

POSC-3215: AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES

Spring 2020

Instructor: Boris Heersink

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Faber Hall 667

Office Hours: Monday and Thursday, 12:30 – 1:30 PM and by appointment

Class Location and Time:

Keating Hall 215

Monday and Thursday, 2:30-3:45 PM

Course Description

Aim of the Course: Despite a long history of skepticism and outright hostility to the concept of factionalism from both voters and major political thinkers in the U.S. across most of American history, political parties have dominated the political process from the late 18th century until the current day. While there have been dramatic changes in the American party system, it is nearly impossible to envision what the American political system would look like without political parties. However, while parties are omnipresent, political scientists have struggled to identify how they affect political outcomes. Indeed, there remain major debates within the field about how to even define what parties actually are.

The aim of this course is to provide you with a thorough understanding of the history of American political parties, and the main theories within political science about the role they play in the political system and the way they influence political outcomes. To achieve these goals, we will be reading a number of different perspectives from political scientists who have debated these issues. When reading these works, and when discussing them in class, it is important to keep in mind that these authors are proposing answers to puzzles but, that in doing so, they may get it wrong. You will be expected to have a thorough understanding of the basic arguments put forward by the authors, but you should also be critical of those arguments.

Basic Rules

In-Class: You are expected to be present in class every session, and to participate in Q&A during class. You should make sure that you come to class having read all the readings for each day, and you should participate actively in our conversation about those readings.

To create an atmosphere in which all students feel comfortable participating and have the ability to achieve their full potential, civility during the discussions is vital. During our conversations we will inevitably come to talk about day to day politics, and it is very much possible that you will find yourself disagreeing strongly with points put forward by your fellow students (and, they with you!). While you should absolutely feel free to challenge other students, it is crucial that you should do so in a respectful way (and, of course, you can expect the same of your fellow students towards you).

Absences: If for some reason you cannot be present for understandable reasons (illness, personal circumstances clearly beyond your control, etc.) you should contact me as soon as you can (if at all possible, before the start of class). Note that in line with Fordham's attendance policy you should report any excused absences with documentation by filling out the [Excused Absence Form](#). I keep attendance and unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your participation grade.

Office Hours

If you have any questions or want to chat about the course, you can come to my office hours on **Monday and Thursday between 12:30 and 1:30 PM** (unless otherwise noted). My office is in 667 Faber Hall. If you want to meet but cannot make that time, send me an e-mail and we will schedule a meeting. You can also e-mail me with any questions or concerns – I try to respond to every e-mail within 24 hours. Office hours do not require an appointment so if you want to chat feel free to drop by. Also, you should not feel like you can only stop by if you have really specific questions: it's fine to stop by if you want to talk about the course more broadly.

Grade

Components: Your grade is based on participation in class (15%), a midterm (25%), a final (30%) and a research proposal (30%).

The midterm and final will both follow the same format. The questions will be a mix of multiple choice questions, ID terms, and open ended essay questions regarding both the readings and the material discussed in class. The midterm will cover all the material dealt with up until then; the final covers all material from the course but the multiple choice and ID term questions will predominantly focus on the material covered after the midterm. The midterm will be held in class on **February 27**. The final will be held **at the assigned time and location for this course**.

The research proposal will exist of a 5 page single-spaced paper engaging a specific puzzle regarding political parties in relation to the readings you will read in this course. On **April 6**, we will use our class to talk about how to design a research project in political science. We will use part of this time for you to brainstorm and design a research question for the proposal paper. You will be expected to provide me with a basic description of your topic and your research question in the next class on **April 16**. The paper itself must be submitted on **May 4** as a PDF file on **Blackboard**. Specific guidelines regarding the components of the

research design will be distributed after the first midterm. However, while doing the readings keep your eye open for a topic you might be interested expanding on for this assignment.

For participation, you are expected to actively engage in class discussion during each session. Your physical presence in class is a necessary but insufficient element of participation. That is, if you miss class for unexcused reasons you are not adding to your participation grade. However, being present but not participating does not add much either. The best way to participate is to make sure you have done the readings ahead of class and to answer questions raised by the instructor or other students. Raising your own questions also counts as participation. There may be a limited number of opportunities to earn participation credit through activities outside of class, such as participating in a department sponsored event during the semester. However, you should not count on those events occurring and if you are unable to attend them, there will not be alternative opportunities to earn extra credit.

Grading Scale and Calculation of Final Course Grade: For the midterm and final exam you can earn up to 100 points. Those points subsequently are converted to a letter grade which builds towards your final course grade in line with the scale below. For your research paper and participation you will receive a single letter grade which follows the point value outlined below.

Exam Points	Letter Grade	Points toward Final Grade
100-93	A	4.0
92-90	A-	3.7
89-87	B+	3.3
86-83	B	3.0
82-80	B-	2.7
79-77	C+	2.3
76-73	C	2.0
72-70	C-	1.7
69-60	D	1.0
59 and below	F	0.0

Your final grade is based on a weighted average of each of the points earned towards your final grade based on the percentages outlined above. That is, an A for a midterm adds 1 point ($4 * 0.25$) out of a total of 4 points you can earn for your final grade. Your final letter grade is based on the following scale:

Weighted Average of Points	Final Letter Grade
4.0 – 3.84	A
3.83 – 3.50	A-
3.49 – 3.17	B+
3.16 – 2.84	B
2.83 – 2.50	B-

2.49 – 2.17	C+
2.16 – 1.84	C
1.83 – 1.34	C-
1.34 – 1.0	D
0.99 and below	F

Grade Complaints: I will grade your performance in this course (on the exams and your participation) in comparison to your fellow students as well as predetermined expectations. This means that the grade you earn should be a fair representation of how you have performed in comparison both to my general expectations of all participants as well as your fellow classmates' work in this course.

It is possible that you may be unhappy with a grade. I am always willing to discuss your progress during the course to help you improve. If you believe the grade you received is an **incorrect** assessment of the quality of the work you produced, you can challenge your grade. If you want to do so, please email me to set up an appointment and bring with you the copy of your exam and a written description (approximately half a page) comparing your answers to those listed in the answer key that will be made available online after the exam, and explaining why you believe your grade does not accurately represent the quality of the work you submitted. We will subsequently discuss your work and I will assess whether I believe your grade should be changed.

Before you contact me about your grade(s), consider the following things. First, the goal of a grade reassessment is to produce a grade that is a fair representation of your performance: this means that any errors that lowered your grade will be corrected, but any potential errors that *increased* it will also be adjusted. A regrading process can thus result in a higher grade, the exact same grade, or a lower grade than what you received through the original grading process.

Second, a grade challenge means you must make a **specific argument** about why you think the grading does not reflect the **quality** of your work. It is not enough to state that you are confused by your grade, or that you feel that it does not reflect the amount of time and effort you put into the course. While I understand that both of those feelings can be very frustrating, they are not arguments for why a grade is not correct and I will not entertain grading challenges based solely on these arguments.

Finally, grades are not a negotiation: if you believe I made a mistake, you should feel free to challenge the grade. But the correct use of this process is not to look at your different grades at the end of the semester and to try to up one, or multiple, grade(s) with the sole goal of collecting enough points to increase your final letter grade. If you want to ensure you get the highest grade possible I would advice you to spend your time reaching out to me with questions *before* the exams, and not on trying to haggle about a grade afterwards.

Plagiarism and Other Violations of Code of Conduct: All assignments in this course fall under Fordham University's code of conduct. Any violation (including, but not limited to, cheating

on exams, and plagiarism) will result in the student being held accountable to the full extent of university guidelines.

Notes

Fordham provides me with a class list that includes your legal name. If you prefer to be addressed by an alternate name and/or gender pronoun, do not hesitate to let me know. You can do so in class, during my office hours, or by e-mail – whichever you prefer.

As a faculty member, I am – by law – a mandatory reporter and I am required to contact and provide information to Public Safety, the Dean of Students, or Fordham's Title IX Coordinator if I am provided with any information indicating that a Fordham student has been sexually harassed (verbally or physically), sexually assaulted, stalked, had domestic violence or dating violence occur in a relationship, or been a victim / survivor of any behavior that is prohibited by Fordham's Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures. Once reported, Fordham will seek to support any student and make efforts to stop the negative behavior, prevent it from recurring, and remedy its effects. It is important for you to be aware that there are three confidential places on campus where you can seek support or guidance from Fordham staff members who are **not** mandatory reporters: clinical counselors in Counseling & Psychological Services, pastoral counselors in Campus Ministry, and medical service providers in University Health Services. You can read more about this in the Student CARE brochure or visit www.fordham.edu/care or www.fordham.edu/sexualmisconduct for more information.

If you or someone you know is struggling with emotional or mental health concerns, and/or gender, sexual, or domestic violence, Fordham's Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) can provide (free) assistance. The Rose Hill office of CPS is open Monday through Friday and can be reached by phone at 718-817-3725. If you, or a student you know, is experiencing a mental health crisis or emergency that requires immediate attention contact Fordham's office of Public Safety at Rose Hill at 718-817-2222 (available 24/7).

Course Materials

Nearly all readings for this course will be made available online through Blackboard. The only exceptions concern:

Marjorie Randon Hershey, *Party Politics in America* (Boston: Pearson, 2017, 17th edition).

John Aldrich, *Why Parties? A Second Look* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Both books are available through the Fordham bookstore, as well as online bookstores. Note that the Fordham bookstore price matches textbooks with Amazon and Barnes and Noble on rentals and purchases.

With regards to the Hershey textbook: previous editions are also available on Amazon and at other online retailers at a considerably lower rate. I expect the differences between the 17th edition and recent other editions to be relatively minor, however if you choose to purchase a different edition than the one listed above it will be at your own risk.

Course Syllabus

January 13

Topic: Introduction to Political Science and the Study of Political Parties

Readings: No readings.

January 16

Topic: Why Do We Have Parties?

Readings:

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 1.

Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, Chapter 1.

January 20

Topic: No class due to Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Readings: No readings.

January 23

Topic: Parties and History: Realignment Theory I

Readings:

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 7.

January 27

Topic: Parties and History – Realignment Theory II

Readings:

David Mayhew, *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), Chapters 2 and 4.

January 30

Topic: Parties and History – The First and Second Party System

Readings:

Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, Chapter 3.

February 3

Topic: Parties and History – Party Machines in the Late 19th Century

Readings:

Scott C. James, “Patronage Regimes and American Party Development from ‘the Age of Jackson’ to the Progressive Era,” *British Journal of Political Science* vol. 36, no. 1 (2006) 39-60.

February 6

Topic: Parties and History – Towards a Polarized Party System

Readings:

Sam Rosenfeld, *The Polarizers: Postwar Architects of Our Partisan Era* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018) Chapters 1 and 3.

["The Partisan Divide on Political Values Grows Even Wider."](#) *Pew Research Center* (October 5, 2017).

February 10

Topic: Parties in Congress I

Readings:

Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993 – 2nd edition, 2007) Chapters 5 and 7.

February 13

Topic: Parties in Congress II

Readings:

Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) Chapters 1 and 2.

February 18

Note: We have class on Tuesday this week because the university is closed on President's Day.

Topic: Party Brands

Jeffrey D. Grynauviski, *Partisan Bonds: Political Reputations and Legislative Accountability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Chapter 2.

February 20

Topic: Presidents and Parties

Readings:

Daniel J. Galvin, *Presidential Party Building: Dwight D. Eisenhower to George W. Bush* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 2010), Chapter 1.

Boris Heersink, "Trump and the Party-in-Organization: Presidential Control of National Party Organizations," *The Journal of Politics* vol. 80, no. 4 (2018) 1474-1482.

February 24

Topic: Does the Party Decide?

Readings:

Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008) Chapters 1 and 7.

February 27

Topic: **Midterm Exam**

Readings:

No readings.

March 2

Topic: Parties as (Ideological) Coalitions

Readings:

Kathleen Bawn, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, "A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands, and Nominations in American Politics," *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2012) 571-597.

March 5

Topic: Parties and Policy Change

Readings:

David Karol, *Party Position Change in American Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Chapters 1 and 2.

March 9

Topic: Parties in the Electorate

Readings:

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapters 6 and 8.

March 12

Topic: No class.

Readings:

No readings.

March 16

Topic: No class due to spring break.

Readings: No readings.

March 19

Topic: No class due to spring break.

Readings: No readings.

March 23

Topic: Intra-Party Coalition Politics: Civil Rights I

Readings:

Eric Schickler, *Racial Realignment: The Transformation of American Liberalism, 1932-1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), Chapters 2 and 7.

March 26

Topic: Intra-Party Coalition Politics: Civil Rights II

Readings:

Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances: Race and Party Competition in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), Chapters 2 and 4.

Leah Wright Rigueur, *The Loneliness of the Black Republican* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University press, 2015), Chapter 7.

March 30

Topic: Partisanship and Gender: The Gender Gap in American Politics

Readings:

Susan J. Carroll, "Voting Choices: The Significance of Women Voters and the Gender Gap," in Susan J. Carroll and Richard L. Fox, *Gender and Elections: Shaping the Future of American Politics* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018, 4th edition) 78-115.

Jane J. Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986) Chapter 9.

April 2

Topic: Partisanship and Religion: The Religious Right

Readings:

Christopher Baylor, *First to the Party: The Group Origins of Political Transformation* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018) Chapters 8 and 9.

April 6

Topic: Research Methodology in Political Science

Readings:

Lisa A. Baglione, *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods* (Sage, 2016) Chapter 7.

April 9

Topic: No class due to Easter Break

Readings:

No readings.

April 13

Topic: No class due to Easter Break

Readings:

No readings.

April 16

Topic: And Now For Something Completely Different: Third Parties in American Politics

Readings:

Ronald B. Rapaport, "Winning Isn't Everything: Third Parties and the American Two-Party System," in L. Sandy Maisel and Jeffery M. Berry (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Groups* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010) 222-242.

April 20

Topic: National Party Organizations – The DNC and RNC

Readings:

Boris Heersink, "Party Brands and the Democratic and Republican National Committees, 1952-1976," *Studies in American Political Development*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2018) 79-102.

April 23

Topic: Can We Get Rid of Parties? Evidence from State Politics

Readings:

Seth Masket, *The Inevitable Party: Why Attempts to Kill the Party System Fail and How they Weaken Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), Chapters 1, 3, and 8.

April 27

Topic: Political Parties in the Trump Era: Where Do We Go from Here?

Readings:

Boris Heersink, "[How Does the Republican Party Solve a Problem Like Donald Trump?](#)" *Washington Post* (August 18, 2015).

Boris Heersink, "[No, the DNC didn't 'rig' the Democratic primary for Hillary Clinton.](#)" *Washington Post* (November 4, 2017).

Brian F. Schaffner, "[These 5 Charts Explain Who Voted How in the 2018 Midterm Election.](#)" *Washington Post* (November 10, 2018).

April 30

Topic: Catch-up class / Q&A

Readings:

No readings.