

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an in depth examination of American political parties in the post-New Deal era. How and why have American parties changed in recent decades? What are consequences of the presence and power of other actors in the electoral and political process, especially interest/advocacy groups and the many forms of mass media? How does the current configuration of these actors in American politics affect policy-making? What can we expect from political parties in the future? In this class we will examine the historical development of the American party system, its current nature, and the status of parties in shaping political competition and electoral participation. We will examine who the parties are today, the ideas they represent and their current organizational forms. We will assess the rules that shape parties and elections, the competition that parties face from groups and candidates, and the developing 2016 elections. In the final portion of the course we will look at the status of our parties in government, especially in light of the Obama presidency and the shifts in the partisan control of Congress.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Marjorie Randon Hershey (2013). The Future of American Parties. Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield.

Daniel J. Hopkins and John Sides, editors. (2015) Political Polarization in American Politics. New York: Bloomsbury Press.

All other required readings are available on our Blackboard page.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Exams:** There will be a midterm and a final exam. The midterm is worth **20%** and will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer. The final will be multiple choice, short answer and essay during finals week (**20%**).

**Case questions:** We will have small group discussion of five specific cases that represent interesting situations for parties in current politics and practice. Each case will have a folder in blackboard that includes readings and guided questions on the readings. A two page memo with the answers to all of the guided questions is due at the start of class on the day the case is assigned for discussion. (**5% each = 25%**).

**Case reaction paper:** Students may choose any case from the course to write a longer (5 page) reaction paper. Details on this assignment will be included in each case file after our in-class discussion. (**20%**).

**Election Wednesdays:** Each week will spend ½ of our Wednesday class discussing a topic associated with the upcoming 2016 election. A team of 3 or 4 students will be responsible for leading the discussion by developing some start up questions designed to get classmates to identify the key details of the readings and follow up questions and observations connecting the discussion to course themes. (**5%**).

**Quizzes:** There will be pop quizzes that cover the readings and concepts from lecture throughout the course of the semester, worth 10% of the grade. I will drop the lowest score.

**Late papers:** Papers are due at the start of class on their due dates. I will not accept late case question submissions. Late case reaction papers will be accepted, but at the cost of a full letter grade for missing the first deadline, and an additional letter grade for each additional 24 hrs late. All in-class writing assignments may only be written in class as they occur.

**Cell Phones and Lap Tops:** Please make sure your cell phone is turned off as soon as class begins. I view using and checking your cell phone during class as disruptive behavior. I do not allow students to use lap top computers during class.

**Academic Honesty Policy:** Students are on their honor to be ethical and honest in carrying out all the assignments and requirements of this course. Any violations of this code, such as cheating, copying, plagiarism, or misrepresentation of one's own work, will meet with the appropriate penalties and discipline as outlined in UAlbany regulations. If you have an unclear picture of what constitutes plagiarism, or the limits of acceptable group collaboration, please ask me for clarification. It is also the responsibility of every student to report any observed instances of cheating and plagiarism. Disciplinary actions for such offenses are severe, and include loss of course credit, suspension, and expulsion from the university.

**Special Needs Policy:** Students who have special needs due to learning or other disabilities will be accommodated, and should inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester. Students who request accommodation will be asked to provide appropriate documentation, which may be obtained through the student services office.

## Party History and Definition

8/26 Introduction  
8/28 Responsible or Pragmatic Parties? *Brewer and Stonecash, Election 2014 folder*

### The Origins of American Parties

8/31 *Federalist #10, Hershey Ch 1*  
9/2 *Election Wednesday 9/2 folder*  
9/4 *Hofstadter,*

9/7 \*\* no class \*\*

9/9 *Election Wednesday 9/9 folder, Silbey*

### Parties and Political Change

9/11 *Hershey Ch 7 pp. 130 -138, Hopkins Ch 1*

9/14 \*\* no class \*\*

9/16 *Election Wednesday 9/16 folder*

9/18 **Case Folder: The New York State Senate**

### From Machines to Modern Organization

9/21 *Hershey Ch 3*

9/23 \*\* no class \*\*

9/25 *Hershey Ch 5*

## The Parties Today

9/28 *Ginsberg and Crenson*  
9/30 *Election Wednesday 9/30 folder*  
10/2 *Hershey Ch 4*

### Partisanship and Political Independence

10/5 *Hershey Ch 6*  
10/7 *Election Wednesday*  
10/9 **Case Folder: Organizing the Grassroots**

