American Political Parties
PSC 316
Winter 2012

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Office Hours: Wednesdays from 3-5 pm or by appointment
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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 half 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 discuss why parties survive. Our discussion will include an examination of 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.

Learning Outcomes

Students will understand:

The origins of the two party system
The role of third and minor parties
How parties are organized
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 in party functioning in elections
The party’s role in American governmental institutions

Requirements

Two Midterm Exams - 25 percent each
Final Exam - 25 percent
Debate - 10 percent
Candidate Plan - 10 percent
Campaign Involvement - 5 percent

Exams

Two midterm exams will occur during the semester. The final exam will not be comprehensive. It will only cover the material following the 2nd midterm.

Debate

Two debates will be held during the semester. The dates are in the class schedule below. The debate topics are:
- The U.S. Should Create At-Large Congressional Districts Within Each State and Elect Members of Congress Through Proportional Representation Instead of Single Member Districts
- Party Candidates Should be Selected Through Party Caucuses Rather than Direct Primaries

Campaign Plan

You will be expected to write a campaign plan for a congressional or statewide (governor or senator) candidate. The campaign plan will outline strategy the candidate should employ to win either the party’s nomination or the general election, depending on the candidate. The plan should discuss how the candidate should approach various facets of the campaign, including fundraising, endorsements, campaign themes, issues, and events. In addition, the plan should lay out how relationships with the following should be handled in order to contribute to candidate success: interest groups, the media, and national and state party organizations. The plan needs to candidly discuss the candidate’s strengths and weaknesses as well as the nature of the opposition.

The plan should use information about the electorate (demographic, party affiliation, economic and social affiliations, and past voting patterns) to discuss voter outreach strategies. 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. You will be expected to make a five minute oral presentation of your report later in the semester. The course documents section on blackboard has a listing of good sources of information on political and demographic background of districts/states.
Possible Candidates:
Presidential – Obama, Romney, Gingrich
Utah -
Governor – Herbert, Sumsion, Philpot, Cooke
U.S. Senate – Hatch, Liljenquist, Ashdown
U.S. Congress – 1st District – Bishop; 2nd District – Clark, Stewart, Buck,
Willoughby, Eagar; 3rd District – Chaffetz; 4th District – Matheson, Wimmer,
Sandstrom, Love

Campaign Involvement

You will be expected to volunteer for a partisan electoral campaign or a party organization locally. This should be within Utah County unless you wish to do it in your hometown. Also, if it is a candidate campaign, it must be a competitive race. That means there more than one candidate waging an active campaign. You must work for only one candidate or party. Once you have started with one, you need to continue with that candidate or party organization. Possible races include governor, U.S. Senate, Congress, state legislature, or county commission.

This campaign involvement must not be with the same candidate you are writing a campaign analysis report on nor can it be an opposing candidate in that campaign. For example, if you are working for Gary Herbert, then you cannot write on Herbert, Ken Sumsion or Morgan Philpot.

You will be expected to work for at least 20 hours on behalf of the campaign and write a five page report describing your experiences and relating some lessons you learned from the involvement. Your campaign report will be due on April 11. Your report needs to include a table detailing what you did for each of the 20 hours.

By January 24, you need to have contacted a candidate or party and secured a volunteer position and submit a one paragraph description of who you will be working for and who the contact person with the campaign you arranged this volunteer opportunity with. It could be the candidate, a campaign manager, or a volunteer coordinator.

Required Texts


Recommended -
Regular reading of some combination of the following:
Local/State - UtahPolicy.com, Deseret News, Salt Lake Tribune’s Political Cornflakes -
http://www.sltrib.com/blogs/outofcontext

Reading and Discussion Topics

**January 5 -** Introduction  
**Reading**  
- SP 1, 2

**January 10, 12 –** Definitions; History of Parties  
- PPA preface and 1

**January 17, 19 -** Two Party System; Other Parties  
- PPA 2; SP3

**January 24, 26 -** Party Organizations; Party Activists  
- PPA 3-5, SP 4-10

**January 31 - MIDTERM EXAM (In Testing Center)**

**February 2, 7 -** Party Identification; Party Coalitions  
- PPA 6 and 7; CC 6-8, 10

**February 9, 14 –** Voting and Participation  
- PPA 8; SP 14-17; CC 4, 5

**February 16 –** Party Nominations  
- PPA 9

**February 23 -** Debate - *The U.S. Should Create At-Large Congressional Districts Within Each State and Elect Members of Congress Through Proportional Representation Instead of Single Member Districts*

**February 28 -** Presidential Nominations  
- PPA 10; CC, 1

**March 1, 6 -** Parties in General Elections  
- PPA 11; CC 2, 9, 11

**March 8 - MIDTERM EXAM (In Testing Center)**

**March 13 -** Campaign Finance  
- PPA 12, SP 11-13

**March 15 – Media**  
- PPA 9

**March 20 -** Debate - *Party Candidates Should be Selected through Party Caucuses rather than Direct Primaries*

**March 22 –** Party in the Legislature  
- PPA 13, SP 18-20

**March 27, 29 – Campaign Reports**

**April 3 – Party in the Executive; Judiciary**  
- PPA 14 and 15

**April 5 – Party Government**  
- PPA, 15

**April 10 - Future**  
- PPA16; CC 12

**Final Examination – April 16 – 11 am**

**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.