RPOS 334 American Political Parties
Class #8785
Fall 2018
T-TH 11:45 - 1:05 pm HU 133
Prof. José E. Cruz

Course Description

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

Learning Objectives

After taking this course students will demonstrate:

1. An understanding of theories of political parties, types of party systems, and the historical development of political parties in the United States;

2. An understanding of the importance of political parties for democratic governance and of the reasons why partisanship is maligned in American politics;

3. An ability to analyze and assess different sources of information and data about political parties;

4. An understanding of the intersections between race, ethnicity, and party politics in the United States; and

5. An understanding of the methods used by political scientists to analyze and evaluate political parties and party systems.

Required Reading


Recommended Readings


**Course Environment**

This course will be taught interactively through lectures and discussion of readings in plenary and small groups. During lectures you need to take good notes since lecture material will not be posted on Blackboard.

During each half of the semester there will be three review sessions prior to the mid-term and final exams. During these sessions the class will be divided into small groups and students will compare notes on three sets of the topics examined, one set per session, and write possible questions for the exams. During each session we will answer the questions written and the instructor will design the exams based on a selection of student questions and his own. To be successful, this process requires excellent attendance to class and good note-taking during lectures. Guidelines for these review sessions will be provided in writing before the sessions.

I notice everything and take everything into account. If you are routinely absent, late, disruptive, disrespectful, texting, improperly browsing the internet, etc., your grade will be affected negatively.

**Course Requirements**

1. Class participation (**20% of course grade**). Class lectures will include questions intended to promote discussion and deliberation. During discussion and deliberation the instructor will play three roles: facilitator, devil's advocate, and provider of information. As a facilitator the instructor will guide exchanges between students making sure that rules of civility and critical thinking are followed. As a devil's advocate the instructor will push students to substantiate their positions through reasoned argumentation. As a provider of information the instructor will supplement the facts presented by students and/or clarify points of contention when necessary.

To prepare for class discussions of the assigned reading you should read the material with a view toward answering the following questions: What is the main point of the chapter? 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 empirical questions. A conceptual question is: What kind of democracy is envisioned in the Democratic Party? An empirical question is: In what year was the Republican 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, and debate.

2. Mid-term exam (25% of course grade). The mid-term exam will be objective, i.e., a combination of multiple-choice, true and false, and fill-in-the blank questions. The exam will be based on the material covered during the first half of the term.

3. One 5-page research paper, typed, double spaced, in Times New Roman 12 font with one inch margins, describing and analyzing the most recent local election (for mayor or city council) in your city or town of origin focusing on the role of political parties, due the last day of classes (30% of course grade). For background and ideas on how to structure and write your paper you will watch Nat Bates for Mayor—Corporate Influence on Local Politics which is available on Blackboard. Your paper should answer the following questions: 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? What role did parties and partisanship play in the election? If the election is formally non-partisan, how did partisan orientations and/or party organizations and resources play out in the campaign and outcome? This paper must be turned in the last day of classes in person, at the end of the class. Late papers without a compelling reason for lateness will not be accepted.

For this paper focus on the questions outlined above and in addition 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 overdo 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. For example: How significant or interesting are your findings? How does the partisan setting in your city or town compare to related references in the topics examined in class? What is your own evaluation of the role of parties on the issue discussed in the paper?

To write your paper, you should use academic and periodical sources available at the University Libraries, the World Wide Web, and other information sources.\(^1\)

4. Final exam (25% of course grade). The final will also be a combination of multiple-choice, true and false, and fill-in-the blank questions. The exam will be based on the material covered during the second half of the term.

\(^1\) This section draws from University guidelines online at http://www.albany.edu/generaleducation/
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 time by appointment. Contact information: jcruz@albany.edu E-mails sent after business hours may not be answered until the following day. E-mails sent after 5pm on Fridays will be answered the following week between 9am and 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 according to the scale noted below.

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<td>B+ 3.30</td>
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<td>C+ 2.30</td>
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<td>E 0.00</td>
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<td>B 3.00</td>
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Exam scores will be converted to grades according to the following scale:

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<tr>
<th>Score Grade Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 93-100</td>
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<td>B+ 87-89</td>
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<td>C+ 77-79</td>
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<td>D+ 67-69</td>
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<td>E 0-59</td>
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<td>A- 90-92</td>
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<td>B 83-86</td>
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<td>C 73-76</td>
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<td>D 63-66</td>
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<td>B- 80-82</td>
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<td>C- 70-72</td>
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<td>D- 60-62</td>
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Policies

There are no opportunities for extra credit in this class.

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.

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 130, 518-442-5490, DRC@albany.edu). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations.

Course Schedule

August
28 – Introduction; watch Nat Bates for Mayor-Corporate Influence on Local Politics on Blackboard as background and template for your research paper.
30 - Lecture: The Idea of a Party System

September
4 – Lecture: Parties and Democratic Governance
6 - Lecture: The American Two-Party System
11 – Lecture: Parties as organizations
13 - Lecture: The party in the electorate
18 - Lecture: The party in government
20 - Lecture: APSA Report: Responsible Parties?
25 - Lecture: Party Competition and Campaign Finance
27 - Lecture: Candidate Centered Politics

October
2 – Lecture: Party Decline
4 – Lecture: Political Justification and Partisanship
9 - Review
11 – Review
16 - Review (Mid term point)
18 - Mid-term exam
23 - Stasi, Fractured Parties
25 - Stasi, Fractured Parties
30 - Stasi, Fractured Parties

November
1 – Stasi, Fractured Parties
6 – Stasi, Fractured Parties
8 - Lecture: Third Parties
13 - Lecture: The Tea Party
15 - Lecture: Partisanship and Race
20 – Watch The Candidate. Write a 250-word reaction paper and submit by e-mail in a word file on or before November 27.
27 - Comments on The Candidate; Lecture: Partisanship and Ethnicity
29 - Review
December
4 – Review
6 – Review **5-page paper due, in person, in class.**
13 - Final exam, 10:30am -12:30