American Political Parties
PSC 316
Spring 2011

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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 10-12
754 SWKT, x2-7503

Course Description

American political parties are much like Mark Twain’s statement about himself in his old age: “Reports of my death are greatly exaggerated.” Parties have been killed off and brought back to life many times over the history of the nation, particularly in the last century. The literature on parties in the past 40 years or so reflects that, especially titles of books about American political parties: The Party’s Over, The Party Has Just Begun, and The Party Goes On.

Yet, political parties are important in American politics today. They play a role in organizing campaigns, choosing candidates, getting out the vote, assisting voters in choosing policy options, organizing government, and making policy. Other players in American politics such as candidates, groups, and the voters take parties seriously. Parties matter.

In this course, we will examine a number of facets about political parties including why we have a two party system, what the role is for third and minor parties, what the party organization is like, why people identify with a party, the role of parties in political participation, the nature of the party activist, the role of parties in nominations and general elections, the party’s relationship with the media, the importance of campaign finance, and the party’s role in government. Finally, we will discuss trends affecting political parties and speculate on where they are going.

Requirements

Midterm Exam - 25 percent
Final Exam - 25 percent
Research paper - 20 percent
Campaign Plan - 20 percent
Campaign Plan Critique - 5 percent
Class Participation - 5 percent

Research Paper
You will be expected to write a research paper on a topic related to American political parties, campaigns, and elections. You may choose the topic. However, I need a two page prospectus describing your paper's thesis and how you will test the thesis. That prospectus is due (in hard copy) by May 4 by 5 pm. The paper (which should be at least 15 pages in length) is due June 15 by 5 p.m.

The paper should prove a thesis. The thesis will be of your choosing and the process of choosing is critical to the development of analytical skills. Make sure the thesis is narrow enough to address in a paper of this length.

Some examples of theses:

- Political parties are better organized today than they were 30 years ago.
- The higher the level of socio-economic status and education of an individual, the greater the likelihood of political participation.

If you decide to change the topic, alert me no later than November 5. Following that date, your chosen topic will be the topic of your paper. Do your research early in order to assure that you are not caught at the end with an unmanageable paper. This paper must be unique to this class, unless approved by the instructor in advance.

Some hints about grading:

1. The minimum page length is mandatory. I will not even read a paper of less than 15 pages. It will be returned with a grade of zero.

2. Please thoroughly proofread your written work. Spell checkers and grammatical programs make this task easy. There is no excuse for these mistakes. If there are more than three mistakes of this character on a page, I will reduce the grade by one half letter grade (for example, A to A-) for each page.

3. Any information used from other sources must be fully cited, not just direct quotations. The paper should draw on at least 20 relevant academic sources. Almost all of these should consist of secondary sources (books and scholarly articles). A few can include primary sources (such as films, interviews, public opinion surveys, speeches, Congressional reports, etc.). Popular sources such as newsmagazines and newspapers should be used only when no better source is available (for example to cite some very recent event). Do not use Internet sites unless they are known, reliable sources offline. Do not use encyclopedias (especially Wikipedia), either online or hard copy. Also, I will not grade a draft without citations and a citation page (or endnotes or footnotes). Such a draft automatically receives a failing grade.

4. Make sure your paper includes a one-sentence thesis statement, a definition of terms used in the thesis that may be unclear to the reader, an overview describing how the paper is organized, and a method section discussing your research methodology. Avoid the use of first person except when discussing your methodology.
Campaign Plan

You will be expected to write a campaign plan for a prospective presidential candidate of your choosing from the list below. The report will consist of an examination of how your candidate can win the presidential nomination, except for President Obama (that would be on how he can win the presidency). The plan should cover facets such as the strengths and weaknesses of your candidate and the expected serious competition, campaign finance, campaign themes, policy issues, states to emphasize, necessary organization, the role of the media, which groups to court and how to do so, etc.

I do not want you to contact campaign staff and get their assessment of the campaign. You must rely on public sources – news articles, political descriptions of the district, candidate websites, etc. Two students cannot take the same candidate, so send me an e-mail with your candidate preference to make sure you get the candidate you wish.

The campaign plan will be due on May 27 by 5 pm. Be prepared to give a ten minute oral presentation of your campaign plan on May 31 or June 2, as assigned. E-mail your campaign plan to everyone else in the class as well on May 27. Two other students will be assigned to critique the campaign plan. Everyone else should be prepared to ask questions.

Possible candidates:
Democrats: Barack Obama
Republicans: Haley Barbour, Michelle Bachmann, Herman Cain, Mitch Daniels, Newt Gingrich, Rudy Guiliani, Mike Huckabee, Jon Huntsman, Gary Johnson, Sarah Palin, Ron Paul, David Patraeus, Tim Pawlenty, Buddy Roemer, Mitt Romney, Rick Santorum, Donald Trump
Independent: Michael Bloomberg

Required Texts

Marjorie Hershey, Party Politics in America, 14th ed., Longman, 2011 (PPA)

Reading and Discussion Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 26 -</td>
<td>Introduction; History of Parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 28</td>
<td>Two Party System; Third and Minor Parties</td>
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<td>May 3</td>
<td>Party Organizations; Party Activists</td>
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<td>May 5</td>
<td>Party Identification; Party Coalitions</td>
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<td>May 10, 12</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 17 -</td>
<td>Voting and Participation; Party Nominations</td>
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Plagiarism/Other Work

While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the internet; as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers. See http://www.byu.edu/honorcode for specific examples of intentional, inadvertent plagiarism, and fabrication, falsification. Work for other courses will not be accepted for assignments in this course.

Sexual Harassment

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU’s policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at 2-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 2-2847.

People with Disabilities

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully,
please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (378-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the SSD office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Employment Office at 2-5895, D-282 ASB.