Course Description

This course introduces students to political parties in the U.S. political system. We will examine various aspects of parties – their organizational elements, the extent to which citizens identify with particular parties, and their role within the government. Our focus is on describing each of these three major elements, the linkages among them, and their influence within the electoral and policy processes. A comparative approach will be employed when possible as we examine parties on the national, state, and local levels. Such a perspective will enable us to address several fundamental questions: Do political parties enhance or detract from representative democracy? Do the two major parties in the U.S. provide real policy alternatives to voters? Over time, have parties become too powerful? Or have they become too weak in the current candidate-centered electoral environment to be effective players within the political process?

In addition to our substantive focus, we will also give attention to the methods used by scholars in answering important questions about political parties. One of our objectives is to assess the evidence uncovered by scholars. How do these findings comport with common perceptions or media accounts concerning political parties? While this is not a course on social science methodology, issues involving research design and analysis will play prominently in many of our class discussions.

Reading Materials

The following book is available for purchase in the bookstore:


In addition to the text, other required readings listed on the syllabus can be accessed through the class Moodle site for this course. The articles themselves (or links to them) are available for download.

Course Requirements

The grade for the course is determined by a student’s performance in the following areas:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation: quizzes, class activities, short assignments, etc.</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Party Project</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Letter grades will be determined as follows: A = 90 – 100 percent, B = 80 – 89 percent, C = 70 – 79 percent, D = 60 – 69 percent, and F = below 60 percent.

Participation: Class Discussions, Quizzes, and Brief Writing Assignments

Classes are generally conducted in a lecture-discussion format so it is important to keep up with the readings and to come to class prepared. Students are strongly encouraged to take part in class discussions. In order to do this, it is necessary to complete the readings in advance and to spend time thinking about them in a critical manner. Also, please
keep up with current political developments since these will often be used as examples in our discussions. I will occasionally ask you to provide a brief paragraph concerning the day’s assigned readings. I may also give you brief quizzes if I suspect that you are not keeping up with the readings. These assignments along with informed commentary and questions you provide in class throughout the semester will be assessed in calculating your participation grade.

State Party Project
A major portion of the course grade (25%) is determined by your work on a report and presentation about state party organizations in an assigned state. The report requires that you collect information on the activities of the state party organizations during recent elections and during the course of this year’s general election campaign. The final report is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, November 15 and students will make brief presentations on November 8 and 13. Details concerning the project will be provided in an additional handout.

Exams
There are two exams, a midterm and a final (dates are listed on the syllabus). These tests will consist of short-answer/essay style questions. Note that a makeup exam is only administered when a student can produce a valid written excuse. If you anticipate a problem, please let me know as soon as possible. Also, for anyone who has special needs or who requires accommodations through Disability Services, please advise me of your situation in advance of the exams so arrangements can be made.

General Policies

Academic Honesty
Students are required to abide by the academic conduct policies outlined in the LSU Code of Student Conduct (http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs). Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to: cheating on exams, plagiarizing, buying or selling assignments, and collaborating with others without permission. I reserve the right to investigate when I suspect a violation of any of these policies. All violations of the university’s academic conduct policies are turned over to the Dean of Students for adjudication.

Classroom Etiquette
Please be considerate to those around you who are trying to listen, take notes, and participate in class discussions. Please make every effort to be on time to class. Be seated and ready to begin at 10:30 and leave early only for emergencies. Turn cell phones and pagers to silent. Most importantly, do not talk during class. Disruptive students will be asked to leave immediately.

Recording Devices and Computers
No audio or video recording devices are allowed unless special permission is granted by the instructor. Please do not take photographs of the overheads. You are free to use laptop computers for class purposes (e.g., taking notes, looking up relevant information on the internet, etc.). But please do not simply play on the internet, check e-mail, or use social networking sites.

Late Assignments and Missed Work
All written assignments are due at the beginning of class. Penalties will be assessed based upon the circumstances, but will generally involve a substantial loss of points. In others words, be certain that I receive your written work at the beginning of class. Please note that for reasons of fairness to other students in the class, credit cannot be given at the end of the semester for missed exams or papers not handed in. In other words, when you experience a significant problem that prevents you from meeting a deadline or taking a test, it is your responsibility to let me know about it in a timely manner and to make arrangements to make up the missed work. Excuses must be provided within one week of your return, NOT at the end of the semester. Please recognize that excused absences are those involving an illness, some type of family emergency, or an official university function that requires your attendance. Absences due to one’s job are not excused absences. If there is a possibility that a regular job you have will interfere with your course obligations, I would suggest taking a course scheduled at an alternative time.
Graded Work
I do not make grades available on Moodle and I will not e-mail grades. I return major assignment and will allow time in class for you to view your mid-term exam. You are also free to come by during my office hours to look at your tests. During office hours I am happy to review your grades with you and talk with you about ways to improve your performance.

Special Needs
For students who have special needs or require accommodations through Disability Services, please advise me of your situation so plans can be made. Keep in mind that it is your responsibility to make timely arrangements through Disabilities Services for exams and other assignments as necessary.

Course Schedule

August 21  
Introduction to the Course

- No reading assignment.

August 23  
What Are Political Parties and Why Should We Study Them?

- **Text:** Hershey pp. 1-26.

August 28  
Approaches to Studying Parties

- **Reading #2:** Lupia, Arthur. 2000. “Evaluating Political Science Research: Information for Buyers and Sellers,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* (pp. 7-13).
- **Reading #4:** “Appendix: A Brief Introduction to Regression.”

August 30  
Development of Political Parties in the United States

- **Text:** Hershey pp. 27-46.

September 4  
Party Organizations at the State and Local Levels

- **Text:** Hershey pp. 47-68.

September 6  
Party Organizations at the National Level

- **Text:** Hershey pp. 69-90.
- **Reading #10:** Malbin, Michael. 2012. “The National Parties are Holding Their Own Financially at the Eighteen-Month Mark,” Campaign Finance Institute, Washington, DC.
September 11  
*Party Activists: Who They Are, What They Do, and Why They Do It?*

- **Text**: Hershey pp. 91-106.

September 13  
*Party Activists in the GOP*


September 18  
*Political Parties in the Electorate*

- **Text**: Hershey pp. 107-125.

September 20  
*Changes in Party Identification and Coalitions*

- **Text**: Hershey pp. 126-148.

September 25  
*Party Polarization in the Electorate?*


September 27  
*Parties and Voter Participation*

- **Text**: Hershey pp. 149-170.

October 2  
*Party Financing: Sums and Sources, and Rules*

- **Text**: Hershey pp. 229-256.

October 4  
*Mid-Term Exam*

October 9  
*How Parties “Choose” Candidates*

- **Text**: Hershey pp. 171-188.
October 11  Parties in Candidate Recruitment and Nomination


October 16  Parties and Presidential Nominations


October 18  Fall Break

October 23  Presidential Nominations Process


October 25  Party Conventions


October 30  Political Parties in the General Election


November 1  Minor Parties in U.S. Elections

- Text: Hershey: Re-read pp. 36-46.

November 6  Party in Government

- Text: Hershey: pp. 257-295

November 8  *** Presentations ***

November 13  *** Presentations ***
November 15  

*Party Influence in Legislatures*

***** Printed copy of State Party Project due at the beginning of class *****


November 20  

*Party Influence on Policy*

- Text: Hershey, pp. 296-312.

November 22  

Thanksgiving

November 27  

*Parties and Democratic Governance*

- Text: Hershey, pp. 313-327.

November 29  

*Summation and Review*

December 5  

Final Exam in this classroom on Wednesday, December 5 from 12:30-2:30 p.m.