

Political Science 327
American Political Parties
Fall, 2009
MWF, 10:00-10:50
209 Graham Building

Charles Prysby
230 Graham Building
336-334-5048
email: prysby@uncg.edu
Office hours: MWF 9:00-10:00 am

SYLLABUS

This course examines political parties and elections in the United States. Among the topics we will cover are the structure of competition between the parties; social and ideological differences between the parties; how the parties are organized; how parties nominate candidates and attempt to elect them; and the overall role of political parties in the democratic process. Students should leave this course with a critical understanding of the functioning of political parties in contemporary America, including a perspective on how the electoral process in general and political parties in particular might be improved.

The concern will be primarily with the Democratic and Republican Parties, since they are the major political parties in this country and have been so for well over 100 years. Nevertheless, some consideration will be given to minor parties and independent candidates, as this topic raises some interesting questions about the political party system. Also, while this is a course in American political parties, some attention will be paid to political parties in other democracies in order to provide a comparative perspective.

An overriding concern of this course is to assess the role that political parties play in the democratic process in this country. In doing so, we will discuss why political parties are important for democracy, how well American political parties fulfill the role that we think that they should be playing in the political system, and what changes might be desirable in our political parties or electoral politics. The position paper topics all deal in some way with this general topic.

Because this is a course in political science, we will be concerned with how parties and elections can be studied. The collection and assessment of information to analyze and examine political phenomena will be discussed throughout the course, and the research paper will provide "hands-on" experience. I expect students to leave this course with an improved understanding of social science research. In order to achieve this goal, I have assigned a number of scholarly articles that report empirical research on political parties, and we will discuss the research methods and analysis of these studies in class.

This course has been designated as writing intensive. To help you develop your writing skills, two different types of papers will be required, along with brief reading summaries. The goal of this course is to improve your social science writing ability. This means, among other things, being able to make cogent arguments supported by relevant evidence. These points are discussed in more detail in the accompanying handout on writing in political science.

Finally, this course is a companion to PSC 332 (Voting and Elections), PSC 328 (North Carolina and Southern Politics), and PSC 326 (Elections, Law, and the Courts). These courses are designed to complement each other, but any one of them can be taken without having taken any of the others. Also, this course overlaps PSC 322 (American State Politics), which also may be of interest to students desiring work in this area. PSC 330 (Workshop in Practical Politics), which provides students with the opportunity to be directly involved in election campaigns, is another related course that may be of interest to students interested in political parties and electoral politics.

Course Goals

As a result of taking this course, students should be able to:

1. Critically discuss theories of the role of political parties in American democracy.
2. Analyze and evaluate the extent to which contemporary political parties fulfill the role that parties should play in American politics.
3. Collect, analyze, and interpret data on various aspects of political parties.
4. Analyze and evaluate proposals for reforming or improving the electoral process in the United States.

Books

The following books are available at the bookstore in paperback editions:

- Marjorie Randon Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, 13th edition, New York: Longman, 2009.
 Jeffrey Cohen, Richard Fleisher, and Paul Kantor, eds., *American Political Parties: Decline or Resurgence?*, Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2001.
 John Green and Daniel Coffey, eds., *The State of the Parties*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007.

While the three required books for the course cover a great deal of material, there are topics where some supplementary material is useful, so there also is a set of reserve readings for this course. Two of the reserve readings are journal articles; the other items come from the books listed below:

- Clark and Prysby, eds., *Southern Political Party Activists* (2004).
 Herrnson, *Congressional Elections*, 4th ed. (2004).
 Maisel, ed., *The Parties Respond*, 3rd ed. (1998).
 Jewell and Morehouse, *Political Parties and Elections in American States*, 4th ed. (2001).

All of the reserve reading items are available on-line. The course schedule portion of this syllabus provides further information on the assigned reserve readings, including when the readings should be completed.

I also have placed several books on closed library reserve because they may be useful to you for the research paper. All of these books are ones with chapters on politics in individual states. One (Appleton and Ward) has a chapter on each of the 50 states; the others have chapters on the southern states. Consult the reserve list for the details on these books, which are listed below.

- Appleton and Ward, eds., *State Party Politics* (1996).
 Bullock and Rozell, eds., *The New Politics of the Old South* (2009).
 Clark and Prysby, eds., special issue of the *American Review of Politics* (2003).
 Lamis, ed., *Southern Politics in the 1990s* (1999).
 Moreland and Steed, special issue of the *American Review of Politics* (2005).

Course Requirements

The grades for this course will be based on the following:

1. A research paper, based on library research, which focuses on the political party system of a specific state. This paper will involve drafts of individual sections, along with a final paper. Details of this assignment will be found on another handout.

2. A position paper, based on library research, which argues for or against a proposed feature of or change in political parties or related aspects of the electoral system, accompanied by participation in a class debate. Details of this assignment will be found on another handout.

3. Reading summaries, due throughout the course. There will be 16 summaries assigned. Each will be worth up to 10 points. Your best 8 summaries will be counted. The reading assignment to be summarized and the due date will be announced at least two class periods in advance. The summaries should be typed and limited to one single-spaced typed page. Summaries must be submitted in person during the class period in which they are due. If you are not present for a class session, you may not submit a reading assignment due that day, regardless of the reason for your absence. Since only 8 of the 16 summaries will count toward your grade, you have ample allowance for illness and other unavoidable absences. The purpose of these assignments is twofold: (a) to help you understand the readings better by having to summarize the key points; and (b) to make sure that you are prepared to engage in class discussions about the readings.

4. Class participation, including both the debate presentation and general contributions to class discussions (the debate will count for one-third of the class participation grade). Regarding class participation, simply showing up for class is not enough; you should come prepared to discuss the readings in class and you should participate in the class discussion. If you have questions about the readings, you should raise them in class. It also will be helpful for you to bring the assigned readings for that day to class, as we often will examine tables or charts in the readings.

The contribution of each component to the course grade is:

Research paper drafts (3)	60 pts
Research paper, final version	100 pts
Position paper	100 pts
Reading summaries (8)	80 pts
Class participation	<u>60 pts</u>
	400 pts

Students are expected to abide by the UNCG academic integrity policy for all written work submitted in this course. Among other things, this means that you should be careful not to plagiarize when you are writing your papers. Further information on the academic integrity policy, including information on plagiarism, can be found at: <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/>.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments

A. Introduction to political parties and party systems

1. Significance of political parties (August 26)

Hershey, chpt. 1.
Cohen, Fleisher, and Kantor, chpt. 5 (by Maisel).

2. The American political party system (August 28-31)

Hershey, chpt. 2.
Green and Coffey, chpt. 2 (by Reichley).

[September 2 and 4 will be devoted to library sessions; meet in the library computer lab]

3. Party competition (September 9-11)

Hofferbert, Richard. 1964. "Classification of American State Party Systems" *Journal of Politics* 26: 550-567 [e-reserve].

4. Minor parties (September 14-18)

Cohen, Fleisher, and Kantor, chpt. 11 (by Lowi).
Green and Coffey, chpt. 14 (by Rapoport and Stone).
Green and Coffey, chpt. 15 (by Collet and Hanson).

B. Political party differences--ideological and social

1. Party differences in the electorate (September 21-28)

Hershey, chpts. 6, 7.
Cohen, Fleisher, and Kantor, chpt. 2 (by Lawrence).
Cohen, Fleisher, and Kantor, chpt. 3 (by Fleisher and Bond).
Green and Coffey, chpt. 16 (by Kimball and Gross).
Green and Coffey, chpt. 18 (by Saunders and Abramowitz).

2. Party differences among elites (September 30-October 5)

Hershey, chpt. 13.
Cohen, Fleisher, and Kantor, chpt. 6 (by Crotty).
Cohen, Fleisher, and Kantor, chpt. 9 (by Davidson).
Green and Coffey, chpt. 4 (by Jackson et al.).

3. Mass-elite differences (October 7)

Jackson, John S. III, Barbara L. Brown, and David Bositis. 1982. "Herbert McClosky and Friends Revisited: 1980 Democratic and Republican Party Elites Compared to the Mass Public." *American Politics Quarterly* 10: 158-180 [e-reserve].
Clark and Prysby, *Southern Political Party Activists*, chpt. 8 (by Patrick et al.) [e-reserve].

4. The responsible party government model (October 9-14)

Hershey, chpt. 15.
Cohen, Fleisher, and Kantor, chpt. 8 (by Pomper).

C. Political party activists

1. Recruitment of party activists (October 16)

Hershey, chpt. 5.
Green and Coffey, chpt. 9 (by Keeter et al.).

2. Political attitudes and orientations of party activists (October 19)

Clark and Prysby, *Southern Political Party Activists*, chpt. 9 (by Prysby) [e-reserve].

3. Organizational activity of party activists (October 21)

Green and Coffey, chpt. 10 (by Ubertaccio).
Green and Coffey, chpt. 11 (by Blumberg et al.).

D. Political party organization

1. State and local organization (October 23)

Hershey, chpt. 3.
Green and Coffey, chpt. 12 (by Dulio and Garrett).

2. National organization (October 26).

Hershey, chpt. 4.
Maisel, *The Parties Respond*, chpt. 3 (by Herrnson) [e-reserve].

3. Party factionalism (October 28)

Green and Coffey, chpt. 3 (by Reiter).
Clark and Prysby, *Southern Political Party Activists*, chpt. 7 (by McGlennon) [e-reserve].

E. Nominating candidates

1. State and local nominations (October 30-November 2)

Hershey, chpt. 9.

2. Presidential nominations (November 4-6)

Hershey, chpt. 10.

F. Election essentials.

1. The campaign context (November 9)

Hershey, chpt. 11.

2. Campaign finance (November 11-16)

Hershey, chpt. 12.

Cohen, Fleisher, and Kantor, chpt. 7 (by Farrar-Myers and Dwyre).

Green and Coffey, chpt. 6 (by Dwyre et al.).

Green and Coffey, chpt. 7 (by La Raja et al.).

3. Electoral participation (November 18)

Hershey, chpt. 8.

Green and Coffey, chpt. 13 (by Shea and Green).

G. The general election.

1. Presidential and congressional elections (November 20)

Cohen, Fleisher, and Kantor, chpt. 1 (by Campbell).

Herrnson, *Congressional Elections*, chpt. 4 [e-reserve]

2. State government elections (November 23-30)

Jewell and Morehouse, *Political Parties and Elections in American States*, chpt. 7 [e-reserve].

H. Parties, government, and the political process (December 2-7).

Hershey, chpt. 16.

Cohen, Fleisher, and Kantor, chpt. 10 (by Binder).

Cohen, Fleisher, and Kantor, chpt. 12 (by Cohen and Kantor).

Green and Coffey, chpt. 20 (by Skinner).

Green and Coffey, chpt. 21 (by Butler).