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## **POLI 4031: POLITICAL PARTIES**

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MWF 3:30 – 4:20  
218 Coates Hall 218  
Office Hours: 1-3 Wednesday  
Or by appointment  
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### **Course Overview**

This course is designed to examine the nature and activities of American political parties. Though often viewed with cynicism and distrust, political parties have played - and continue to play - an important role in the development of American democracy. As such, understanding the nature and activities of political parties is critical to understanding the functioning of American government.

Our investigation into political parties will be conducted on two levels. First, we will examine political parties as they exist in the political system. What is it that political parties do? How do they operate? What functions do they perform within the political system? This will include an examination of individual attachments to political parties, the role of political parties in elections, and the role of political parties in governing. Second, we will examine political parties from a normative standpoint. To what extent are political parties operating as they should? Would strengthened political parties facilitate or hinder the political process? The answer to these questions lies in understanding the nature of American political parties and, more broadly, the American party system.

### **Required Texts**

Hershey, Marjorie. 2013. *Party Politics in America*. 15<sup>th</sup> Edition. Pearson.

\*You can rent an e-copy of the book at or get an older edition:

<http://www.coursesmart.com/party-politics-in-america-pearson-classics/marjorie-hershey-randon-john-h-aldrich/dp/9780205852475>

Goidel, Kirby. 2014. *America's Failing Experiment: How We The People Have Become the Problem*. Rowman & Littlefield.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Grades will be based on the following criteria:

Exams (2)	40% (20% each)
Final Exam	10%
Election Paper	20%
Governing Paper	20%
Class Participation	10%

The two course examinations will consist of short answer/essay questions. These exams are designed to tap not only knowledge of course material but also your ability to integrate and critically examine content. The goal is not just memorization but understanding. Make-up exams will be allowed only in the case of a university excused absence. The final exam will consist of a single essay asking students to develop a perspective on the role of political parties in American democracy.

Students will also write two papers during the course of the semester. In the first paper, students will select either the Democratic or Republican Party and outline a strategy for financing 2014 congressional candidates. As part of the paper, students will outline a campaign agenda and distribute \$50 million to individual House and/or Senate campaigns. The financing should be part of a strategy to maintain majority status and/or win control of one of the chambers. In the second paper, students will develop a legislative proposal and develop a strategy to pass a major piece of legislation. The strategy should account for contemporary political realities, split control of the House and Senate and President Barack Obama in the White House.

Finally, because the overall quality of the class will depend on student involvement, ten points will be allocated for class participation. This will include class attendance and class discussion. The final participation grade will be based on my subjective assessment.

Let me add an additional note: I welcome emails from students and will try to respond as quickly as possible. However, at the beginning of every class, I will ask students if they have any questions, thoughts, or points of confusion. I will also answer questions that I have received by email, particularly when the answers are better addressed to the overall group. There is a reason for this. Everyone can hear the answer and students can ask follow-up questions.

Grades will be based on the following scale:

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
59 and below	F

### **Tentative Reading Schedule**

The reading schedule is tentative and will be adjusted as we move through the material. It is your responsibility to read material before we cover it in class and to know where we are in terms of class content.

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Topic</u></b>	<b><u>Read</u></b>
15-Jan	Class Introduction	
	<b>Political Parties and Party Systems</b>	
17-Jan	What are Political Parties	Hershey, Ch. 1
20-Jan	MLK Day	

22-Jan	The American Two Party System	Hershey, Ch. 2
	<b>The Political Party as Organization</b>	
27-Jan	State & Local Party Organizations	Hershey, Ch. 3
31-Jan	National Party Organization	Hershey, Ch. 4
5-Feb	Party Activists	
	<b>Political Parties in the Electorate</b>	
10-Feb	Party Identification	Hershey, Ch. 6
14-Feb	Party Coalitions and Party Change	Hershey, Ch. 7
19-Feb	Parties & Voter Turnout	Hershey, Ch. 8
24-Feb	<b>First Exam</b>	
	<b>Parties, Nominations, &amp; Elections</b>	
26-Feb	How Parties Choose Candidates	Hershey, Ch. 9
	Choosing Presidential Nominees	Hershey, Ch. 10
5-Mar	The General Elections	Hershey, Ch. 11
10-Mar	Financing the Campaigns	Hershey, Ch. 12
17-Mar	<b>First Paper Due</b>	
	<b>The Party in Government</b>	
19-Mar	Parties in Congress and State Legislatures	Hershey, Ch. 13
26-Mar	Party in the Executive and Courts	Hershey, Ch. 14
31-Mar	The Semi-Responsible Parties	Hershey, Ch. 15
2-Apr	The Place of Parties in American Politics	Hershey, Ch. 16
9-Apr	<b>Second Exam</b>	
21-Apr	America's Failing Experiment, Part I	Goidel, Ch. 1-3
23-Apr	America's Failing Experiment, Part II	Goidel, Ch. 4-7
28-Apr	Policy Proposals	
2-May		
10-May	<b>Final Exam (3:00-5:00)</b>	
	<b>Governing Paper Due</b>	

