



POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

POLS 125
University of Vermont
Fall 2014
Tu Th 1:00-2:15 PM
Lafayette Hall, Room 210

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:30-12:30, again from 2:30-3:30, and by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines U.S. national elections and political parties. Topics to be discussed (among others) include electoral realignments throughout history, voting for President and Congress, party competition, voter turnout, incumbency advantage, and the electoral foundations of divided party control of government.

The course has several objectives—

- 1) To introduce students to important literature in the field, developing familiarity with basic theories of party organization, election mechanics, and voting behavior;
- 2) To apply these concepts to recent electoral strategies in both presidential and congressional campaigns;
- 3) To assess the current state of American electoral politics by probing deeper questions surrounding electoral systems and policy response, democratic accountability, and collective responsibility for political outcomes.

REQUIRED READING

The following books are required and may be purchased at the college bookstore:

- Brian F. Schaffner, *Politics, Parties and Elections in America*, 7th edition. Cengage Learning (2011).
ISBN: 9780495899167

- Paul S. Herrnson, Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington, 6th edition. CQ Press (2011). ISBN: 9780872899650.
- Stephen J. Wayne, The Road to the White House 2012, 9th edition. Cengage Learning (2011). ISBN: 9781111341503.

All additional reading assignments are available online. Hyperlinks are provided on our class web page under the "Calendar" heading at:

http://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS125/Fall_2014/

To view each article, direct your web browser to the URL above, use the menu to select "Calendar," then click the title any article. A new window will open, from which you can either print or read online.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

Our emphasis throughout the semester will be on critical thinking and the development of strong, analytical writing skills. Graded assignments are designed to evaluate your growth in these areas. Assignments are also designed to give you many opportunities, using different skills, to build a strong grade in this course.

- 1) A large part of your final grade (30%) will be determined by a take-home paper due at the end of term. This work must be submitted no later than Friday, December 5 at 10:30 a.m.
- 2) Two essay-based exams will be administered in class, each worth 30% of your final grade. The dates for these are Tuesday, September 30 and Thursday, November 13.
- 3) Finally, your active participation and attendance is essential to the effectiveness of this class. It will account for the remaining 10% of your grade.

The following rules regarding assigned work are important. Please read this syllabus *carefully* before deciding to enroll in class. All students are expected to read, understand, and abide by these policies:

In fairness to others, students are *not* permitted to do "extra credit," either to compensate for a poor grade or a missed class. Since a total of four grades cumulate to determine your final grade (and no one assignment dominates), there are plenty of opportunities to improve your standing.

If a student misses an exam for reasons that are both serious and outside of their control, they may make up that work, but only on a set day and time at the end of the semester. During the Fall 2014 term, make-up work is scheduled for Tuesday, December 2 from 2:30-3:45 p.m.

Due dates on final papers are set by the Registrar's Office at the beginning of the term and cannot be rescheduled, except under the conditions described in the course catalog. Written documentation of need must be provided.

GRADING STANDARDS

The grades I assign are based on the following criteria:

92-100	A	Excellent (A range): Grades in the “A” range are reserved for work that is superior in quality. “A” papers are lively, interesting, and intellectually sophisticated. The writer develops a clear and creative thesis, and supports their argument with solid and persuasive evidence. The paper itself is polished and beautifully written, free of grammatical and typographical errors. Above all, “A” papers reflect originality. The writer’s own voice and logic are present on the page.
90-91	A-	
88-89	B+	Good (B range): Grades in the “B” range reflect work that is good to very good in quality. The paper completes all of the requirements of the assignment at hand. It may have minor errors and flaws, but the foundation of the work is solid, clear, and reasonably well-organized. “B” papers address topics in a thoughtful way, but offer less insight and originality than “A” papers.
82-87	B	
80-81	B-	
78-79	C+	Fair (C range): A “C” paper represents work that is satisfactory. The writer offers a thesis, but it is usually too broad, or too vague. The paper tends to make assertions without offering specific examples or supporting evidence from class lectures, discussions, and reading assignments. The overall impression of the paper is that of a rough draft. More effort at revision is encouraged and spelling and grammatical errors often require correction.
72-77	C	
70-71	C-	
68-69	D+	Poor (D range): A “D” paper is an unsatisfactory paper. It is sloppy, incoherent and poorly written, marred by mechanical faults (e.g., errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling), and/or factual errors. The writer has difficulty developing an idea, and holding a paragraph together. The thesis of the paper—that is, what the paper is arguing—is usually absent or incomplete.
62-67	D	
60-61	D-	
≤ 59	F	Failing (F): A failing grade is given for work that is exceedingly poor, cannot be understood, or has little relevance to the course.
0		No Credit (O): A grade of “zero” is given for any work that is not completed.

Work that is produced by cheating, collaboration, plagiarism or any other violation of academic honesty is positively unacceptable and will be subject to the disciplinary actions described in the UVM student handbook.

CLASS ATTENDANCE

Class attendance accounts for 10% of your final grade in this class. It is recorded by your signature on the attendance sheets passed around in class each day. All students receive two “free” absences to use as they see fit (without need for excuse), but these absences are intended for illness and emergencies and should be saved for such. Once they are gone, they are gone. Note that *10 points* will be deducted from your attendance grade for each

class you miss in addition. In other words, if you miss class frequently it is possible for your score to fall into negative numbers.

You need also to be aware of the following:

- You are solely responsible for making sure you sign the attendance sheet before leaving class. If you do not, your name *cannot* be added at a later point.
- Any student involved in the forgery of signatures—either on the “giving” or “receiving” end—will receive an automatic zero for that entire portion of their grade, and will in addition be subject to the university’s policy on academic honesty.
- Beyond the two “free” absences described above, I *do not* grant excused absences unless the circumstances are exceptional, or you travel out of town as a member of a UVM club or sports team. If you are a member of a sports team, please be sure to forward a copy of your schedule to me in writing as soon as it becomes available, so that attendance sheets can be marked accordingly on those days when your team travels out of town.

In addition to daily attendance, you are also encouraged to participate actively in class discussions. Thoughtful and frequent participation in class is typically rewarded as a “tie-breaker,” in the event that your final score is close to the next higher grade.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. Please submit your documented religious holiday schedule for the semester to me by the end of the second full week of classes. Students who miss work for the purpose of religious observance will be permitted either a make-up exam or a penalty-free extension.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In keeping with University policy, any student with a documented disability interested in utilizing accommodations should contact ACCESS, the office of Disability Services on campus. ACCESS works with students and faculty in an interactive process to explore reasonable and appropriate accommodations via an accommodation letter to faculty with recommended accommodations as early as possible each semester.

Location: A170 Living/Learning Center
Telephone: (802) 656-7753
E-mail: access@uvm.edu
Website: <http://www.uvm.edu/access>

CLASSROOM PROTOCOL

In coordination with the Department of Political Science, I have adopted the following protocol for classroom behavior:

1. Students are expected to attend and be prepared for *all* regularly scheduled classes.
2. Students are expected to arrive on time and stay in class until the class period ends. If a student knows in advance that he or she will need to leave early, he or she must notify the instructor before the class period begins.
3. Students are expected to treat faculty and fellow students with respect. For example, students must not disrupt class by leaving and reentering during class, must not distract class by making noise, and must be attentive to comments being made by the instructors and by peers.
4. Students must turn off and stow *all* electronic devices (e.g., laptops, iPads, cell phones, etc.) before class begins. Why don't I allow such devices for taking notes? This post from Buzzfeed says it all: "11 Things You're Actually Doing on Your Laptop During a Lecture."

Students who violate any of these rules may be subject to whatever *grade penalty* I deem appropriate.

ASKING FOR HELP

Be sure to ask questions whenever you need to. Here is how:

- I am generally available to answer quick questions both before and after class.
- I hold office hours on a first-come, first-serve basis every Tuesday and Thursday from 11:30-12:30 and again from 2:30-3:30 p.m. If those hours are not compatible with your schedule, please do not hesitate to ask for an appointment. My office is located on the 5th floor of Old Mill, room 519.
- While you can reach me by telephone at (802) 656-4062, e-mail is generally faster. I check e-mail on a regular basis, but please understand that I may not be able to respond immediately to messages sent in the evening or on weekends. My e-mail address is: Deborah.Guber@uvm.edu

CLASS CALENDAR

Note: All reading assignments marked [online] can be found on the POLS 125 website under the heading "Calendar."

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Tuesday, August 26: *Fixing Democracy*

Editorial, "A Broken Election System," [The New York Times](#) (November 20, 2012) [online].

II. POLITICAL PARTIES IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Thursday, August 28: *The Responsible Party Model*

Brian F. Schaffner, [Politics, Parties and Elections in America](#) (2011): Preface and Chapter 1.

APSA, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System" (1950): Part 1 [online].

Tuesday, September 2: *The American Two-Party System*

Brian F. Schaffner, [Politics, Parties and Elections in America](#) (2011): Chapters 3-5.

Thursday, September 4: *Electoral Realignments and Party Systems*

Brian F. Schaffner, [Politics, Parties and Elections in America](#) (2011): Chapter 2.

David R. Mayhew, [Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre](#) (2004): Chapters 2-3 [online].

David Von Drehle, "Origin of the Species: Up from the Ooze, into the Mud—A Brief History of American Political Evolution," [The Washington Post](#) (July 25, 2004): W12 [online].

Tuesday, September 9: *Understanding Ideology*

Robert B. Smith, "Ideology, Partisanship, and the New Political Continuum," [Society](#) (March-April 1997): 13-18 [online].

Reihan Salam "The Missing Middle in American Politics: How Moderate Republicans Became Extinct," [Foreign Affairs](#) (March/April 2012) [online].

Thursday, September 11: *Party Polarization*

Michael Barone, "The 49 Percent Nation," [National Journal](#) (June 9, 2001): 1710 [online].

Morris P. Fiorina, Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope, [Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America](#) (2004): Chapters 1-2.

Tuesday, September 16: *Third Party Insurgents*

Steven J. Rosenstone, Roy L. Behr, and Edward H. Lazarus, Third Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure (1996): Chapters 2 & 5 [online].

Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol, and John Coggin, "The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism," Perspectives on Politics (March 2011): 25-43 [online].

III. THE CITIZEN AS VOTER

Thursday, September 18: *The Vanishing (or Resurgent) Voter?*

Brian F. Schaffner, Politics, Parties and Elections in America (2011): Chapter 7.

Thomas Patterson, "The Vanishing Voter: Why Are the Voting Booths So Empty?" National Civic Review (Winter 2002): 367-378 [online].

Tuesday, September 23: *Motorize or Mobilize?*

Marshall Ganz, "Motor Voter or Motivated Voter?" The American Prospect, 28 (1996): 41-48 [online].

Alexis C. Madrigal, "When the Nerds Go Marching In," The Atlantic (November 16, 2012) [online].

Thursday, September 25: *The Politics of Voter Turnout: Fraud and Suppression*

Spencer Overton, Stealing Democracy: The New Politics of Voter Suppression (2006): Chapter 6 [online].



EXAM #1: Tuesday, September 30

Thursday, October 2: *How We Vote, Part 1: Identity Politics*

Brian F. Schaffner, Politics, Parties and Elections in America (2011): Chapter 7.

Ann Friedman, "All Politics is Identity Politics," The American Prospect (July 29, 2010) [online].

Martin P. Wattenberg, Is Voting for Young People? (2007): Introduction and Chapters 6-7 [online].

Tuesday, October 7: *How We Vote, Part II: The Culture War*

Thomas Frank, What's the Matter with Kansas? (2004): Introduction, Chapters 1-2 [online].

Jon A. Shields, "In Praise of the Values Voter," The Wilson Quarterly (Autumn 2007): 32-38 [online].

Thursday, October 9: *How We Vote, Part III: Reason and Emotion*

Donald Green, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler, Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters (2004): Chapters 1-2 [online].

Drew Westen, [The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation](#) (2007): Chapters 1-2 [online].

IV. CANDIDATES AND CAMPAIGNS

Tuesday, October 14: *The Incumbency Factor in Congressional Elections*

Paul S. Herrnson, [Congressional Elections](#) (2011): Preface, Introduction, and Chapters 1-4.

Thursday, October 16: *Drawing District Lines*

Paul S. Herrnson, [Congressional Elections](#) (2011): Chapters 5-9.
Steven Hill, "Behind Closed Doors: The Recurring Plague of Redistricting and the Politics of Geography," [National Civic Review](#) (Winter 2002): 317-330 [online].

Tuesday, October 21: *The Electoral College*

Stephen J. Wayne, [The Road to the White House 2012](#) (2011): Chapter 1.
Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "Not the People's Choice: How to Democratize American Democracy," [The American Prospect](#) (March 25, 2002): 23-27 [online].

Thursday, October 23: *The Presidential Nomination Process*

Stephen J. Wayne, [The Road to the White House 2012](#) (2011): Chapters 4-6.

Tuesday, October 28: *A History of Presidential Campaigns*

Stephen J. Wayne, [The Road to the White House 2012](#) (2011): Chapter 7.

Thursday, October 30: *From Broadsides to Broadcasts: The Changing Role of the Media*

Stephen J. Wayne, [The Road to the White House 2012](#) (2011): Chapter 8.
Mary E. Stuckey, "Here We Go Again: Presidential Elections and the National Media," [Perspectives on Political Science](#) (Spring 2000): 99 [online].
Evgenia Pertez, "Going After Gore," [Vanity Fair](#) (October 2007) [online].

Tuesday, November 4: *Pundits vs. Pollsters: The Art and Science of Forecasting Elections*

Stephen J. Wayne, [The Road to the White House 2012](#) (2011): Chapter 9.
Zeynep Tufekci, "In Defense of Nate Silver, Election Pollsters, and Statistical Predictions," [Wired](#) (November 2, 2012) [online].
Sam Wang, "Will the 2014 Election be a Wave or a Ripple?" [The New Yorker](#) (August 19, 2014) [online].

Thursday, November 6: *Show Me the Money: The Politics of Campaign Finance*

Stephen J. Wayne, [The Road to the White House 2012](#) (2011): Chapter 2.

Tuesday, November 11: *When Pigs Fly: In Search of Real Campaign Finance Reform*

Bradley A. Smith, "Campaign Finance Regulation: Faulty Assumptions and Undemocratic Consequences," Cato Policy Analysis (1995) [online].

Jeffrey Toobin, "Money Unlimited: How Chief Justice John Roberts Orchestrated the Citizens United Decision," The New Yorker (May 21, 2012) [online].



EXAM #2: Thursday, November 13

V. PARTIES IN GOVERNMENT

Tuesday, November 18: *Partisanship and Polarization*

Brian F. Schaffner, Politics, Parties and Elections in America (2011): Chapter 9.

David R. Mayhew, "Divided Party Control: Does It Make a Difference?" PS: Political Science and Politics (December 1991): 637-640 [online].

Ronald Brownstein, The Second Civil War: How Extreme Partisanship Has Paralyzed Washington and Polarized America (2007): Chapter 1 [online].

Jonathan Chait, "What's So Great About Bipartisanship?" The New Republic (January 15, 2001): 17 [online].

Thursday, November 20: *Fixing Elections*

Paul S. Herrnson, Congressional Elections (2011): Chapters 10-11.

Stephen J. Wayne, The Road to the White House 2012 (2011): Chapter 10.

The American Voting Experience: Report and Recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration (January 2014): All.



THANKSGIVING RECESS: November 24-28

Tuesday, December 2: *Concluding Thoughts*

Brian F. Schaffner, Politics, Parties and Elections in America (2011): Chapter 10.

Morris P. Fiorina, "The Decline of Collective Responsibility in American Politics," Daedalus, 109 (1980): 25-45.



PAPER DUE: No later than Friday, December 5 at 10:30 a.m.