

**University of Missouri - St. Louis  
Department of Political Science  
Fall 2002**

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 235  
POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS  
MW 11:00-12:15 in SSB 201**

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Political parties are important institutions that appear in virtually every forum of American politics, especially in elections. In fact, many scholars believe that the development of democracy in the United States would not have occurred without political parties. However, the activities of political parties have changed substantially over the last forty years, and some believe that parties have seen their influence decline – both as important players in national politics and as objects of public support and voter loyalty.

In the wake of the controversial 2000 presidential election, there is renewed debate about a variety of election reform proposals (including areas such as voter registration, campaign finance, voting technology, presidential nominations, and the Electoral College, to name a few). Clearly, the rules matter. This course will examine how election laws influence the strategies and tactics of parties and candidates, as well as the issues at stake in many debates about election reform.

#### OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students will be able to: (1) describe the historical foundations of the two-party system in the United States; (2) explain why voter turnout is low in the United States compared to other countries; (3) describe the major coalitions supporting each major party; (4) explain basic election laws governing campaign finance, nominations, and election administration; (5) understand the basic issues and disagreements in several current election reform disputes.

#### REQUIRED BOOKS

Maisel, L. Sandy. 2002. *Parties and Elections in America: The Electoral Process*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Wayne, Stephen J. 2003. *Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

There will be some short articles (which I will provide or are available on the internet) assigned as well.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exams: There will be a midterm and a final exam. The exams will be closed-book, in-class tests based on assigned readings, course lectures, and discussions. The exams will include an essay and some identification and short answer questions. The final exam will be comprehensive. Failure to take the exams at the scheduled time, unless excused by the instructor in advance, will result in an F for that exam.

### First Paper:

For the first paper, you will report on a congressional election campaign (from a list I will provide). The paper should be no more than 6 pages long. You will analyze the political culture and recent history of the state or district where the election will take place, as well as the major candidates running for the seat, and report whom you expect to win the race. The first paper is due October 7. More details on this paper will come soon.

Election predictions: On Monday, November 4, you will turn in your predictions for the number of seats each party will gain or lose in the U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, and governor's races in the November 5 elections. Include a brief explanation (no more than 1 or 2 pages) of how you arrived at your predictions. I will present my predictions to the class November 4 as well. If you beat my predictions, you will get extra credit for the assignment.

Final Paper: For the final paper, you will prepare a 15-page argument for or against an election reform proposal of your choosing. You must submit a one-page description of your final paper topic for my approval by October 30. The final paper is due December 9.

Attendance and Participation: I expect students to read the assigned materials on time, attend class, and participate in discussions on a regular basis. I will take attendance on ten randomly chosen days during the semester. Students who miss more than two of those days will lose points on the attendance and participation part of their grade. Regular attendance and participation is likely necessary to receive an A for the course.

Follow Campaigns and Political Parties in the News: You will get more out of the course (and you will have more information for the written assignments) if you keep abreast of party activities and other political developments. As an aid, I am creating a web site for this course (MyGateway) with links to various sites on political parties, campaigns and elections in the United States.

### Campaign or Election Work

You can earn a small amount of extra credit for this course by working on a campaign this fall or by working as an election judge on November 5.

## GRADING

Final grades will be based on the following proportions:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Due date</u>
First Paper	15%	Oct. 7
Midterm Exam	20%	October 16
Election Predictions	10%	November 4
Final Paper	25%	December 9
Final Exam	25%	December 18
Attendance and Participation	5%	

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

I take academic misconduct (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) very seriously, and any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the university committee on academic misconduct and handled according to university policy. In addition, students will receive a grade of “0” for that assignment. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, plagiarism is “stealing and using the ideas or writings of another as one’s own” (p. 524). If you are uncertain about this definition or how it applies to your work, please come see me.

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If anyone has a health condition or disability, which may require accommodations in order to effectively participate in this class, please contact me and the **Disability Access Services Office in 144 Millennium Student Center at 516-6554**. Information about your disability will be regarded as confidential.

## COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

I will provide readings marked with an asterisk (\*).

### I. Introduction to Political Parties and Elections

#### August 21-28: Introduction

Why do we have elections? What functions do they serve?

- Maisel, chapter 1
- Wayne, chapter 1

#### **No Class on Labor Day – Monday, September 2**

#### September 4-9: The Historical Evolution of American Parties

What did the Founders have to say about parties?

Were the Federalists a political party?

How did political parties develop in the United States?

Which parties have been dominant throughout American history?

What are the geographic bases of support for the major parties?

- Maisel, chapter 2
- Wayne, chapter 4

#### September 11-16: The Two-Party System and Minor Parties in American Politics

What types of third parties emerge in American politics? When do they emerge?

Why are third parties so unsuccessful? Do elections ensure political representation?

Should the United States consider a different electoral system?

Would your grandma understand proportional representation voting systems?

- Wayne, chapter 3
- Maisel, pp. 252-262
- Gregory L. Giroux, “New Twists in the Old Debate on Race and Representation,” *CQ Weekly*, August 11, 2001, pp. 1966-1973. (\*)
- Michael Lind – “Alice Doesn’t Vote Here Anymore” *Mother Jones* (March 1998 [http://www.mojones.com/mother\\_jones/MA98/lind.html](http://www.mojones.com/mother_jones/MA98/lind.html))
- David Beiler, “The Body Politic Registers a Protest,” *Campaigns & Elections*, Feb. 1999 (<http://www.campaignline.com/news/index.cfm?id=4>)

## II. Mass Support for Parties and Candidates

September 23-25

Sizing up the Electorate

Why is voter turnout so low in the United States? Why do some voters fail to complete their ballot? Does it matter?

- Wayne, chapter 2
- Maisel, chapter 4

September 25-October 2

Party Identification and Theories of Voting

How are public opinion polls used in campaigns and elections? Is there too much polling? Which polls should be taken seriously?

- Herbert Asher, “Polls and Elections” (chapter 7), from *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington: CQ Press (2001).
- “It’s the People, Stupid” (in-class video)

Is popular support for political parties declining or increasing? What explains these trends? To what degree does party loyalty color our opinions?

- Maisel, chapter 5
- Lydia Saad, “Americans Take Their Own Candidate’s Side in Election Dispute,” *Gallup News Service*, November 14, 2000 (\*)

What are the main theories of voting in American elections? Do they still apply?

- Maisel, chapter 5
- Philip D. Duncan, “Incumbent in the Cross Hairs,” *Campaigns & Elections*, Dec. 1999 (<http://www.campaignline.com/news/index.cfm?id=13>)

### First Paper Due Monday, October 7

October 7

Party Coalitions

Which voters provide the electoral base for each major party?

Which voters appear up for grabs?

- See where you fit among party coalitions by completing a survey for the Pew Research Center Typology of American Voters (<http://www.people-press.org/fit/>)
- Gregory L. Giroux, “Breaking the Tie: Parties seek Formula for Majority Status,” *CQ Weekly*, February 17, 2001, pp. 363-372. (\*)

## III. Political Parties as Organizations

October 9-14

Party Organizations and Party Activists

How did the major parties create stronger national organizations?

- Maisel, chapter 3

How do party activists differ from rank-and-file voters?

Should party activists care more about winning elections or promoting a political ideology?

### **Wednesday, October 16: Midterm Exam**

#### **IV. Political Parties and Institutions in the Electoral Process**

##### October 21-28

Parties and the Nomination of Candidates

What are the different methods parties use to nominate candidates?

- Harmon Zeigler, *Political Parties in Industrial Societies*, 1993, pp. 101-104 (<http://janda.org/c24/Readings/Zeigler/zeigler.htm>)
- Maisel, chapter 7

What was behind the shift toward presidential primaries?

- *Chicago 1968* (film in class)

How do candidates deal with the current presidential nominating system? Does the current system work?

- Maisel, chapter 9
- Wayne, chapter 7

##### October 30-November 18

Important Rules and Players in General Elections

Historical trends in state and local elections: Why are incumbents so successful?

- Maisel, chapter 8
- Bob Benenson, Gregory L. Giroux, and Jonathan Allen, "Safe House: Incumbents Face Worry-Free Election," *CQ Weekly*, May 18, 2002, pp. 1274-1286. (\*)

Presidential elections: Strategies and tactics

- Maisel, chapter 10

#### **Election Predictions and Proposal for final paper due Monday, November 4**

Campaign Advertising: How well does it work?

- Maisel, pp. 440-449
- Wayne, chapter 8
- Kenneth M. Goldstein et al., “Going Negative: Attack Advertising in the 1998 Election,” *Playing Hardball: Campaigning for the U.S. Congress*, 2001, pp. 92-107 (\*)

The News Media: Can they get anything right with elections?

- Maisel, chapter 12
- Wayne, chapter 6

Campaign Finance: How serious a problem is it?

- Maisel, chapter 11
- Wayne, chapter 5
- Derek Willis, “Debating McCain-Feingold,” *CQ Weekly*, March 10, 2001, pp. 524-527. (\*)

## **V. Political Parties as Governing Coalitions**

November 20-25

Party Leadership and Party Cohesion in Government

Are there noticeable differences between the two parties in Congress?

Does divided government make any difference?

- Maisel, chapter 13

**No Class Wednesday, November 27 (Thanksgiving break)**

## **VI. The State of Political Parties and Elections in America**

December 2-9

Parties and Elections in American Politics

Do we have strong and “responsible” parties? Do parties improve democracy?

- Maisel, chapter 14
- Republican *Contract with America*, 1994  
(<http://www.house.gov/house/Contract/CONTRACT.html>)

The Rise of Initiatives and Referenda: Laws without government?

Do elections help citizens hold government accountable?

- Wayne, chapter 9
- “Democracy Unleashed,” *National Journal*, July 1, 2000, pp. 2140-2149. (\*)

**Final Paper Due Monday, December 9**

**Final Exam**

**Wednesday, December 18, 10:00-12:00 Noon**