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Political Science 202: Parties, Interest Groups and Elections, Winter 2000

This course examines linkages between the mass citizenry and elite policy makers in America. Its goals are four: (1) to explain the operations of parties, interest groups and elections; (2) to examine the correspondence between public opinion and the activities of parties and interest groups, (3) to explore public opinion and voting behavior in the 1996 election; and (4) to critically examine several current approaches to campaign finance reform.

The course is organized around two group projects in which all students will participate. During the first five weeks, the class will divide into four analysis groups to examine public opinion and voting behavior in the 1996 election. Each group will examine the relationships between the social, demographic, party identification and ideological traits of voters and one of four distinct types of attitudes or behaviors: (1) voting behavior and political involvement, (2) attitudes on social and other domestic issues, (3) media involvement and (4) general attitudes toward government. Groups will present important findings from their investigations in reports (each 30 minutes in length) on January 31 and February 2.

During the second half of the course, students will organize into four groups to assess possible campaign finance reforms. Each group will present arguments for one of four possible approaches to campaign finance reform, that of: (1) the McCain-Feingold 1997 Senate legislation, (2) the Kerry-Wellstone 1997 Senate legislation, (3) William Thomas' 1998 House legislation and (4) the approach of Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Ky). The groups will present their arguments on behalf of the approaches on March 6 and 8. Our final class, day, March 10, will involve class discussion and voting on these four possibilities.

Students will write a 5-7 page paper for each project. The election analysis paper should examine one aspect of the group topic in detail, with references to the related scholarly literature. It is due in class on February 14. The campaign finance reform paper should critique the four alternative approaches and present your overall recommendations for reform. It is due at my office by Noon Monday, March 13. You'll find more information on the projects later in the syllabus.

The following books are required and available at the bookstore:
L. Sandy Maisel, *Parties and Elections in America* (3rd edition)
William Riordan, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall*
Jeffrey Berry, *The Interest Group Society* (3rd edition)
Steven E. Schier, *By Invitation Only: The Rise of Exclusive Politics in the United States*
Charles Prysby and Carmine Scavo, *Voting Behavior in the 1996 Election*
Nelson Polsby and Aaron Wildavsky, *Presidential Elections* (10th edition)
Anthony Corrado, et al. *Campaign Finance Reform: A Sourcebook*

Two copies of each of the required books are available on closed reserve
In the library.

Final grades are calculated on the following basis:
Electoral analysis paper 20% (60 points)
Campaign finance paper 20% (60 points)
Midterm 20% (60 points)
Class and group participation 15% (45 points)
Final 25% (75 points)

Final grades are figured from a class total of 300 points. A's range from 270-300, B's from 240-269, C's from 210-239 and D's from 180-209.

What follows is a schedule of class sessions by topic.

1. Introduction (1/5)

2. Parties, interests and voters: an overview (1/7)

Schier, ch. 1 (download this from my web page); Maisel, ch. 1; Polsby and Wildavsky, chs. 1 & 2

3. Introduction to the 1996 Election Data Set (1/10)

Pryby and Scavo, chs. 1-6

***** Election analysis group preferences due at my office by noon, 1/11*****

4. Assessing voting behavior (1/12)

Maisel, chs. 4 & 5

5. The history and functions of Parties (1/14)

Maisel, chs. 2 & 3

6. Movie: The Great McGinty (1940), winner of the academy award for best original screenplay. Written, produced and directed by Preston Sturges. (1/17)

Riordan, introduction through "Tammany the Only Lastin' Democracy"

7. Assessing Plunkitt and McGinty (1/19)

Riordan, remainder of book

8. State and local nominations (1/21)

Maisel, chs. 7 & 8

9. Presidential elections: rules (1/24)

P&W, ch. 3

10. Presidential nominations and the fall campaign (1/26)

P&W, chs. 4-5

11. Evaluating presidential elections (1/28)

P&W, chs. 6 & 7

12. Election Analysis Project Presentations I (1/31)

13. Election Analysis Project Presentations II (2/2)

14. Contemporary campaigns on television (2/4)

Maisel, ch. 12

15. Midterm exam (2/9)

16. How interest groups form (2/11)

Berry, chs. 2 & 4

17. Interest group influence (2/14) ELECTION ANALYSIS PAPERS DUE

Berry, chs. 5 & 6

18. Interest groups and governance (2/16)
Berry, chs. 8, 9, & 10

19. The campaign finance thicket (2/18)
Maisel, ch. 11; Corrado, chs. 1 & 2; handouts

***** Campaign finance group preferences due at my office by noon, 2/20*****

20. Does money talk? (2/21)
Corrado, chs. 3 & 4

21. PACs and soft money (2/23)
Corrado, chs. 5 & 6

22. Issue advocacy and express advocacy (2/25)
Corrado, ch. 7

23. Recent innovations (2/28)
Corrado, ch. 9

24. The Great Disintegration (3/1)
Schier, chs. 2, 3 & 4

25. Governance and Reform (3/3)
Schier, chs. 5 & 6

26. Campaign Finance Reform Presentations I (3/6)

27. Campaign Finance Reform Presentations II (3/8)

28. Class Deliberation and Vote on Reform Proposals (3/10)

***** Campaign finance reform papers due at my office by noon, 3/13*****