

AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES

Course Description:

This course studies American political parties and the American political party system, including the history and functions of our two-party system. Political parties can usually be described in three ways: (1) the party in the electorate, (2) the party as an organization outside of government, and (3) the party as an organization in government. Paramount among these is the party in the electorate: the campaigning and electoral function. This is the basic description of the course, along with the following topic outline.

Required Texts:

- (1) Marjorie Hershey and Paul Beck, *Party Politics in America*
- (2) Stephen Wayne, *The Road to the White House*

Examinations:

Course requirements will include a mid-term and a final examination. With regard to examinations, both material covered in the class lectures and required readings will be considered "fair game" for test questions. Both the mid-term and final examinations will be of the "written" or "essay" variety, possibly also including identification items. Each examination will constitute 50% of the course grade.

Topic Outline:

- I. **Democracy and Political Parties**
(definition of democracy; democratic procedures; relation of democracy to the growth of political parties)
- II. **Political Party Systems**
(types of political parties; characteristics and functions of political parties; differences between two-party and multi-party systems)

Hershey and Beck, chapter 1
- III. **History of American Political Parties**
(political conflict in America; the development of America's two-party system from Federalist/Anti-Federalist factions to Republicans and Democrats)

Hershey and Beck, chapter 2
- IV. **Election Laws and Rules**
(election laws and party rules regarding the nomination and election of party candidates)

- V. **The Power of Political Parties: A Lesson in History**
(political party power and corruption in the 1800s; the decline of political party power in the 1900's)

Wayne, chapter 1
- VI. **Party Organization outside of Government**
(state and local party organizations; the national party organization; activists and rank-and-file party members; nomination and election functions)

Hershey and Beck, chapters 3-5
- VII. **Parties and Nominations**
(the role of direct primaries, party caucuses, and party conventions in nominating party candidates)

Hershey and Beck, chapters 9-10
Wayne, chapters 4-5
- VIII. **Party in the Electorate: the Campaign**
(candidates and their campaigns; the art and science of building a campaign organization and mobilizing and converting voters)

Hershey and Beck, chapter 11
Wayne, chapter 6
- IX. **Theories of Voting**
(sociological, psychological, rational, and ideological theories of voting)

Wayne, chapter 3
- X. **Causes of Voting**
(party, candidate, and issue influences on the vote)

Hershey and Beck, chapters 6-8
Wayne, chapter 8
- XI. **Election Results since the 1932 Party Realignment**
(results of specific elections in the 1932-2000 period)
- XII. **Elections and the Media**
(the role of media in campaigns and elections; political commercials and television reporting)

Wayne, chapter 7
- XIII. **Parties and Campaign Finance**
(the role of money in campaigns; the power of PACs; election laws on campaign finance; the need for campaign finance reform)

Hershey and Beck, chapter 12
Wayne, chapter 2

XIV. **Party Organization in Government**

(the role of the President as party leader; presidential effectiveness with Congress; party organizations in Congress; the independently motivated Congressperson)

Hershey and Beck, chapters 13-15

XV. **Party Responsibility Models for Government**

(different ways of conducting politics and making parties more politically responsible)

XVI. **Party Reform: Is There a Need?**

(different ideas for party reform)

Wayne, chapter 9

XVII. **Parties and the Political Future**

(Democratic Party dominance for the future or a Republican realignment? the role of the independent voter in the future? the possible impact of future third parties like Ross Perot's party?)

Hershey and Beck, chapter 16