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POLS 241-01, American Parties and Interest Groups, Spring 2008

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PS 241
American Parties and Interest Groups
Spring 2008

In this course, we will explore the following questions:

- What is a political party? What is an interest group? How are they organized?
- Why did political parties and interest groups develop?
- What do political parties and interest groups do for voters, for candidates and officeholders, and for democratic government?
- How do parties and interest groups compete with and complement each other?
- How has the role and importance of both political parties and interest groups in American politics changed over time?

We will examine these questions both theoretically and empirically using a range of materials and media. As we explore these questions, we will do so with an eye to a prominent debate in political science over the relative strength of the parties and the related normative question of whether “strong” parties are a good thing for our democracy.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to help you:

1. Gain factual knowledge about the structure, function and behavior of American parties, interest groups, and their members
2. Learn fundamental principles and generalizations concerning how these political organizations interact with other political actors and institutions
3. Apply what we read about parties and interest groups to real-world events
4. Analyze and critically evaluate major arguments in political science and in politics concerning parties and interest groups

Books and Readings

There are five required books for this course:

1. Brewer and Stonecash, *Split!: Class and Cultural Divides in American Politics*
2. Cigler and Loomis, *Interest Group Politics*, 7th edition
3. Fiorina, *Culture War?: The Myth of a Polarized America*, 2nd edition
4. Herrnson, Shaiko and Wilcox, *The Interest Group Connection*, 2nd edition
5. Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, 12th edition

All these books are available for purchase at the college bookstore. If you purchase them elsewhere, please make sure you get the correct edition.

Other readings will be available online, in my public PS 241 folder, or distributed in class. In addition to these readings, you are strongly encouraged to read a

national newspaper such as *The New York Times* on a daily basis. We will be discussing relevant current political events in class.

Assignments and Grading

Your final grade in the course will be computed as follows:

Assignment	% of Final Grade	(Due Date)
Presentation	5%	(Variable)
Participation	10%	(Ongoing)
Midterm Exam	20%	(Feb. 28)
Final Exam	20%	(May 3)
Short papers	45%	(Jan. 29, Feb. 12, April 3, April 24)

Presentations

Over the course of the semester, you will give a 10 minute presentation on one of the minor political parties or interest group of your choosing. More information will be distributed about these presentations in a separate handout.

Participation

Regular attendance is critical to effective participation. Although near perfect attendance is expected, I do realize that there may come a day when you need to miss class. Therefore:

- You may accrue up to three absences over the course of the semester with impunity.
- A fourth absence will result in a maximum participation grade of 75%. Additional absences will lower the participation grade further.

In other words, you may miss as many as three class periods *for whatever reason* over the course of the semester without being penalized. There are, therefore, no such things as “excused” or “unexcused” absences. I assume all reasons for missing class are good ones; I do not need them explained. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for the readings, lecture material, and other assignments for that day.

Although near perfect attendance is expected, it is not the same as participation. Learning is not a spectator sport. Fundamentally, the responsibility to learn is yours; you must take an active role in the process. Consequently, I expect you to come to class prepared and ready to learn, meaning you have done the assigned reading before class, considered it in light of the study questions, and have questions and/or ideas of your own about it in mind. Being prepared for class enables you to construct a knowledge base on which subsequent learning rests. It also makes class more productive, purposive and enjoyable.

Class participation is not limited to discussion. You may also be asked to lead a brief discussion, take part in small group activity, etc. This is part and parcel of class participation and is required.

Exams

There are two exams that will consist of essay and/or short answer questions. You need to learn the basic factual information and principles/theories presented in the readings and classes, as well as be able to apply and think critically about this information to do well on the exams.

Papers

There are four short (3-5 pages) papers which will require some outside research. More information will be distributed about them in a separate handout.

Grading

I grade on the following scale: 90-100 is A-range, 80-89 is B-range, 70-79 is C-range, 60-69 is D-range, and below 60 is an F. Not turning in an assignment will result in a 0 for that assignment. I reserve the right to raise (or lower) your final grade by up to one third of a letter grade based on a pattern of continuing improvement (or regression) during the semester.

Late Assignments and Extensions

As a rule, I do not accept late assignments or give extensions. The only exceptions may be in cases of documented medical emergencies. Extra curricular obligations, computer problems, family and job obligations can be anticipated and managed. Late assignments are those received after the deadline. When an assignment is due in class, the deadline is the beginning of that class (i.e. the first 5 to 10 minutes).

Academic Dishonesty

Quite simply, any type of academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) will not be tolerated. You are responsible for knowing the Rhodes College Honor Code, and its rules and regulations concerning these matters. Please read them carefully at:

<http://www.rhodes.edu/Rhodes/CampusCommunity/PoliciesandProcedures/Student-Handbook.cfm>).

In any case, ignorance of the law is not an excuse. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be referred immediately to the Honor Council.

Academic Support

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services at x3994 as soon as possible. The SDS website (<http://www.rhodes.edu/disability>) provides detailed information about Rhodes' policies and procedures in this regard.

Rhodes also has a variety of academic support services including:

- A Writing Center (315 Palmer Hall and on line at: <http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter>)

- Workshops in study skills assistance (contact the Office of Student Academic Support at x3433 for more information)

Do take advantage of them.

Finally, I strongly encourage you to work together during this course. Contact me at any time during the year if you are interested in forming a study group, for example, and I will do what I can to help.

Class Schedule

Thursday, 1/10: Introduction

Tues., 1/15: Why Parties?

- George Washington, "Farewell Address." Available at: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/washing.htm>
- Hershey, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-25)
- Valelly, "Who Needs Political Parties?," *The American Prospect*, August 14, 2000. Available online at: <http://www.prospect.org/web/page.wv?section=root&name=ViewPrint&articleId=5401>

Thurs., 1/17: Party Development

- Hershey, Intro to Part II and Chapter 3 (pp.45-64)
- Miller, *Mr. Crump of Memphis*, pp. 194-223 (handout)

Tues., 1/22: Party Development

- Hershey, Chapter 4
- Bai, "It's His Party," *The New York Times Magazine*, October 1, 2006 (available through Lexis-Nexis)
- Zeleny, "His Meteoric Days Gone, Quiet Dean Leads Party," *The New York Times*, October 21, 2007 (Lexis-Nexis)

Thurs., 1/24: Charlie Cook on Election 2008

- Reading(s) TBA

FIRST PAPER DUE

Tues., 1/29: Third Parties

- Hershey, Chapter 2
- Watch "Crashing the Parties 2004" (available on reserve in the Media Center)
- Nader, *Crashing the Party*, Chapters 4 and 5 (handout)

Thurs., 1/31: Party Identification

- Hershey, Chapter 6

Tues., 2/5: Partisanship

- Pew Research Center for People and the Press, “Beyond Red vs. Blue,” (Parts 1, 2, 3 and Profiles of the Typology Groups). Available at: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=943>
- Fill out the Political Typology Questionnaire, linking from the above page or go directly to: <http://typology.people-press.org/typology/>. Come prepared to discuss your results.

Thurs., 2/7: Partisanship and Realignment

- Hershey, Chapter 7
- Kirkpatrick, “Voters’ Allegiances, Ripe for the Picking,” *The New York Times*, October 15, 2006 (available through Lexis-Nexis)
- Edsall, “White Guy Rebellion,” *The National Journal*, November 11, 2006. (available through ProQuest)
- Nossiter, “In Mississippi, Democrat Runs in G.O.P. Lane,” *The New York Times*, October 10, 2007.
- Goodstein, “For a Trusty Voting Block, A Faith Shaken,” *The New York Times*, October 7, 2007.

Tues., 2/12: Culture War?

- Fiorina, *Culture War?: The Myth of a Polarized America*, Prefaces and Chapters 1-4

SECOND PAPER DUE

Thurs., 2/14: Culture War?

- Fiorina, *Culture War?*, Chapters 5-8

Tues., 2/19: Culture War?

- Brewer and Stonecash, *Split!*, Chapters 1-4

Thurs., 2/21: Culture War?

- Brewer and Stonecash, *Split!*, Chapters 5-7

Tues., 2/26: Culture War?

- Fiorina, *Culture War?*, Chapter 9
- Brewer and Stonecash, *Split!*, Chapter 8

MIDTERM EXAM DUE

Thurs., 2/28: Interest Groups: Pluralism and Interest Group Formation

- Truman, *The Governmental Process*, Chapter 1 (handout)
- Cigler and Loomis, Chapter 1

Tues., 3/4: No Class (Spring Break)

Thurs. 3/6: No Class (Spring Break)

Tues., 3/11: Interest Groups: Pluralism and IG Formation

- Cigler and Loomis, Chapter 3
- Cigler and Loomis, Chapter 4

Thurs., 3/13: Involving Group Members

- Cigler and Loomis, Chapter 2
- Hershey, Chapter 5

Tues., 3/18: Campaigns

- Hershey, Chapter 9

Thurs., 3/20: No Class (Easter Break)

Tues., 3/25: Campaigns

- Hershey, Chapter 10
- Altschuler, "Selecting Presidential Nominees by National Primary: An Idea Whose Time Has Come?," *The Forum*, January 2008 (PS 241 folder)

Thurs., 3/27: Campaigns

- Hershey, Chapter 11

Tues., 4/1: Campaigns

- Cigler and Loomis, Chapters 7 and 8

THIRD PAPER DUE

Thurs., 4/3: Party in the Legislature

- Hershey, Chapter 13 (pp.248-257)
- Hulse, "Pelosi Rebuffed Over Her Choice for House Post," *The New York Times*, November 17, 2006 (available through Lexis-Nexis)

Tues., 4/8: Party in the Legislature

- Hershey, Chapter 13 (pp. 257-269)
- Cohen, Baumann, and Victor, "Going Blue," *National Journal*, November 11, 2006 (available through ProQuest)

Thurs., 4/10: Lobbying

- Cigler and Loomis, Chapter 17
- Overby, "New Congress Spurs Wave of Job Swaps," *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, December 8, 2006. Listen at:
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6597171>

Tues., 4/15: Lobbying

- Herrnson, Chapter 10
- Overby, "Environmental Groups Launch Exxon Boycott," *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, July 12, 2005. Listen at:
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4749052>

Thurs., 4/17: The Executive Branch

- Hershey, Chapter 14 (pp. 270-279)
- Article(s) TBA

Tues. 4/22: The Courts

- Hershey, Chapter 14 (pp. 279-285)
- Binder and Maltzman, “Congress and the Politics of Judicial Appointments” (handout)
- Cigler and Loomis, Chapter 15

FOURTH PAPER DUE

Thurs., 4/24: Debriefing and Wrap Up: Where’s the Party At?

- Hershey, Chapter 16 (pp. 311-315)
- Rhode, “Political Command and Control,” *The New York Times*, November 18, 2006 (available through Lexis-Nexis)