comparative Parties

Readings: Duverger, Political Parties, pp. 206-255.
Lipset, Rokkean, "Cleavage Structure, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments," in their Party Systems and Voter Alignments.

* Riker, "Duverger's Law Revisited," pp. 19-42.

* Sartori, Chapters 3 and 9 of Parties and Party Systems.

* Ware, Chapters 1 and 9 of Political Parties and Party Systems.

(Alternative arrangements must be made for the required readings.)

B. Electoral Institutions and Party Systems

Readings: Cox, Making Votes Count
Abramson, et al., pp. 1-26.

C. Government Structures and Party Systems

Readings: Lijphart, Democracies, esp. Chapters 1-3, 7-9, 11, 13.

III. Historical Explanation and American Political Parties

A. Ideas and Their Relevance

Readings: Aldrich, Why Parties?, Chapters 3 and 4.
Hofstadter, The Idea of a Party system, entire.
Wallace, "Changing Concepts of Party...", pp. 453-491.

- * Aldrich and Grant, "The Antifederalists...."
- * Holt, "The Election of 1840...", pp. 16-58.

B. Time's Arrow: Institutional Development and Change

Readings: Aldrich, Why Parties?, Chapter 5.
McCormick, R.L., "The Party Period...", pp. 279-298.

- * Binder, "The Partisan Basis of Procedural Choice, APSR."
- * Cox, The Efficient Secret, selections.
- * Silbey, Chapter in Shafer.

C. Time's Cycles: Periods, Cycles, Discontinuities

Readings: Brady, Critical Elections.
Carmines and Layman, in Shafer.
Key, "A Theory of Critical Elections," JoP, pp. 3-18.
Niemi and Weisberg, Classics, pp. 284-345:
Editors' Intro.
Beck, "A Socialization Theory of Partisan
Realignment," Niemi, ed., The Politics of Future
Citizens (SF: Jossey-Bass, 1974).

C. Time's Cycles, Cont'd.

- * Burnham, "The Changing Shape of the American Political Universe," APSR, 59 (1969):7-28.
- * Rusk, "The Effect of the Australian Ballot Reform on Split Ticket Voting: 1876-1908," APSR, 64 (1970): 1220-38.

* Key, "Secular Realignment...," JoP, pp. 198-210.

IV. The Contemporary Party in America

A. Parties-In-Elections

Readings: Aldrich, Why Parties?, Chapter 6.
Converse, TBA.
Lodge and Hammill, "A Partisan Schema...," pp. 505-519.
MacKuen, et al., "Macropartisanship," pp. 284-303.
Niemi and Weisberg, Classics, pp. 210-262.
Editors' Intro.
Campbell, et al., The American Voter (NY: Wiley, 1960), Chapters, 6 and 7.
Nie, Verba, and Petrocik, The Changing American Voter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), unstated.
Fiorina, Retrospective Voting in American National Elections (New Haven: Yale, 1981), unstated.

- * Achen, "Prospective Voting...," pp. 1-29.
- * Fiorina, "An Outline for a Model...," pp. 601-625.

C. Parties-In-Government

Readings: Aldrich, Why Parties?, Chapters 7, 8.
Aldrich and Rohde, "The Transition to Republican Rule in the House".
Coleman, "The Decline and Resurgence....," pp. 124.
Cox and McCubbins, "A Theory of ...," pp. 107-135.
Krehbiel, "Where's the Party?" pp. 235-266.
Shesple, Weingast chapters:
 Cox and McCubbins
 Sinclair
 Shesple and Weingast (intro.)

- * Rohde
- * Maltzman and Smith

D. Parties and Policy

Readings: Aldrich and Rohde, "A Tale of Two Speakers"
Aldrich and Rohde, "The Republican Revolution and the House
 Appropriations Committee".
Mayhew, Divided We Govern.

- * Cameron, TBA.
- * Gimple, Fulfilling the Contract.
- * Jones, Chapter in Shafer.

* Denotes Recommended Readings.