

PSC 222: PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

Autumn, 2016

Dr. Wayne Steger
990 W. Fullerton, room 2103
(773) 325-4240 wsteger@depaul.edu

Office Hours: MW 11:30-12:30 & by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course examines political parties and elections in the United States. Much of the course focuses political parties and their role in political and electoral processes. Political parties have evolved over times from groups of elites in government to coalitions of state and local organizations and most recently to become networks of party insiders, aligned groups, and party activists. We will look at how and why these organizations and memberships have evolved over time as party coalitions fragment and reconstitute. Attention will be given to the role of political parties in recruiting and supporting candidates, raising funds, recruiting and organizing volunteers and especially to their impact framing political discourse and organizing political conflict in the U.S. Of particular note, we will spend a fair amount of time looking at the potential causes and consequences of political polarization, which may be one of the greatest challenges to the functioning of the American political system since the Civil War.

Finally, we will look at citizen's decision to vote/not vote, patterns of voting behavior, and aggregate election outcomes. "Who votes?" is a particular concern that has a great deal of impact on the outcome of elections and for the condition of democracy. The extent to which American elections are democratic depends on how we define democracy as well as patterns of voter turnout. We will conclude with an analysis of patterns of vote choice. Why do certain groups of people tend to vote Democratic or Republican?

The class will examine the 2012 presidential election in some depth. In this part of the class, we will read a series of chapters covering different aspects of the 2012 elections, including polarization of the political parties, ideology, party voting versus issue voting, and the effects of campaigns as mechanisms of voter mobilization and persuasion. Part of this examination will focus on the differences between the "systematic" and the "transient" factors affecting voter turnout and voter choice. Systematic factors are the more important from a theoretical standpoint. Systematic factors are those that transcend a single election cycle. Transient factors are those that matter in a particular election or are common in a given election year but which do not have much explanatory power beyond that election.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance & Participation	15%	Always (or as close as possible to that)
Partisan self-evaluation paper:	20%	Monday, September 26
Exam I:	30%	Wednesday, Oct 5
Final Exam:	35%	November 16 Final exam at 11:30-1:45

Paper guidelines and directions are attached at the end of this syllabus

REQUIRED READINGS:

Margorie Randon Hershey. 2011. *Party Politics in America*, 15th ed. Pearson-Longman.
John Sides, Daron Shaw, Matt Grossman & Keena Lipsitz. 2015. *Campaigns & Elections*. 2nd Ed.
Norton

Additional readings are posted to D2L. These are listed below by author and title.

TWO WARNINGS

Do not rely on your current knowledge of politics. People typically have highly biased perceptions and understanding of politics as a result of our existing beliefs and these biases are magnified by the selective reading of incomplete and biased information from the internet and the media. I've seen too many students in a class like this try to get by using their existing knowledge. Read the course materials. It's an important part of critical thinking—learning how to think about what we know in a critical manner so that you can better distinguish between what is fact and what is a fallacy.

Do not text or surf the web during class. If I catch you texting during a class, you will automatically lose one letter grade for the course. I reserve the right to have laptop users turn around their computers at anytime. If a laptop is open to something other than class-related sites, then you will lose one letter grade for the course (1/3 of participation points). Texting and surfing the web indicate that you are not engaged in a class and lack the self-discipline to focus on the task at hand.

OTHER CONCERNS:

Deadlines: I *am* going to be strict and insist that you turn in assignments on time. There are few valid excuses (e.g., medical reasons) for missing deadlines. Aside from excused delays, I will deduct 10% from your paper grade per class day an assignment is late.

Attendance and participation: Participation means active involvement in class discussions. Showing up but not contributing to discussion will earn you only six of the ten points possible for this part of your grade. If you **MUST** miss class, you are responsible for the material covered that day. You will be granted 3 absences—excused or unexcused. After that, absences negatively impact your grade by one-third of your participation grade per absence.

Academic Dishonesty: Work done for this course must adhere to the University Academic Integrity Policy, which you can review in the Student Handbook or by visiting Academic Integrity at DePaul University (<http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu>). The short and simple of it is this. If I catch you cheating, I will lower your grade. The extent to which your grade is lowered will depend on the magnitude of the offense. Pursuant to University policy, I will forward the action to the Academic Integrity Board, which may consider various actions up to and sometimes including suspension or dismissal from the university.

Copying material from another source (e.g., a book, other student, or webpage) without proper acknowledgment is cheating. *Cutting and splicing from sources culled from the internet is also cheating.* So be warned--JUST DON'T DO IT. See me if you have any questions about proper acknowledgment for your written work.

Learning Disabilities: Students who may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential.

- PLS Program (for LD, AD/HD) at 773-325-1677, Student Center #370, and/or
- The Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at 773-325-1677, Student Center #370

The Dean of Students Office (DOS) helps students in navigating the university, particularly during difficult situations, such as personal, financial, medical, and/or family crises. Absence Notifications to faculty, Late Withdrawals, and Community Resource Referrals, support students both in and outside of the classroom. Additionally we have resources and programs to support health and wellness, violence prevention, substance abuse and drug prevention, and LGBTQ student services. Please feel free to contact us at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/>.

STANDARDS FOR GRADING

Written work will be evaluated according to the following criteria.

A: designates work of *extra-ordinarily high quality*; reflects *thorough and comprehensive understanding* of the issues at hand; presents a clearly identifiable thesis and the arguments are clearly organized with supporting ideas and/or evidence.

B: designates work of *high quality*; reflects a clearly organized and *good understanding* of the issues at hand; presents a substantive thesis and argument with development and support of ideas.

C: Designates work which meets the requirements of the assignment; reflects some organization and development of ideas, reflecting an *adequate understanding* of the issues/concepts at hand, and/or tends to develop arguments in simplistic manner.

D: Designates work of *poor quality* that meets the minimum requirements of the assignment; but which demonstrates poor organization of ideas and/or inattention to development of ideas, grammar, and spelling; *treatment of material is superficial and/or simplistic* with evidence that the student *lacks understanding* of some concepts or ideas; may indicate that the student has not read assignments thoroughly.

F: Designates work of poor quality that *does not* meet the requirements of the assignment; fails to reflect an understanding of the issues at hand; fails to present organized arguments *or* fails to adequately support arguments with ideas; or which is not handed in on time.

Your **class participation** will be evaluated according to the following criteria.

A: Student has read the assignments and asks questions, expresses judgments and/or poses questions at each class session. Student is prepared at *all times* if asked to summarize assigned readings.

B: Student participates as above *most of the time*, and attends all class periods.

C: Student does not volunteer, responds only to direct questions, frequently remains silent during class discussions, and often is unable to summarize readings if called upon. Student may have absences but participation is adequate when in attendance.

D: Student does not volunteer, cannot respond to direct questions, keeps silent during class discussions, and is unable to summarize readings if called upon. Student may be frequently absent, but participation is often inadequate when in attendance.

F: Student sits silently in class, and fails to participate even minimally in class or group discussions. Student may be frequently absent even if participation is inadequate (silent) when student attends.

LECTURE TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1 (9/7): Introduction and course overview

- Parties as networks of activists, elites, groups and identifiers & officials in government
- Parties—definers of political competition & the lines of conflict
- Parties—mechanisms for overcoming & thwarting constitutional design
- Parties—mechanisms for accountability (responsible party argument)

Week 2 (9/12 & 14): Development of the political parties (**important readings**)

Hershey, ch. 1 & 2

Sides, et al., ch. 6

Bawn et al. “A Theory of Political Parties.” (D2L)

Week 3 (9/19 & 21): Organization and coalitions (activists, elites, aligned groups, and identifiers)

Hershey, ch. 3, 4

Hershey, ch. 5, 6

Paper on Party Self-Identification is due Monday, September 26

Week 4: (9/26 & 28) Party Identification & Party Ideology

- A moral/cultural issue-driven realignment
- Economic causes of realignment

Hershey, ch. 6 & 7

PEW survey on political party identification 2015 (D2L)

Magleby & Nelson, “Independent Leaners as Policy Partisans” (D2L)

Carmines, Ensley & Wagner, “Political Ideology in American Politics” D2L

Bartels, “What’s the Matter with ‘What’s the Matter with Kansas’” (D2L)

Week 5 (10/3) Realignment & Coalition Change

Hershey, ch. 7

Exam 1 in class: Wednesday, Oct 5:

Section II: Elections: process, voting and outcomes

Week 6 (10/10 & 12) Actors in campaigns: Candidates, Media, Donors, Groups
Sides, ch. 1, 2, 3, 7 & 8

Week 7 (10/17 & 19): Financing campaigns & campaign strategies
Hershey, ch. 12
Sides, et al. 4, 5

Week 8 (10/24 & 26): Nominations & general elections
Hershey ch. 9, 10, 11
Sides, et al. ch. 9, 10, 11

Week 9: (10/31 & 11/2): Voter turnout (who votes?)
Hershey, ch. 8
Sides et al., ch 12
Hanmer “Turnout in the 2012 election” (D2L)
“Voter Registration and Turnout” a US Census Bureau Study

Week 10 (11/7 & 9): Vote Choice (why people vote the way they do?)
Sides, et al., ch. 13,
Abramson, Aldrich & Rhode, “social forces and the vote” (D2L)
Abramson, Aldrich & Rhode, “Candidates, issues and the vote” (D2L)
Abramson, Aldrich & Rhode, “party loyalties, policy preferences & the vote” (D2L)

<http://www.people-press.org/obama-romney-voter-preferences/#all-registered-voters>

Week 11 (11/14): Is the electoral system broken or alive and well?
Hershey, ch. 15, 16
Sides, et al., ch. 14

Wednesday, November 16 Final exam at 11:30-1:45

The purpose of this assignment is to explore your own political beliefs, applying the course readings and lectures, to explain why you are a Democrat, Republican, Anarchist, Libertarian or whatever. The emphasis of your paper should be analytical explanation. To do this right, I will expect that your essay reflects familiarity and understanding of the readings relating to partisan identification and party strength/loyalty.

Page length is open, but the paper should be as short as necessary and no shorter. Your object here should be to convince me that you know what you are and that you understand why you are that way. I really don't care whether you are a Democrat, Republican, Green, Libertarian or independent. I do care that you realize what you believe and understand why you believe that. That is the purpose of the assignment. This is a project of introspection using the materials for this course.

Your paper should address the following points.

- 1 Identify your partisan beliefs, elaborating as needed to present as precise a picture of what you believe about your own partisan leanings. Simply identifying yourself as a weak Democrat or as a strong Republican is only a beginning point here.
- 2 **Explain why** you are a Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, Socialist or whatever. If you do not know enough about these things, read ahead in the course readings. At a minimum, your essay should reflect on the major factors influencing individuals' partisan identification. How have the following factors influenced you in your life?
 - a. Socialization factors (family political beliefs; educational background, peer groups—what influence have your friends had on your beliefs)
 - b. Demographic factors: race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, sexual preference.
 - c. Socio-economic factors: income, occupational status of family, social status into class (upper, upper-middle, middle, lower-middle, poor working class, etc).
 - d. Psychological factors: political efficacy, alienation, apathy,
 - e. Economic perspective (by which I mean the logic of rationality): the rational bases of your partisan inclinations based on your self-interests.
 - f. Socio-political factors: the influence of your current friends & associates
 - g. The influence of candidate/party images on your thinking
 - h. The influence of current issues on your thinking

Be sure to think about how you may be cross-pressured by the various forces/factors operating in your life, and link these to your political identification and ideological convictions

Guidelines for Papers:

1. Papers must be typed, double-spaced on white, unlined, 8.5" x 11" paper; with one inch margins
2. Papers must be printed in a 12 point font in Times New Roman font.
3. Papers must be stapled.
4. The number of typographical errors should be zero. Proofread!
5. Do not use contractions or otherwise abbreviate. You are not writing for your BFF.