

Fordham University
Department of Political Science
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PORU 2211
Fall 2008

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American Political Parties

Course Description and Requirements

Welcome to PORU 2211 – American Political Parties. The focus of this course is on political parties and the role that parties play in American politics. In exploring this topic, most of our time will be spent focusing on the role of political parties in the electoral process. We will explore the role of parties in the recruitment and nomination of candidates, their role in campaigns, the public's identification with and their evaluation of political parties including the role that parties play in voter's electoral decisions. In addition, we will spend some time this semester examining the importance of political parties in the policy-making process. By spending this semester examining political parties, it will give us the opportunity to develop an understanding of the forces that shape contemporary American politics. In studying political parties, our goal is to develop generalized explanations of party politics based on solid empirical support for these explanations.

Course Requirements

In this course there will be two examinations (a midterm and a final) and a paper. Grades will be based on a total of 350 points. The numerical weights assigned to the exams and the paper is as follows:

Midterm examination 100 points
Paper 150 points
Final examination 100 points

The purpose of the examinations is to evaluate how well you can use the required readings and class materials to answer specific questions about American political parties. I expect that that you will be able to cite the readings on the syllabus as part of your answer to any exam question. Both exams are in-class essay exams. We will not have time to spend class time discussing every assigned reading. I encourage you to ask questions if there are aspects in the reading that are confusing. The final examination is cumulative. If your grade on the final exam is at least five points better than your grade on the midterm I will weigh the final exam grade twice and ignore the midterm grade.

In addition, I will be giving out bonus points based on class participation. You will be earn from 0 to 10 bonus points based on what you contribute to class discussions over the course of the semester. The number of bonus points received for class participation is based on my assessment of the quantity and quality of what you contribute. Bonus points will be assigned at the end of the semester. Semester grades will be assigned according to the schedule located on the last page of this syllabus.

For the paper, you are to select an issue from the list provided below. Using that issue as the basis of your paper, write a research paper that addresses the following questions:

- 1) What is each of the parties' current position on the issue?
- 2) Has the parties' position on the issue evolved over time?
- 3) How divided are the political elites within each of the parties on the issue that you have selected?
- 4) How does each party's political base affect the latitude that the party has on the issue?
- 5) Using the concept of "issue ownership", which party has tended to own this issue in past elections? [For a discussion of issue ownership read Petrocik, John R. 1996. "Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Aug., 1996), pp. 825-850 (available on JSTOR)].
- 6) What impact, if any, did the issue have on the outcome of the 2008 election and why?

The following is the list of issues that you are to select from:

- A) Stem Cell Research
- B) Immigration Reform
- C) Global Warming
- D) Gun Control
- E) Federal Minimum Wage
- F) Trade Policy
- G) Health Care Reform
- H) Role of Religion in the Public Realm
- I) Budget Deficits, Taxes and Balanced Budgets

In writing your paper, develop a clear, coherent argument that you defend based on the research that you have done. Provide empirical evidence that supports your argument. The paper should have an introduction, body and conclusion. Do not write the paper as a separate answer to each of the questions that I have posed. Instead, use sub-headings as a way of organizing the paper so that it has a coherent focus. The paper will be graded based on the clarity and originality of the paper's argument, quality of the research reflected in the paper including how well you use evidence to defend your points, and the presentation of the argument (i.e. organization, grammar, spelling, etc.). I expect that your papers will be approximately 15-20 pages not including tables, charts or references. Keep the paper focused - do not try to cover more than you reasonably can in the space that you have been allotted. Since this is a research paper, I expect that you will support all conclusions by citing and discussing the documentary evidence that supports your thesis. Be sure to cite what ever sources you use. Do not plagiarize. All sources used must be cited using either the APSR citation format (this will be discussed later in the semester) or a traditional footnote citation format. Cases of plagiarism will be dealt with harshly according to the University's policy regarding academic dishonesty. Plagiarism consists of copying or paraphrasing from a source without citing that source. It does not matter if the source is a book, article, or web page. You should be aware that the University has software that allows faculty to check student papers for plagiarism. I will check a random number of papers using this software and I reserve the right to check any paper that I suspect using this software. By remaining in the course you acknowledge that your paper may be checked for plagiarism. In a few weeks (October 2nd), I will ask you to indicate which of the issues you have selected for study. The final paper is due on December 1st. In addition to handing in a paper copy of your paper, you must also email me a copy of your paper. I strongly urge you to turn the paper in on the assigned date. Papers turned in after the due date may or may not (the discretion is entirely mine) be penalized. The maximum penalty for late papers will be a reduction of 5 points per day for each day the paper is late. Papers not turned in at all will receive a grade of 0. If you cannot complete the paper by the assigned due date, you must speak to me prior to the day the paper is due. All

papers are to be typed, double-space. In using material from the Internet beware that all sources are not created equal. Some sources have a particular partisan slant. You may not use Wikipedia, or any other encyclopedia, as a source for your paper.

Finally, some general ground rules. I am expecting that you will keep up with current developments regarding American political parties. On a regular basis, the news media focuses on issues involving parties and elections in contemporary American politics. Given the nature of the subject matter, students should also keep up with current developments involving political parties by reading the New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com/>) and/or the Washington Post (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/>). In addition, current news involving some aspect of political parties can be found on other news services including such media outlets as CNN, MSNBC, CBS, Reuters and the Associated Press. There are also several web sites that provide information regarding public opinion toward political parties. Some of the better sites include Pollingreport.com (<http://www.pollingreport.com>), Democracy Corps (<http://democracycorps.com/>) and the Gallup Poll (<http://www.gallup.com/>). For access to NES data, the survey used most often by Political Scientists to analyze American electoral behavior, look at the NES web page (<http://www.umich.edu/~nes/nesguide/gd-index.htm#2>). Finally, a number of web sights relevant to political parties are listed at the back of the Hershey book.

I also expect that you will come to class on a regular basis. You are responsible for organizing the other aspects of your life in such a way that they do not interfere with your commitment to this course. I fully understand that at times it may be necessary to miss class. That is why you are permitted four absences. Absences will not be excused except for acute medical situations. Excessive absences (i.e. more than four) will result in your grade being lowered. The last page of this syllabus lists the penalty for missing more than four classes. If, for any reason, attending class becomes a problem, you must speak to me in a timely fashion to discuss the problem. In addition, I expect that you will keep up with the readings and be prepared to engage in class discussions. Class discussions may be based on the assigned readings but class time is not meant to summarize the readings. We will not, however, have time to discuss each individual reading assignment during a class period. Whether or not we discuss an assigned reading, you are still responsible for its content. Feel free to raise questions about any of the readings at the beginning of class. I sincerely hope that we will be able to generate a good deal of class discussion. I normally prefer to call on volunteers to answer questions, but you should be prepared to answer questions about the readings if called upon. How well you answer questions when called upon will affect the evaluation of your class participation. Finally, my office hours, phone number and e-mail address are listed at the top of this syllabus. I encourage you to take advantage of my hours even if you just want to come by to discuss some aspect of politics or some other subject.

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The following are the scheduled dates for exams in this course as well as the due date for the paper:

Midterm Examination – Thursday, October 18th

Paper Due – Monday, December 1st

Final Examination - Thursday, December 18, @ 9:30 am

Required Readings

The following books are available for you to purchase at the bookstore:

- Aldrich, John H. 1995. **Why Parties?: The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America**. Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Brewer, Mark D. and Jeffrey M. Stonecash. 2007. **Split: Class and Cultural Divides in American Politics** CQ Press
- Hershey, Marjorie Randon. 2007. **Party Politics in America**, 12th edition. Pearson Longman.
- Nivola, Pietro S. and David W. Brady. 2006. **Red and Blue Nation?: Characteristics and Causes of America's Polarized Politics, Volume 1**. Brookings Institution Press
- Nivola, Pietro S. and David W. Brady. 2008 **Red and Blue Nation?: Consequences and Correction of America's Polarized Politics, Volume II**, Brookings Institution Press
- Stonecash, Jeffrey M. 2006. **Political Parties Matter: Realignment and the Return of Partisan Voting**. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Reading Assignments

The due dates listed for each of the readings are presented below. The dates do not necessarily mean that is the day that we will discuss that material in class. Predicting in advance dates that we will discuss specific material is difficult because I do not know in advance exactly when we will get to a specific topic. The reading assignments are posted in the order we will cover them in class. Keep up and complete the readings by the dates posted. We will not discuss all of the material in each of the books. You are still responsible for the material in the books. Feel free to ask questions about the readings even if we do not discuss a specific reading in class.

Political Parties and American Democracy – September 8th

- Hershey, chs. 1-5
- Aldrich, chs.1,2,6,8
- Galson and Nivola, ch 1 in Nivola and Brady I

Nominations, Elections and Campaigns – September 18th

- Hershey, chs. 9-12

Political Parties and Mass Polarization – October 20th

- Hershey, ch. 6
- Fiorina & Levendusky; Abramowitz; Jacobson ch 2 in Nivola and Brady I
- Dionne; Wolfe; Kohut ch 4 in Nivola and Brady I
- Hetherington; Brooks & Geer; Wattenberg ch 1 in Nivola and Brady II
- Brewer and Stonecash, entire book

Partisan Realignment – November 6th

- Hershey, chs. 7,8
- Stonecash, entire book

Political Parties and Governance - November 17th

Hershey, chs. 13-15

Aldrich, ch. 7

Brady & Han; Campbell; Cannon ch 3 in Nivola and Brady I

Sinclair; Foreman; Krehbiel ch 2 in Nivola and Brady II

Binder; Shapiro; Wittes ch 3 in Nivola and Brady II

Beinart; Wilson; Rauch ch 4 in Nivola and Brady II

Brady, Ferejohn & Harbridge; Campbell; Patashnik ch 5 in Nivola and Brady II

Assessment of Political Parties – December 8th

Hershey, ch. 16

Aldrich, ch. 9

Nivola & Galston; Polsby; Aberbach; Diamond ch 6 in Nivola and Brady II

Points lost for missed classes:

5 absences	6 points
6 absences	8 points
7 absences	10 points
8 absences	15 points
9 absences	20 points
10 absences	30 points
11 absences	40 points
12 absences	55 points
13 absences	70 points
14 absences	85 points
15 absences	100 points

Semester Grading Scale

A = 335	C+= 265
A- = 320	C = 245
B+ = 305	C- = 230
B = 295	D = 210
B- = 280	F = < 210