

**Political Science 123A**  
**Parties and Political Organizations**  
**Winter 2000**

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The purpose of this course is to give undergraduates a firm understanding of the role that groups, large and small, play in local, state and national American politics. The focus will be on political parties: what they are, how they work, and how they fit together in what political scientists like to call “the party system”. But, as a way of illuminating the uniqueness of parties, we will also consider other groups that attempt to influence the electoral and governmental process, such as political action committees (PACs), interest groups, community organizations, non-profits, protest movements, and unofficial partisan assemblies. In light of modern developments, and the multiplicity of groups competing in the system, our ultimate goal is to answer the question raised by Barbara Sinclair, namely, “Do parties matter?”

The class will consist of a mixture of lectures, reading and written assignments. Students will enjoy guest lectures from visitors who are experts in national, state and local politics and will participate in class exercises designed to develop their skills. The emphasis will be on fostering practical and community level experience with group politics that will contribute to the students’ theoretical understanding of the political milieu.

For the purpose of highlighting the distinct features of the American party system, the course will frequently examine party and organizational activity in countries outside the United States.

### **Reading**

Beck, Paul Allen. 1997. *Party Politics in America*. New York: Longman.  
Berry, Jeffrey M. 1997. *The Interest Group Society*. New York: Longman.

In addition, there will be readings from a course packet that will be available for purchase. You may also read/download articles from the course packet via electronic reserves at <http://antpac.lib.uci.edu/>. Click on “course reserves” in the yellow menu and then search by course number.

### **Assignments and Exams**

This class will consist of three requirements: 1) debate participation and paper (20% of your grade); 2) an election project (30%); and 3) a final examination (40%). Your overall classroom participation will count for the remaining 10% of your final grade.

**Debates.** Each Friday class will be devoted to discussion of the reading material and to a formal class debate. At the beginning of class on Monday, Jan 10, students will sign up for one of six debate topics, choosing either the pro- or con- side to the issue. The students on each team will then collaborate, outside of class, to develop a strategy and coherent presentation before the debate. The students that are not debating in a given week will be expected to raise questions for the panelists. Upon completion of the debate, students will have **1 week** to turn in a **5-page** formal paper that outlines the position they took. The papers will be graded based on: a) the quality and cogency of their argument and b) the extensiveness of their external research.

**Election Project.** On **February 25**, students will be randomly assigned into groups – which will become political parties. Together, party members will draft a **platform** that will contain their overall philosophy and positions on issues of priority to them. Each party should keep in mind that their platform should be designed not only to represent your beliefs, but also to appeal to potential voters. Because...

...on **March 10**, each party will convene to ratify its platform and to nominate a candidate. On **March 13**, each candidate will give a 5-minute speech to the rest of the class, outlining the party's beliefs and issue positions. The other members of the party will be expected to distribute copies of their platform to the class and to the instructor (that will be the final one that you turn in). Once the speeches are completed, each candidate will field at least one question from the audience. On **March 15**, everyone in the class (including your instructor) will vote for the candidate of their choice, using secret ballots.

Party platforms will be collaborative and at least **15 pages**. Platforms must contain: a) a preamble, outlining general beliefs and philosophy; b) a list of issues important to the party; c) an explanation for why each issue is important (for the country); d) a clear outline of the party's position and solution for solving the issue. Platforms will be evaluated for their originality, cogency, and depth of research. Grades on the platform will be assigned to every member of the party.

*Independent Option.* In lieu of participating in a political party, entrepreneurs may skirt the parties and run independent candidacies. Before doing so, however, they must obtain the signatures of: a) the signature of their instructor and of c) five other registered classmates within a three-day period between February 25 and 28. Independents will be required to draft a **10-page platform** (also due on **March 13**) and participate in the candidate forum. *Should an independent candidate win the election, he or she will earn 3 additional percentage points to his/her final grade. An independent that is runner up will receive 1 additional point.*

**Final Examination.** The final on **March 22** (1:30-3:30pm) will be two-fold: there will be one essay question and a separate multiple-choice component that will measure your completion of the reading material. The essay question will be abstract and will ask you to simply respond to a single, brief question, such as "Do parties matter?". There are no correct answers; you will be graded on the insight and

erudition revealed in your essay. The multiple-choice component will be 50 questions drawn from the reading material – not gotcha-game details, but general comprehension.

## Class Schedule

Date	Topic/Question(s)	Reading
1/7	Introduction	
1/10	What is a political party?	Beck, Ch. 1
1/12	Why do parties form?	Reading #1: Aldrich (1995)
1/14	How do candidates become party nominees?	Beck, Ch. 9 & 10
<b>1/17</b>	<b>MLK Day</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>
1/19	What is a party convention?	Reading #2: O'Rourke (1992)
1/21	What is a party platform?	Readings #3-#6: Republican, Democratic, and Reform (1997) and Green (2000) platforms (skim only)
1/24	How have the media affected political parties?	Reading #7: Patterson (1992)
1/26	How do parties influence participation in politics?	Beck, Ch. 5
1/28	Is there a dime's worth of difference between American parties? <b>**DEBATE #1**</b>	
1/31	Would stronger parties mean higher voter turnout in the U.S.?	Beck, Ch. 8
2/2	How do Americans see political parties?	Beck, Ch. 7
2/4	Are parties, like, relevant to Gen X voters? <b>**DEBATE #2**</b>	
2/7	What determines the number of parties in a party system?	Reading #8: Ware I (1996)
2/9	Why does the U.S. have a two-party system?	Reading #9: Ware II (1996); Beck, Ch. 2
2/11	Should the United States maintain or dismantle the two-party system? <b>**DEBATE #3**</b>	Readings #10-#11: Lawson/Bibby (1997)
2/14	What role do parties play in legislatures? How does partisanship impact the way government is run?	Beck, Ch. 13; Reading #12: Sinclair (1999)
2/16	Who is the <i>real</i> leader of a political party?	Reading #13: Davis (1992) Beck, Ch. 14
2/18	Is divided government good or bad for America? <b>**DEBATE #4**</b>	
<b>2/21</b>	<b>President's Day</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>
2/23	How are parties financed?	Beck, Ch. 12
2/25	Should 'soft money' donations be banned from politics? <b>**DEBATE #5** (PARTY</b>	

	FORMATION DAY)	
2/28	What are 'special interests'?	Berry, Ch. 2, 5 & 7
3/1	Do interest or citizen groups undermine or strengthen political parties?	Berry, Ch. 3
3/3	Are interest groups a good thing or a bad thing for the political system? **DEBATE #6**	Berry, Ch. 1 & 10
3/6	Why do groups protest?	Berry, Ch. 4, 6
3/8	How is the California party system unique? What is a 'blanket' primary?	
3/10	PARTY CONVENTIONS	
3/13	CANDIDATE SPEECHES **PLATFORMS DUE**	
3/15	ELECTION DAY	
3/17	Do parties matter? – Review and final discussion	
<b>3/22</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	<b>1:30pm to 3:30pm</b>

### Bibliography

Aldrich, John. 1995. "Why Parties Form", excerpt from *Why Parties*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bibby, John F. 1997. "In Defense of the Two-Party System," taken from Herrnson, Paul S. and John C. Green, eds., *Multiparty Politics in America*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Davis, James W. 1992. "Reassessing Presidential-Party Relations", excerpt from *The President as Party Leader*. New York: Greenwood, pp. 119-140.

Green Party Platform 2000. [www.gp.org/fullplatform.htm](http://www.gp.org/fullplatform.htm)

Lawson, Kay. 1997. "The Case for a Multiparty System," taken from Herrnson, Paul S. and John C. Green, eds., *Multiparty Politics in America*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

O'Rourke, P.J. 1992. "On the Blandwagon: A Political Convention", excerpt from *Parliament of Whores*, New York: Vintage.

Patterson, Thomas. 1992. "The Miscast Institution", excerpt from *Out of Order*, New York: Knopf, pp. 29-52.

Reform Party Platform 1997.

[www.reformparty.org/principles/platform1997/text.html](http://www.reformparty.org/principles/platform1997/text.html)

Sinclair, Barbara. 1998. "Partisan Imperatives and Institutional Constraints: Republican Party Leadership in the House and Senate", taken from Rae, Nicol C.

and Colton C. Campbell, eds., *New Majority or Old Minority?: The Impact of the Republicans on Congress*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Ware, Alan. 1996. "The Classification of Party Systems" and "Why Party Systems Differ", excerpts from *Parties and Party Systems*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.