

## **POSC 341/441: Political Parties and Elections**

**Karen Beckwith, Professor**

**Clark Hall 308  
TTh 10:00-11:15am  
Spring Semester 2023**

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Office Hours via zoom: Monday and Wednesday 2:30-3:30pm or by appointment

“On the whole, the development of parties seems bound up with that of democracy, that is to say with the extension of popular suffrage and parliamentary prerogatives.”

Duverger, *Political Parties*

“[P]olitical parties created democracy and ... modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties. As a matter of fact, the condition of the parties is the best possible evidence of the nature of any regime.”

Schattschneider, *Party Government*

### **COURSE OUTLINE AND REQUIREMENTS**

**Political Parties and Elections** is an examination of political parties, elections and voting behavior in the United States. As linkage organizations, political parties help to organize opinion and to mobilize voters. Relatively free of state interference (and completely unmentioned in the US Constitution), US political parties are distinctive in their instrumentalist nature: their purpose is to win elections. In addition, they help to organize elections and campaigns; they nominate candidates for office; they intend to govern; and, once in office, structure the internal workings of Congress (and of state legislatures and other governmental institutions). They also function to represent public policy preferences within government.

US political parties are distinctive for several reasons. In comparison with the industrialized democracies of West Europe, the US is a federal presidential political system, with a single-member plurality electoral system for electing Members of Congress. These factors function to limit effective competition to only two major parties, and the Democrats and the Republicans continue to encompass all electoral competition at the national level. The extent to which the two parties have become increasingly competitive and polarized is a current subject of debate, as are the range of explanations offered for party polarization. Additional issues include changes in campaign finance and the results for candidates and political parties, the influence of women in party electorates, the impact of changing voter demographics, the extent of voter suppression and election fraud, and the protection of voting rights. This course will address these questions, with particular attention to the 2020 congressional elections.

**Two books are required for this course**, listed below:

Matt Grossman and David A. Hopkins. 2016. *Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sidney Tarrow. 2021. *Movements and Parties*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Additional readings** support the required books; these are extensive and provide a deeper understanding and analysis of elections and electoral systems. The additional readings are identified in the **Schedule of Readings and Assignments**, below, and are available on the course Canvas site. Students are encouraged to read a daily national newspaper (e.g., the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*).

There are several excellent political science blogs that include a focus on US politics, including *The Monkey Cage* (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/monkey-cage/>); *Mischiefs of Faction* (<https://www.mischiefsoffaction.com/>), *Election Updates* (<http://electionupdates.caltech.edu/>), and the *Scholars' Strategy Network* (<http://www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/>). Students may wish to peruse some of these blogs from time to time, for timely political science analysis and news related to US political parties and elections. Additional sites, such as *RealClearPolitics* (<http://www.realclearpolitics.com/>), *Fair Vote* (<http://www.fairvote.org/>), *Frontloading HQ* (<http://frontloading.blogspot.com/>), and *Ballot Access News* (<http://ballot-access.org/>), provide polling data, information about candidate status, and other useful evidence. Political party sites, such as *GOP* (<https://www.gop.com/#>) and the *Democratic National Committee* (<https://www.democrats.org/>) may be helpful (see also, e.g., <http://www.lp.org/> for the Libertarian Party and <http://www.gp.org/> for the Green Party). Finally, candidates and campaigns have their own websites as well; students may find these useful for following a specific candidate.

In addition to these, please refer to the *Research Resources* list, provided on the course Canvas site.

**Evaluation of student performance** in this course will be based on the following criteria. First, each student is expected to attend class and to be prepared for each class meeting by having read, in advance, the materials assigned for that day. Students should be prepared to discuss the material in detail in class every day, and all students are expected to participate. Students are expected, and obliged, to comport themselves, in class, in a professional manner. Professionalism refers to adherence to standards of behavior and performance expected from political scientists. This includes, but is not limited to, courteous attention to other speakers; engagement with the work at hand; appropriate use of language; and, of course, adherence to university standards of academic integrity. Informed class participation and professionalism are requirements of the course, and account for 10 percent of the final course grade.

Second, students will complete two short research papers, each of which is worth 20 percent of the student's course grade. A separate *Guidelines for Short Research Papers* discusses the details of these papers. The *Guidelines* are available on the course Canvas site.

Third, students will complete a final research paper, worth 25 percent of the course grade (see *Guidelines for Final Research Papers* for details concerning the final paper, available on the course Canvas site). Students will also have responsibility for presenting their final paper results to the class in the last two weeks of the semester. The final paper presentation is worth 10 percent of the student's course grade. Presentation guidelines are provided in the *Guidelines for Final Paper Presentations* (available on the course Canvas site).

Fourth, each student will have responsibility for facilitating discussion during one class meeting; the student facilitating discussion for the day will also submit a brief summary discussion report. Discussion facilitation is worth 10 percent, and the summary discussion report is worth 5 percent, of the student's course grade. Discussion facilitation is assigned by the professor, and *Guidelines for Discussion Facilitation and Report* are available on the course Canvas site.

It is a requirement of this course that students use their CWRU email account for correspondence with the professor.

Students are not to record or to photograph class sessions, or to share recordings of class sessions with others; this course requirement honors and protects the privacy of rigorous in-class discussion.

**Standards of professionalism and academic integrity** are integral components of this course. Students are reminded that they are obliged to understand, to uphold, and to comply with the Academic Integrity Policy of the University. A copy of the Code may be found online at <http://students.case.edu/groups/aiboard/policy.html>. Students who do not understand the Academic Integrity Policy after having read it should make an appointment to discuss it with me; indeed, I welcome this discussion and encourage students to contact me in advance of any assignment about which they have doubts or questions. It is a course requirement that students read the University's Academic Integrity Policy.

**Note that students are required to attend all classes and to complete all course assignments.**

## **SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

January 17      **Introduction to the Course: Parties, Elections and Democracy in the US**

January 19      **Why Elections and Why Parties?**

READ: E. E. Schattschneider, *Party Government*, Chapters 1 and 3 [available on Canvas]

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January 24      **Political Parties and the Party System in the United States**

READ: Grossman and Hopkins, *Asymmetric Politics*, Chapter 1; Matthew Green, "[The Struggle to Select a Speaker](#)," *Mischiefs of Faction*, January 8, 2023; and Jason Willick, "[The House spectacle highlights a key difference between the parties](#)," *Washington Post*, January 6, 2023.

January 26      READ: Skocpol, "The Elite and Popular Roots of Contemporary Republican Extremism," in Theda Skocpol and Caroline Tervo, eds., *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020) [available on Canvas].

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January 31      READ: Grossman and Hopkins, *Asymmetric Politics*, Chapter 2

RECOMMENDED: Douglas J. Ahler and Gaurav Sood, "The Parties in Our Heads: Misperceptions about Party Composition and Their Consequences," *Journal of Politics*, 80 (3), 2018: 964-981; and Joshua N. Zingher, "Polarization, Demographic Change, and White Flight from the Democratic Party," *Journal of Politics*, 80 (3), 2018: 860-872.

February 2      READ: Grossman and Hopkins, *Asymmetric Politics*, Chapter 3; and John V. Kane, Lilliana Mason, and Julie Wronski, "Who's at the Party? Group Sentiments, Knowledge, and Partisan Identity," *Journal of Politics*, 83 (4), 2021: 1783-1799 [available on Canvas].

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February 7      READ: Grossman and Hopkins, *Asymmetric Politics*, Chapters 5 and 6

February 9      DISCUSSION

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February 14     **Primary Elections and the Nominating System**

READ: Aldrich, “The Invisible Primary and Its Effects on Democratic Choice,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, January 2009: 33-38; and Kevin Reuning and Nick Dietrich, “Media Coverage, Public Interest, and Support in the 2016 Republican Invisible Primary,” *Perspectives on Politics* 17 (2), 2019: 326-339 [available on Canvas]

February 16     READ: Heather Frederick, “Reforming the Presidential Primary System: The Voter Turnout Initiative,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, January 2012, pp. 51-57, and Elaine C. Kamarck, *Primary Politics*, Chapter 3 [both available on Canvas]; and Blake Hounshell and Lisa Lerer, “[How Democrats’ New Primary Calendar Changes the Chessboard](#),” *New York Times*, December 4, 2022.

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February 21     **Reapportionment, Redistricting, and the Electoral College**

READ: “[Redistricting Criteria](#),” National Conference of State Legislatures; and “[What Redistricting Looks Like in Ohio](#),” *FiveThirtyEight*, October 11, 2021.

February 23     DISCUSSION

FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE BY EMAIL

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February 28     **Campaign Finance and Money to Run**

READ: Yasmin Dawood, “Campaign Finance and American Democracy,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2015, 18: 329-348; Michael Barber, “Comparing Campaign Finance and Vote-Based Measures of Ideology,” *Journal of Politics* 84 (1), 2021; and *Federal Election Campaign Act* (1974), pp. 1-11, 39-41, 60-91, 95-101.

RECOMMENDED: *Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act* [available on Canvas]; <http://www.fec.gov/pages/brochures/fecfeca.shtml>; [http://www.fec.gov/pages/bcra/bcra\\_update.shtml](http://www.fec.gov/pages/bcra/bcra_update.shtml); <http://www.fec.gov/law/litigation.shtml>.

March 2     READ: *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) ([https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/424/1#writing-USSC\\_CR\\_0424\\_0001\\_ZS](https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/424/1#writing-USSC_CR_0424_0001_ZS)), *passim*; and *McConnell v. Federal Election Commission* (2003), *Syllabus* (<https://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/02-1674.ZS.html>).

CANDIDATE SELECTION FOR SECOND PAPER DUE BY EMAIL

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March 7     **Campaigning and Campaign Constraints**

READ: Benjamin Melusky, Eric Loepp, and Kristin Kanthak “Candidate Emergence and the Success of Women,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 2020: 440-446; and Gary Jacobson, “How Do Campaigns

Matter?”, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2015, 18: 31-47 (available on Canvas)

March 8 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

March 9 Lecture by Irene Lin, Democratic Party Campaign Manager

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March 14- March 16 SPRING BREAK

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March 21 **Who Gets to Participate in Elections?**

READ: Henry Brady, and John McNulty, “Turning Out to Vote: The Costs of Finding and Getting to the Polling Place,” *American Political Science Review* 105 (1), February 2011: 115-134; Matt A. Barreto, Stephen A. Nuño, and Gabriel R. Sanchez, “The Disproportionate Impact of Voter-ID Requirements on the Electorate—New Evidence from Indiana,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, January 2009, pp. 111-116; and Zoltan Hajnal, John Kuk, and Nazita Lajevardi, “We All Agree: Strict Voter ID Laws Disproportionately Burden Minorities,” *Journal of Politics*, 80 (3), July 2018: 1052-1059.

RECOMMENDED: [Voting Rights Act](#) (1965); *Help America Vote Act* (2002; available on Canvas); *US Constitution*, Article I, Sections 2, 3.1, 4.1; Article II, Section 1; Amendments 12, 15, 17, 19, 23, 24, and 26 (<https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution>).

March 23 DISCUSSION

SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE BY EMAIL

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March 28 READ: Tarrow, *Movements and Parties*, Introduction and Chapter 1

March 30 READ: Tarrow, *Movements and Parties*, Chapters 6 and 7

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April 4 READ: Tarrow, *Movements and Parties*, Chapter 8; and Larry M. Bartels, “Partisanship in the Trump Era,” *Journal of Politics*, 80 (4), 2018 [available on Canvas].

April 6 DISCUSSION

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April 11 **Party Reform and Democracy**

READ: William D. Hicks, Seth C. McKee, and Daniel A. Smith, “Contemporary Views of Liberal Democracy and the 2016 Presidential Election,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 2021: 33-40 (available on Canvas)

April 13 NO CLASS; PROFESSOR ATTENDING MIDWEST POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

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April 18 In-class presentations

April 20 In-class presentations

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April 25 In class presentations

April 27 **Conclusion to the Course**

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**FINAL PAPERS DUE FRIDAY, MAY 11 BY 11:00AM**