

POSC-3215: AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES

Spring 2024

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Faber Hall 667

Office Hours: Monday, 1:30 – 2:30 PM; Thursday, 1:00-2:00 PM and by appointment

Class Location and Time:

Dealy Hall 204

Monday and Thursday, 11:30 AM – 12:45 PM

Aim of the Course: Despite a long history of skepticism and outright hostility to the concept of partisan 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, as well as 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 assigned 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 and from me 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). With regards to health issues, I am of the strong belief that if you're sick, you're sick: so, if you are – get better, let me know, and report your absence to Fordham by filling out the [Excused Absence Form](#).

Do note that I keep attendance and while excused absences do not affect your participation grade, unexcused absences will have to result in a lowering of that part of your grade. Note that Fordham's official attendance policy is that for courses that meet twice a week it is not allowed to have more than four absences in total across the course. While having more than four unexcused absences does not automatically result in failing this course, excessive absences make it very difficult to receive a passing grade.

Office Hours

If you have any questions or want to chat about the course, you can come to my office hours on **Monday between 1:30 and 2:30 PM** and **Thursday between 1:00 and 2:00 PM** (unless otherwise noted) or email me to set up a Zoom meeting. My office is in 667 Faber Hall. 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. You should not feel like you can only stop by if you have really specific questions: it's fine to come to my office hours 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 open ended essay questions regarding the readings and material discussed in class. The midterm will cover all the material dealt with up until then; the final covers will predominantly focus on the material covered after the midterm though you may need to rely on some of the knowledge you gained during the first half of the semester. The midterm will be a take-home exam on **February 22**. The final will be a take-home exam and available **at the assigned time for this course during finals week**.

The research proposal will exist of a 10-page double-spaced paper engaging a specific puzzle regarding political parties in relation to the readings you will read in this course. On **April 15**, 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 share a draft of your research proposal with other students and discuss it in class on **April 25**. The paper itself must be submitted on **May 3** 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 and be actively engaged in class discussion and assignments. Raising your own questions also counts as participation.

Grading Scale and Calculation of Final Course Grade: For the midterm and final exams 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 based on the percentages outlined above. For example, the midterm is worth 25% of your final grade. If you earned a B+ for the midterm, this would earn you $3.3 * 0.25 = 0.825$ points towards your final grade. Similarly, an A- for participation earns you $3.7 * 0.15 = 0.555$ points towards your final grade. Adding all the weighted points for each assignment up produces your final grade, based on the following scale:

Total Earned Final Grade 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

Grade Complaints: I will grade your performance in this course 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 general expectations of all participants, as well as your fellow classmates' work in this particular course.

It is possible that you may be unhappy with a grade, and 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 send me a copy of your work and a written description explaining in detail why you believe your grade does not accurately represent the quality of the work you submitted. You must do so within a full week of receiving the grade. 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 carefully.

First, the goal of a grade reassessment is to produce a grade that fairly represents 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 re-grading 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. Both of those feelings can be very frustrating. But they are not arguments for why the grade is not correct, and I will not entertain grading challenges based solely on these arguments.

Third, as you are assessing your work in comparison to the answer keys or my comments, make sure you do not just look at the things you did right. You have to incorporate those things you missed or got wrong. It is quite common for students who received, for example, an A- to list all the things they got right when complaining about a grade. But those things are what earned you the A-. The question is whether there were mistakes or elements missing that reasonably cost you enough points to keep you below an A.

Fourth, students sometimes try to 'challenge' their grade through a roundabout way – effectively having the instructor defend why they graded the work the way they did. Often, those students do not provide arguments for why they disagree with the grade. If you are unsure what you did wrong and you'd like me to clarify, I am of course always happy to do so. But I will not engage the 'roundabout grade challenge': if you think the grade is incorrect, it is on you to identify what it is you think I did wrong and provide an argument for why the

grade would need to be corrected. If you cannot articulate why you think a grade is wrong, then that might just mean it is in fact a correct assessment of your performance.

Finally, grades are not a negotiation. They should reflect the quality of the work you produced. 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 advise you to spend your time reaching out to me with questions *before* the exams and paper deadline, and not on trying to haggle about a grade afterwards.

AI Use, Plagiarism and Other Violations of Code of Conduct: All assignments in this course fall under Fordham University's code of conduct. Generative AI tools are not permitted in this course. Students must rely on their own originality, creativity and critical thinking skills to complete assignments and engage with course material. Any violation (including, but not limited to, cheating on exams, relying on AI, and plagiarism) will result in the student being held accountable to the full extent of university guidelines. This includes self-plagiarism – meaning, cases where students re-use material they wrote themselves for other courses. While self-plagiarism might seem like an innocent act, it means you did not do original work as required for this course. It too can lead to negative consequences, including failing this course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university. If you aren't sure whether what you are doing is right or not, check in with the writing center or with me!

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, please do not hesitate to let me know! You can do so in class, by email, or during an office hour appointment – whichever you are comfortable with. Also, if during the semester I mispronounce your name or use an incorrect gender pronoun please do correct me – I want to get these things right.

If you have a learning disability for which you require accommodations, make sure to check in with the Office of Disability Services (<https://www.fordham.edu/student-life/disability-services/>). They will subsequently provide me with the appropriate documentation and instructions. If you have any questions or concerns about these accommodations, feel free to contact me!

Fordham's Writing Center (in Walsh Library at Rose Hill and in Quinn Library at Lincoln Center) provides individualized assistance to students for writing assignments. You can make an appointment – free of charge! – to meet with someone who will read your paper and discuss it in detail with you. I strongly recommend using this system. You can sign up for an appointment at https://www.fordham.edu/info/20126/writing_center.

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. Note that CPS also provides other services, including support groups for students that meet regularly throughout the semester. You can find more information about these services on the CPS website (<https://www.fordham.edu/student-life/safety-health-and-wellness/counseling-and-psychological-services/>). If you prefer to access mental health services outside of Fordham, New York City provides free mental health support through NYC Well (<https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/>).

If you, or a student you know, is experiencing a mental health crisis or emergency that requires immediate attention, please 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 exception concerns:

Boris Heersink, *National Party Organizations and Party Brands in American Politics: The Democratic and Republican National Committees, 1912-2016* (Oxford University Press, 2023).

This book is available for purchase through the Fordham bookstore and online through major booksellers (like Amazon, Bookshop.org, etc.).

Course Syllabus

Thursday, January 18

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

Readings:

Amelia Hoover Green, "How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps."

Monday, January 22

Topic: Why Do We Have Parties?

Readings:

John Aldrich, *Why Parties? A Second Look* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), Chapters 1 and 3.

Thursday, January 25

Topic: Parties and History: Realignment Theory I

Readings:

Marjorie Randon Hershey, *Party Politics in America* (Boston: Pearson, 2021, 18th edition), Chapter 7.

Monday, January 29

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.

Thursday, February 1

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.

Monday, February 5

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) Chapter 1.

Boris Heersink, *National Party Organizations and Party Brands in American Politics*, Chapters 5 and 6.

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

Thursday, February 8

Topic: Parties in Congress I

Readings:

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

Monday, February 12

Topic: Parties in Congress II

Readings:

Gary W. Cox and Matthew 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.

Thursday, February 15

Topic: Party Brands

Boris Heersink, *National Party Organizations and Party Brands in American Politics*, Chapter 1

Monday, February 19

No class due to President's Day.

Tuesday, February 20

Note: classes follow a Monday schedule.

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.

Thursday, February 22

Topic: **Take-home midterm exam**

Readings:

No readings.

Monday, February 26

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.

Thursday, March 1

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.

Monday, March 4

Topic: Parties and Policy Change

Readings:

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

Thursday, March 8

Topic: Parties in the Electorate

Readings:

Marjorie Randon Hershey, *Party Politics in America* (Boston: Pearson, 2021, 18th edition), Chapters 6 and 8.

Monday, March 11

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.

Thursday, March 14

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.

Monday, March 18

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.

Thursday, March 21

No class due to Spring recess.

Monday, March 25

No class due to Spring recess.

Thursday, March 28

No class due to Easter recess.

Monday, April 1

No class due to Easter recess.

Thursday, April 4

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.

Monday, April 8

Topic: Quantitative methods in political science research

Readings:

Boris Heersink, *National Party Organizations and Party Brands in American Politics*, Chapter 2

Thursday, April 11

Topic: Experimental methods in political science research

Readings:

Camille D. Burge, Julian J. Wamble, and Chryl N. Laird, "Missing the Mark? An Exploration of Targeted Campaign Advertising Effect on Black Political Engagement," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* vol. 8, no. 2 (2020) 423-438.

Monday, April 15

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.

Thursday, April 18

Topic: National Party Organizations – The DNC and RNC

Readings:

Boris Heersink, *National Party Organizations and Party Brands in American Politics*, Chapters 3, 8, and 9.

Monday, April 22

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

Readings:

Seth Maskett, *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.

Thursday, April 25

Topic: Research Proposal Workshop

Assignment: Prepare draft of your research proposal and share with group members *before* class.

Readings:

No readings.

Monday, April 29

Topic: Q&A / Catch-up Day

Readings:

No readings.