

PSC 222: PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

Autumn 2019

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

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course examines political parties and elections in the United States. We will begin with an effort to understand the powerful psychological effects that partisan identification has on perceptions and evaluations of information. Democrats and Republicans perceive and think about the world differently. Partisanship as emerged as one of the fundamental social divides in American society, with Democrats and Republicans having strongly negative attitudes toward each other. This part of the class seeks to provide students with an understanding of the potency of partisanship as a force biasing our perceptions and understanding of the world. We will then move on to the roles of political parties 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. We will also looking at how the political parties have polarized over time, resulting in two tribal factions that divide Americans in ways that are problematic for American society and for democracy.

The class will examine the presidential election in some depth. In this part of the class, we will read a about presidential nominations, which can be viewed as a conflict among factions of a political party and among candidates over the issue and policy priorities that the party will stand for. We will also look at the roles of party activists and party elites in influencing the presidential nominations. The section of the general election will focus on the differences between the “systematic” and the “transient” factors affecting election outcomes. Systematic factors are the more important from a theoretical standpoint. Systematic factors transcend a single election cycle. Transient factors are those that matter in a particular election year but may matter less in other years.

Finally, we will look at citizen’s decision to vote or 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 groups tend to vote for either Democratic or Republican candidates.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance & Participation	10%	Always (or as close as possible to that)
Short paper on cognitive effects of partisanship:	10%	Thursday, Sept. 19th
Partisanship & ideology self -evaluation paper:	10%	Thursday Oct. 3rd
Exam I (Partisanship and Party organizations):	35%	Thursday, October 17th
Final Exam:	35%	Thursday, Nov. 21st 11:30-1:45

REQUIRED READINGS:

Margorie Randon Hershey. 2017. *Party Politics in America*, 15th ed. Routledge, ISBN-13: 978-1138683686

Alan Abramowitz, 2019, *The Great Alignment*. Yale University Press.

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 **TWO** 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.

- Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at 773-325-1677

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 there are 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

Sept. 12. Introduction and 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 both overcoming & thwarting constitutional design
- Parties—mechanisms for accountability (responsible party argument)
- Partisanship as a powerful social and psychological force

Sept. 17 & 19: The psychological dimensions of partisan conflict (it's in your head to begin with)

- Dan Kahan, “Ideology, Motivated Reasoning, and Cognitive Reflection” (D2L)
- Toby Bolsen, James N. Druckman, Fay Lomax Cook “The Influence of Partisan Motivated Reasoning on Public Opinion” (D2L)
- Iyengar and Westwood “Fear and Loathing Across Party lines” (D2L)
- Alan Abramowitz & Steven Webster, “The rise of negative partisanship and the nationalization of US elections in the 21st century,” *Electoral Studies*. (D2L)

Three page evaluation of the main ideas and empirical results of these studies. Answer these questions

- **Explain what motivated reasoning is.**
- **Explain how and why partisan identification influences public opinion**
- **What is the main point of Iyengar and Westwood’s paper about partisanship?**
- **What is negative partisanship and why does it matter?**

Paper one is due **Thursday, Sept. 19th**

Sept. 24 & 26: Development of the political parties & Theories of political parties

- Hershey, ch. 1 & 2
- Bawn et al. “A Theory of Political Parties.” (D2L)

Sept. 25 & 27: Organization and coalitions (activists, elites, aligned groups, and identifiers)

- Hershey, ch. 3, 4, 5

Oct 1 & 3rd: Party identification and Partisanship in the Electorate

- Hershey, ch. 6
- Magleby & Nelson, “Independent Leaners as Policy Partisans” (D2L)

PEW survey on political party identification 2015 (D2L)

PEW survey on political Polarization (D2L)

Paper on Party Self-Identification is due Thursday Oct. 3rd

Tues. Oct 8th: Party Coalitions & the Decline of the New Deal Coalition

- Abramowitz, ch. 1-2.

Thurs. Oct. 10th: from Dealignment to Realignment, Geography & the New Electorate

- Abramowitz, ch. 3-5

Tuesday, Oct. 15th: Authoritarianism, Racial Resentment & Negative Partisanship

- Abramowitz, ch. 6-7

Exam 1: Thursday, October 17th

Section II: Elections: process, voting and outcomes

Oct. 22 & 24 Presidential Nominations

- Hershey, ch. 9 & 10
- Steger, Conditional Arbiters of Presidential Nominations

Oct. 29 & 31: Presidential Election: Financing, Media, Groups & Campaign effects

- Hershey, ch. 11, 12

Nov. 5 & 7: Voter Turnout

- Hershey, ch. 8,
- <http://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2017/03/america-goes-polls-2016.pdf>

Nov. 12 & 14: Vote Choice (why people vote the way they do?)

- Abramson, Aldrich & Rhode, “party loyalties, policy preferences & the vote” (D2L)
- <http://news.gallup.com/poll/196172/aversion-candidate-key-factor-2016-vote-choice.aspx>

Nov. 19th: Election outcomes (congressional vs. presidential)

TBD

Thursday, November 21 Final exam, 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. I will expect your essay to reflect 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. 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 an independent-leaning toward one of the two parties, a weak or strong partisan, or as something else 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. Demographic factors: race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, sexual preference.
 - b. Socialization factors (family political beliefs; educational background, peer groups— what influence have your friends had on your beliefs)
 - c. Socio-political factors: the influence of your current friends & associates
 - d. Socio-economic values: income, occupational status of family, social status into class (upper, upper-middle, middle, lower-middle, working class, etc). Do you think a party will better serve your economic self-interest (and why)
 - e. Cultural values: how do the political parties align with your cultural values on social issues like religion, attitudes toward law and order/the police, authority, gender roles and racial equality, sexual identity,
 - f. The influence of candidate/party images on your thinking
 - g. The influence of current issues on your thinking
3. How are you **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, 8.5" x 11" paper; with one-inch margins
2. Papers must be printed in a 12 point 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.