

# Pols 419

## Political Parties

Spring 2009  
M/W/F 2:00 - 2:50  
1004 Faner Hall

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Office Phone: 453-3170  
Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 3-5, Thursday 8:30-10:30

## 1 Course Description

In *Federalist #10*, James Madison warned about the destructive influence of political faction, suggesting that organized political interests posed a threat to capture governmental power and use it for non-democratic purposes. In this we see the very roots of Americans' ambivalence toward and disdain for political parties. Despite the notable weaknesses of American parties compared to those in other democracies, it is common to hear them condemned for a variety of sins such as restricting political choice, shutting minority interests out of government, and promoting narrow partisanship over national interest. Yet the parties have thrived—and continue to thrive—in a variety of institutional and historical settings. How can it be that American parties permeate every aspect of our political lives in such an environment? What is the secret of their continued success, both now and through time?

This course addresses these issues by describing, explaining, and evaluating American political parties. We will confront the following issues: What is a political party and what does it do? How has the role of parties changed through time? Why are there only two parties in America? Why does it seem that parties are more interested in fighting with each other than compromising on policy? What are the factors that influence how parties behave?

We will answer these questions by delving into research on American political parties. The course is structured into six basic units: 1) basic concepts regarding parties, 2) the structure of the party system, 3) the electoral role of parties, 4) the operation of party organizations, 5) the importance of parties in government, and 6) how parties affect representation of some groups.

## 2 Course Objectives

1. *To improve understanding of what a political party is and what it does in American politics.*
2. *To familiarize students with contemporary issues about parties, including presidential nominations, partisan polarization in the electorate, and partisan bickering in the legislature.*
3. *To learn analytic skills, such as conceptual thinking and the use of research for drawing conclusions.*

## 3 Course Requirements and Graded Evaluation

### 3.1 Class Participation

Learning is an active exercise and you will not succeed in this class unless you participate frequently and effectively. Although I will occasionally lecture in this class, it will primarily be run as a seminar in which students summarize and react to the assigned material. Toward that end, I will grade both your attendance and participation in this class. Attendance will be taken randomly throughout the semester and points will be assigned on a percentage basis. Participation will be my subjective assessment of your citizenship in the class. I will assign 100 course points on the basis of attendance and another 100 for participation, making this fully 20% of your final course grade.

### 3.2 Talking Points

To facilitate participation, you are required every week to submit at least **two** talking points on assigned readings. Talking points are due in my email (mcclurg@siu.edu) by 10:00 a.m. on the morning of the class for which the reading is assigned. I will compile these talking points and use them to guide course discussions. The class schedule at the end of the syllabus marks those readings that are **not** available for talking point submissions with an asterisk (\*).

Your talking points should be interesting questions or arguments that you have identified based on the assigned reading. They should refer to one or more specific sections of the reading (with appropriate page references). Talking points that are longer than 100 words will not be accepted. Neither will I accept talking points that arrive late. Credit for these talking points will be assigned on three criteria: 1) weekly completion, 2) familiarity with the reading, and 3) thoughtfulness. The total points assigned to this grade is 240, for a total of 24% of your final course grade.

### 3.3 Exam

You will be administered a comprehensive final exam during finals week. This will be an in-class exam consisting of three essay questions. Each essay will cover a distinct component of the class, focusing in particular on subjects raised in the assigned reading. You will be evaluated on the clarity of your essay, understanding of basic concepts, the use of specific details from readings and lectures, and on the quality of exposition. Each essay is worth 75 points, making the exam work 22.5% of your final grade.

### 3.4 Research Paper

The final requirement for this class is a ten to fifteen page research paper that focuses on one of the following topics:

1. An evaluation of how partisanship influenced policy-making in the last session of the House or Senate.
2. An exploration of how the Republican party is responding to its electoral losses in the last two election cycles.
3. A comparison of the politics in a “blue state” to those in a “red state,” with the goal being to assess the culture war argument.
4. An examination of how well the Democratic party represents racial minorities in light of the 2008 presidential election.

The goal of your paper should be to posit an argument on the subject and to then build support for it from a close reading of relevant research materials. Appropriate resources include government documents (e.g., committee hearings or laws), in depth newspaper reports, and scholarly treatments of the subject.

To receive full credit on this assignment, you will be required to have at least one office appointment with the instructor, turn in an abstract and outline, turn in at least one fully preliminary draft, and complete a final version by **April 24**. You will receive ten points for completing each of the preliminary steps, though I will dock you **one half-letter grade** for any that you miss. With the points for the preliminary steps included, this paper will account for 33.5% of your final grade.

Papers will be graded on the depth of your research, the quality of your analysis, and the clarity of your writing. All students must turn in both a hard copy of their final paper and an electronic copy that will be checked on *Turnitin.com* for plagiarism.

### 3.5 Assignment Schedule

Participation	200 points	<i>Daily</i>
Talking Points	240 points	<i>Weekly</i>
Exam	225 points	<i>May 6</i>
Paper Outline	10 points	<i>February 9</i>
Paper Draft	10 points	<i>March 20</i>
Office Visit Period	10 points	<i>February 16 - March 16</i>
Research Paper	305 points	<i>April 24</i>

### 3.6 Grading Scale

Grades are distributed on the basis of the following scale:

1000 to 900	A
899 to 800	B
799 to 700	C
699 to 600	D
Below 600	F

## 4 Class Policies

### 4.1 Absences

You are expected to attend every session. Students arriving after attendance is taken will be considered absent for the day. If you must miss class for some reason, you can receive an excused absence by contacting me **IN ADVANCE**. I reserve the right to see documentation for your absence or to decide what constitutes a reasonable excuse. If you miss class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed.

### 4.2 Missed Assignments

All assignments are due at the start of class on the date assigned unless the instructor indicates otherwise. Any assignments that are not turned in on time will lose half a letter grade for each day they are late. Any assignment that is more than 48 hours late will not be accepted. See “Problems and Emergencies” below below for the only exceptions to this policy.

### 4.3 Makeup Exams

There will be no make-up exams except in cases of emergency or where university policy applies. If you miss an exam, you will receive a zero. If you are late to an exam, you must take it in the time that is remaining when you arrive. See “Problems and Emergencies” for the only exceptions to this rule.

## 4.4 Cheating and Academic Misconduct

Any student engaging in academic misconduct will receive an **F** in the course and will be reported to the Dean for further disciplinary action outlined in the university code of student conduct. If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating, academic misconduct, or plagiarism, you should examine the university policy and/or ask the instructor prior to turning in any assignment. It is **YOUR** responsibility to familiarize yourself with university policy.

## 4.5 Problems and Emergencies

If a problem or emergency arises that prevents you from attending an exam, turning in a paper, or class, you should contact Professor McClurg as soon as possible. The best way to contact me is via email (mcclurg@siu.edu). If you do not hear back from me within a reasonable amount of time, you may call me. Students contacting me **PRIOR** to missing an assignment receive greater leniency from the instructor. Examples of excuses that have **NOT** been accepted in the past include the following: oversleeping, taking too much medication, being incarcerated, having a cold. You are welcome to clarify what constitutes an acceptable excuse with me at any point in the semester.

## 4.6 Grading Policies & Standards

Graded exams will be returned as promptly as possible. When students receive an exam or assignment back, they must wait at least two days until asking the instructor to review the grade. If a student wants a re-grade, s/he must submit a single-spaced, one paragraph note explaining why the original grade is inappropriate. All assignments submitted for a re-grade can go up or down.

## 4.7 Disability Policy

It is the policy of this university and this professor to help disabled individuals succeed in the classroom. The student is responsible for notifying the professor and the university of any special problems or needs as soon as possible. The professor and university are responsible for doing whatever they can within university policy to accommodate that student. It is in your best interest to notify the professor and university **immediately** so that arrangements can be made as soon as possible. For more information, please contact Kathleen Plesko at Disabled Student Services.

## 4.8 Contacting the Instructor

I am happy to help students however I can. If you have any questions, please email the question and I will reply as soon as possible. If your question requires more explanation than can be provided in an email, please come to my office during office hours or make an appointment with me after class. Written communication with the professor must be properly addressed and written. If an email or note to the professor does not meet the following criteria, it will be ignored. The criteria are:

1. it respectfully addresses the professor.
2. it identifies the student and class.
3. it has capital letters, periods, and uses good grammar in appropriate spots.
4. it includes information on how the professor can get back to the student with an answer.

## 4.9 Appropriate Classroom Behavior

I reserve the right to end class if students are engaging in disruptive behaviors. Examples of disruptive behavior include students holding conversations with each other on material unrelated to the class, sleeping, reading the newspaper, doing homework, and similar activities. If I end the class, I will NOT go over the material scheduled for class that day, but you will STILL be responsible for it on the exam.

## 4.10 Policy Acknowledgment

In order to be eligible for a grade in this class, a student must read and sign the form on the last page of this syllabus. After signing that “Acknowledgment of the Terms and Policies” form you must turn it in to the instructor or Teaching Assistant. You will not receive any credit in the course until this form has been turned in. (That means, for example, that if you turn it in after your first assignment, then your score on the assignment is a zero.) A word to the wise - students who do not turn this form in immediately are unlikely to remember later on, so get it done!

## 5 Following Political Developments in the Media

The study of American politics cannot be divorced from current events. I strongly recommend that you regularly monitor politics in the national media. Along with any local papers you read, I recommend that you peruse the following with some frequency: *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*. Each of these papers has national print editions available through the bookstore, as well as free online content. Additionally, you may want to examine news magazines for more in-depth coverage of particular issues and events. *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* and *The National Journal* are two particularly informative periodicals. Other options include *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *The Economist*.

## 6 Reading Assignments

Because this class will be run as a seminar, it is crucial that you obtain all of the assigned materials and read them carefully. Most of the assigned work will come from a series of assigned books, although you will be required to read the occasional news report or journal article.

### 6.1 Required Books

We will read the following books in their entirety, so you should obtain them as soon as possible. If you have any trouble, please notify me immediately.

- Eilperin, Juliet. *Fight Club Politics: How Partisanship is Poisoning the House of Representatives*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006.
- Fiorina, Morris P., with Samuel J. Abrams and Jeremy C. Pope. *Culture War: The Myth of a Polarized America*. Second Edition. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006.
- Frymer, Paul. *Uneasy Alliances: Race and Party Competition in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Hershey, Marjorie. *Party Politics in America*. Twelfth Edition. New York: Pearson, 2007.

### 6.2 Recommended Books

We will read a significant portion of the following book, so I have asked the bookstores to make it available to you. However, it is rather expensive and we will not read it cover to cover so you might consider obtaining copies of the assigned chapters (on reserve in the library).

- Klinkner, Philip A. *The Losing Parties: Out-Party National Committees, 1956-1993*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.

## 7 Course Schedule & Reading Assignments

### 7.1 Introduction

**January 12.** Course introduction.  
*No reading.*

**January 14.** What is a political party?  
Hershey, Chapter 1\*

**January 16.** Key concepts related to parties  
*No reading*

**January 19.** Parties in the American system  
*No reading*

**January 21.** Theory: How do parties behave?  
Schlesinger, Chapter 1

**January 23.** Theory 2: How do parties behave?

### 7.2 The American Political Party System

**January 26.** What is a party system?  
Hershey, Chapter 2\*

**January 28.** What is a party system?  
Hershey, Chapter 7\*

**January 30.** Historical development of the party system

**February 2.** Contemporary American party system  
Fiorina *et al.*, Chapter 1

**February 4.** Two-party politics

**February 6.** Critiques of the American system  
Fiorina *et al.*, Chapter 2  
Frymer, Chapters 1

### 7.3 Political Parties & Elections

**February 9.** Partisan voters  
Hershey, Chapters 6 and 8\*  
*Paper abstract and outline due*

**February 11.** Parties and nominations  
Hershey, Chapters 9 and 10

**February 13.** Parties and elections  
Hershey, Chapters 11 and 12

- February 16.** Red State, Blue State  
Fiorina, Chapters 3 and 4
- February 18.** Abortion  
Fiorina, Chapter 5
- February 20.** Gay Marriage  
Fiorina, Chapter 6
- February 23.** Change in American Party Cleavages  
Fiorina, Chapters 7 and 8
- February 25.** Red State, Blue State Explained  
Fiorina, Chapter 9
- February 27.** Partisanship, Politics, and America  
Fiorina, Chapter 10

## **7.4 American Party Organizations**

- March 2.** State Organizations  
Hershey, Chapter 3\*
- March 4.** The National Parties  
Hershey, Chapter 4\*
- March 6.** The Parties Respond...To Loss  
Klinkner, Chapter 1
- March 9. Spring Break**
- March 11. Spring Break**
- March 13. Spring Break**
- March 16.** Policy Response  
Klinkner, Chapter 2
- March 18.** Organizational Response  
Klinkner, Chapter 7
- March 20.** Procedural Response  
Klinkner, Chapter 5  
*Draft paper due*
- March 23.** Roots of Contemporary Parties  
Klinkner, Chapter 9
- March 25.** What Drives Party Innovation?  
Klinkner, Chapter 10
- March 27.** Whither the Republicans?  
Selected newspaper stories\*

## 7.5 Political Parties in Government

**March 30.** Legislative Parties  
Hershey, Chapter 13\*

**April 1.** Parties in other branches  
Hershey, Chapters 13 and 14\*

**April 3. No Class.**

**April 6.** Partisan Bickering  
Eilperin, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2

**April 8.** Sources of the Problem  
Eilperin, Chapters 3, 4, and 5

**April 10.** How To Move Forward  
Eilperin, Chapters 6 and 7, Afterword

## 7.6 Parties, Competition, and Representation

**April 13.** Competition and Party Evolution  
Miller & Schofield, *APSR*, Available through JSTOR

**April 15.** Coalitions and Capture  
Frymer, Chapter 2

**April 17.** The Case of Black Disenfranchisement  
Frymer, Chapter 3

**April 20.** Democratic Party Capture  
Frymer, Chapter 4

**April 22.** Mobilization and Education  
Frymer, Chapter 5

**April 24.** Legislative Representation  
Frymer, Chapter 6  
*Final paper due*

**April 27.** Capture Theory More Broadly  
Frymer, Chapter 7

**April 29.** Revaluating the Capture of Blacks  
Selected newspaper stories

**May 1.** Class Wrap Up  
*No reading*

## 7.7 Final Exam

**May 6.** Final Exam (3:10 - 5:10).

## Policy Acknowledgment

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print your name), acknowledge that I have read and understand the following information about Political Science 319 “American Political Parties” I understand that this information and these policies apply to me in the context of this course. I also understand that this syllabus represents a plan for the semester and that the instructor reserves the right to change the requirements, policies, and schedule of topics for the course as deemed necessary.

- \_\_\_ Instructor Office Hours
- \_\_\_ Instructor Email
- \_\_\_ Course Goals
- \_\_\_ Course Requirements
- \_\_\_ Attendance Policy
- \_\_\_ Missed Assignment Policy
- \_\_\_ Make-Up Exam Policy
- \_\_\_ Problems / Emergency Policy
- \_\_\_ Grading Policy Standards
- \_\_\_ Disability Policy
- \_\_\_ Contacting the Instructor Policy
- \_\_\_ Reading Assignments
- \_\_\_ Classroom Behavior Policy

\_\_\_\_\_ (signature and date)