

Political Science 327W
American Political Parties
Spring, 1999
MWF, 10:00-10:50
209 Graham

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SYLLABUS

This course examines political parties and elections in the United States. Among the topics we will cover are the structure of competition between the parties; social and ideological differences between the parties; how the parties are organized; how parties nominate candidates and attempt to elect them; and the role of political parties in the democratic process. Students should leave this course with a critical understanding of the functioning of political parties in contemporary America, including a perspective on how the electoral process might be improved.

The concern will be primarily with the Democratic and Republican Parties, although some consideration will be given to minor parties and independent candidates (e.g., Ross Perot). While this is a course in American political parties, some attention will be paid to political parties in other democracies in order to provide a comparative perspective.

Because this is a course in political science, we will be concerned with how parties and elections can be studied. The collection and assessment of information to analyze and examine political phenomena will be discussed throughout the course, and the research paper will provide "hands-on" experience. I expect students to leave this course with an improved understanding of social science research.

This course has been designated as writing intensive. To help you develop your writing skills, different types of papers will be required, along with brief reading summaries. The goal of this course is to improve your social science writing ability. This means, among other things, being able to make cogent arguments supported by relevant evidence.

Finally, this course is a companion to PSC 332 (Voting and Elections). The two courses are designed to complement each other, but either can be taken without having the other. Also, this course overlaps PSC 322 (American State Politics), which also may be of interest to students desiring work in this area. PSC 330 (Workshop in Practical Politics), which provides students with the opportunity to be directly involved in election campaigns, is another related course that may be of interest to students interested in political parties and electoral politics.

Books

The following books are available at the bookstore in paperback editions:

P. Beck, *Party Politics in America*, 8th edition, Longman, 1997.

S. Wayne, *The Road to the White House, 1996*, Post-election ed., St. Martin's Press, 1997.

There are several journal articles in the assigned readings. Copies of these articles are on closed reserve. In addition, a number of books have been placed on library reserve. Some of these books may be very useful to you for your research paper. Consult the reserve list for the titles.

Course Requirements

The grades for this course will be based on the following:

1. Reading summaries, due throughout the course. There will be 15 summaries assigned. Each will be worth up to 3 points. Your best 10 summaries will be counted. The reading assignment to be summarized and the due date will be announced at least two class periods in advance. The summaries should be limited to one single-spaced typed page or its equivalent (approximately 500-600 words). Summaries must be submitted in person at the beginning of the class period in which they are due. If you are not present for a class session, you may not submit a reading assignment due that day, regardless of the reason for your absence. Since only 10 of the 15 summaries will count toward your grade, you have some allowance for illness and other unavoidable absences. The purpose of these assignments is twofold: (a) to help you understand the readings better by having to summarize the key points; and (b) to make sure that you are prepared to engage in class discussions about the readings.
2. A policy paper, based on library research, which argues for or against a proposed change in the electoral system, accompanied by a class presentation. Details on this assignment will be found on another handout.
3. A research paper, based on library research, which focuses on political parties and elections in one of the American states. Details on this assignment will be found on another handout.
4. A final exam, based on the course material, which will focus on possible reforms and prospects for the American political party system. Details on the final exam will be provided near the end of the semester.
5. Class participation, including informal discussions and impromptu writing.

The contribution of each component to the course grade is:

Reading summaries	30 pts (15%)
Policy paper	50 pts (25%)
Research paper	80 pts (40%)
Final exam	30 pts (15%)
Class participation	<u>10 pts (5%)</u>
	200 pts (100%)

Course Outline

A. The political party system (Jan. 13-29).

Beck, chpts. 1,2.

B. Party differences--ideological and social (Feb. 1-10).

Beck, chpts. 6,7.

Wayne, chpt. 3

Jackson, John S., III, Barbara L. Brown, and David Bositis. 1982. "Herbert McClosky and Friends Revisited: 1980 Democratic and Republican Party Elites Compared to the Mass Public." *American Politics Quarterly* 10(April): 158-180.

C. Party organizations.

1. State and local organization (Feb. 12-17).

Beck, chpts. 3,5.

Gibson, James L., Cornelius P. Cotter, John F. Bibby, and Robert J. Huckshorn. 1985. "Whither the Local Parties?" *American Journal of Political Science* 29(February): 139-160.

2. National organization (Feb 19).

Beck, chpt. 4.

Cotter, Cornelius P., and John Bibby. 1980. "Institutional Development of Parties and the Thesis of Party Decline." *Political Science Quarterly* 95(Spring): 1-27.

D. The campaign context.

1. Electoral participation (Feb. 22-26).

Beck, chpt. 8.

Powell, G. Bingham, Jr. 1986. "American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 80(March): 17-44.

2. Campaign finance (March 8-12).

Beck, chpt. 12.

Wayne, chpt. 2.

E. Nominating candidates.

1. State and local nominations (Mar. 15-19).

Beck, chpt. 9.

2. Presidential nominations (Mar 22-26).

Beck, chpts. 10.

Wayne, chpts. 1(part),4,5.

F. The general election.

1. Presidential elections (Mar. 29-April 5).

Wayne, chpts. 1(part),6,7.

2. Congressional and state elections (April 7-16).

Beck, chpt. 11

Jacobson, chpt. 6

Abramson, et al., chpt. 11

G. Parties, government, and the political process (April 19-23).

Wayne, chpt. 8.

Beck, chpts. 13-15.

H. Prospects and reforms for the party system (April 26-30).

Beck, chpts. 16.

Wayne, chpt. 9.

Schlesinger, Joseph A. 1985. "The New American Political Party." *American Political Science Review* 79(December): 1152-1169.