American Political Parties  
T-TH 11:45 - 1:05 pm ES 147

Course Description  
This course will examine the theory, organizational forms, and dynamics of American political parties with special attention to the relationship between race, ethnicity and partisanship.

Required Readings and Viewings
- Christopher S. Parker and Matt A. Barreto, *Change They Can't Believe in: The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in America*
- Tasha S. Philpot, *Race, Republicans and the Return of the Party of Lincoln*
- Films: *The Candidate* (110min.), *Game Change* (118min.), *The War Room* (96min.)

Course Requirements
- Three, in-class, one-page reaction/commentary essays based on *The Candidate, Game Change* and *The War Room*. One page per movie. You will be provided blue books to write these three essays. You will be expected to write four blue book pages, double space, for each essay. Four blue book pages, double space, is, more or less, the equivalent of one page, typed, double space paper with one inch margins. I will grade these essays as one unit (15% of course grade).

- Because these are just one-page, please focus on the following questions: What do you think was the purpose for making each of these films? What is the main point addressed in each? Did the films serve their purpose well? Why or why not? Was there anything in the films that you found objectionable? Why? What did you learn or realize as a result of watching these films? What questions did they raise in your mind about political parties, candidates, campaigns, elections, and/or voting?¹

- One, 5-page paper, typed, double space, describing and analyzing the partisan make-up of your city or town of origin, due the last day of classes. What is the partisan make-up of your city or town of origin? What is the historical background of your city or town’s partisan alignment? Select a historical or contemporary issue of significance in your city or town of origin and explain what role parties have played in the emergence, development and resolution of that issue. This paper must be turned in the last day of classes in person, at the end of the class. Students who submit their papers in person without attending class will incur a penalty of half a grade. Late papers without a compelling reason for lateness will not be accepted (30% of course grade).

¹ This section draws from *Handy-Dandy Guide To Writing a Reaction Paper*  
• For this paper focus on the questions outlined above and keep in mind the following general guidelines. The most elementary requirement of an essay or paper is to have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Your introduction could give the reader a bit of historical background about your city or town. Don’t overdue it; write just enough to allow the reader to get a general sense of the place.

• In the middle section of the paper you will address the questions and their role in the issue you select.

• The end of your paper should bring your narrative to a coherent closing by elaborating on the implications of your findings. How significant or interesting are your findings? How does the partisan setting in your city or town compare to related references in the readings we did in class?

• To write your paper you should use the University Libraries, the World Wide Web, and other information sources. Keep in mind that beginning, middle and end demarcate the form of your essay paper. Your writing will be a process of finding, evaluating, and citing information sources presented in diverse formats from multiple sources. The finished product will integrate this information within a single textual document.2

• Fifteen random quizzes. Three will be dropped (25% of course grade).

• Class participation (20% of course grade). Class participation will be structured so that each student, with notice, will have sufficient opportunity to comment on class readings. Students who are absent on the day when they are supposed to comment will fail the requirement for that given day and will not be allowed to make up the assignment unless their absence is justified and documented according to university policy. Keep in mind that due to the size of the class, even if the absence is justified, there may not be an opportunity to make up the assignment. While attendance will not be taken, absences will be noted and taken into account.

• Presentations will be peer evaluated. Presenters will answer the following questions: What is the main point of the chapter/reading? What did you learn? What did you find particularly interesting or provocative? Is(are) there any value judgment(s) that you disagree with and/or assumption(s) that is(are) unfounded? Explain. Do you have any questions that you would like to share with the class? Focus on conceptual rather than factual questions, e.g. How does Libertarianism address the issue of community? rather than What year was the Libertarian party founded? The second question is legitimate but you can find the answer easily on your own. Let’s use class time to analyze, probe, debate questions.

• Proper demeanor and engagement (10% of course grade). This portion of the course grade will be based on my assessment and evaluation of your presence and behavior during the semester. I notice everything and take everything into account, e.g. if you are routinely absent, absent-minded, late, disruptive, disrespectful, texting, browsing the internet, etc. I assume that everyone knows how to behave appropriately during class

2 This section draws from University guidelines online at http://www.albany.edu/generaleducation/
and unless a student’s disregard for the basic norms of classroom behavior is flagrant, I will not put anyone on the spot (then again, I may; I am unpredictable in this regard). I may call your attention privately but I will do so only on a discretionary basis.

**Office Hours**
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-11:00 am HU-B16. If you are unable to meet during scheduled office hours, we can meet at a mutually convenient day and time by appointment. Contact information: jcruz@albany.edu E-mails sent after business hours will not be answered until the following day. E-mails sent after 5pm on Fridays will be answered the following week during business hours. Business hours are 9am-5pm.

**Grading**
The course is graded A-E. The course grade will be tabulated according to the weights indicated above for each requirement. Letter grades will be converted into scores between 0-100 and graded according to the scale noted below. Letter grades will be converted to the top score in the range for each grade. For example, if the grade for your 5-page paper is a B+, your score will be 89.

Individual participation beyond the structured opportunities through statements and questions will be taken into account in determining the course grade, with a particular emphasis on borderline cases. An example of a borderline case is someone scoring 89 in the final course tabulation. If that student makes no additional, distinctive and significant contribution to class participation during the course of the semester, he/she will receive a grade of B+ instead of an A- or even an A for the added participatory value.

In making borderline determinations, I reserve the right to judge whether contributions are worthy or not. For example, statements or questions that reveal that a reading or readings have not been done or that do not measure up to standards of reason and civility are not only discouraged but will not be considered meaningful contributions.

**Grading Scale**

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<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-95</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>94-90</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>89-85</td>
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**Policies**
There will be no opportunities for extra credit in this class. You either meet the requirements specified in the syllabus or you don’t.
Concerning standards of academic integrity, freedom of expression, and attendance and timely completion of course requirements please refer to:
http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html

Concerning medical excuses please refer to:
http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml

Please also note that, as indicated in the University's Undergraduate Bulletin: “Each instructor retains the right to modify the syllabus and give notice in class of any modifications in a timely fashion. Students are responsible to apprise themselves of such notices.”

I retain the power to judge and/or decide on any situations, terms, conditions, and stipulations not specified herein, nor prohibited by reasonable academic and administrative standards.

Course Schedule

August
26 – Introduction
28 - Lecture: The idea of a party system

September
2 – Lecture: Parties and Democratic Governance
4 - "Freedom Rocks" available on Blackboard
9 – "The Crooked and the Dead" available on Blackboard Democratic primary.
11 - "Game Change-Barack in a Box" available on Blackboard
16 - Hershey, 1-2
18 - Hershey, 3-4
23 - Hershey, 5-6

25 - NO CLASSES, Rosh Hashanah.

30 - Hershey, 7-8

October
2 – Hershey 9-10
7 – The Candidate - 65 min. viewing, 15 min. writing.
9 - Finish The Candidate - 45 min. viewing, 15 minutes final writing, 20 minutes discussion.
14 – The War Room - 65 min. viewing, 15 min. writing. Mid-term point.
16 - Finish The War Room - 31 minutes viewing; 15 minutes final writing; 25 minutes to discussion.
21 - Hershey, 11-12

23 - NO CLASS. Profesor Cruz at PRSA conference.

28 - Game Change - 65 min. viewing, 15 min. writing.
30 - Finish Game Change - 53 min. viewing, 15 min. final writing, 10 min. discussion.
November
4 – Discussion of *Game Change* - 20 minutes; Hershey, 13-14 **Election day**.
6 – Hershey, 15-16
11 - Philpot, 1-3
13 - Philpot, 4-6
18 – Philpot, 7-9
20 – Parker and Barreto, Introduction, 1
25 –

**27 - NO CLASSES, Thanksgiving break**

December
2 – Parker and Barreto, 2-3
4 – Parker and Barreto, 4-5
9 – Parker and Barreto, 6. **5-page paper due, in person, in class.**