

Political Parties and Interest Groups (POL 310)
University of Mississippi, Fall 2016

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Office Hours: T/W/Th from 11:30am-12:30pm, or by appointment
Office Location: Deupree Hall, Room 235

Class Time: T/Th from 8:00-9:15am
Class Location: Holman Room 38
Course Website: blackboard.olemiss.edu

PURPOSE

The purpose of this course is to examine the nature of organized interests in the American political system. Within the course, we will study both political parties and interest groups. Although distinct entities, the two have much in common. We will be particularly interested in the current configuration of these organized interests, as well as the reasons for these configurations.

Perhaps the most interesting question to ask (and the most difficult to answer) is that of the importance of these groups. How significant are political parties to the day-to-day lives of Americans? How effective are interest groups in arguing for their membership in a pluralist version of democracy? In the end, are citizens well served by the current activities of political parties and other organized interests? By the end of the semester, you should be able to offer an informed answer to such questions, backing your view with appropriate evidence.

In order to address the “big picture” questions, we will need to spend a fair amount of time on details. I urge you not to get lost in the details, lest you forget the importance of the topic. Politics today is greatly shaped by the nature of political parties and the actions of interest groups. It is in your interest (both in terms of this course and in your later life) to understand how this process works, as well as how it influences your life.

As is the case in any course, a great deal of topics germane to the course are not covered. The interested student is encouraged to consult the instructor for additional readings on these subjects.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completing the class, students should:

- Understand the nature of organized interests in the American political system.
- Have a deeper knowledge of the (theoretical and empirical) similarities and differences between political parties and interest groups.
- Have thought critically about the “proper role” of political parties and interest groups in the American political system.
- Be better equipped to analyze contemporary research in political science and other social sciences, as well as news reports.
- Hopefully, be more inclined to participate in elections and governance.

READINGS

All readings for this course will be posted on blackboard.

Students are responsible for all assigned readings. I will not cover everything we read in lecture/discussion, and not everything covered in lecture/discussion will come from the readings. All reading and lecture/discussion material are fair game for the exams.

Also, please attempt to keep up with current events by reading or watching the news. By staying current on the news, especially the 2016 presidential and congressional elections, the class material we discuss will hopefully be easier to follow and more enjoyable to talk about.

Recommended Text

Hershey, Marjorie Randon. 2013. *Party Politics in America*. 15th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson.

GRADING POLICY

*** Please note: Departmental policy is that no grades below a C can count towards a major in POL. This means a grade of C- does not count toward the POL major.**

Final Grades

Your final grade is based on four primary areas of evaluation, which are detailed below.

- Class participation: 7%
- Quizzes (6 @ 2.5% each): 15%
- Papers (3 @ 6% each): 18%
- Examinations (midterm @ 25% and cumulative final @ 35%): 60%

A:	93-100	C+:	77-79
A-:	90-92	C:	73-76
B+:	87-89	C-:	70-72
B:	83-86	D:	60-69
B-:	80-82	F:	59 or below

Grade Component	Grade	Weight	Weighted Grade
Participation		x .07 =	
Quiz 1		x .025 =	
Quiz 2		x .025 =	
Quiz 3		x .025 =	
Quiz 4		x .025 =	
Quiz 5		x .025 =	
Quiz 6		x .025 =	
Paper 1		x .06 =	
Paper 2		x .06 =	
Paper 3		x .06 =	
Midterm Exam		x .25 =	
Final Exam		x .35 =	
Sum	--	--	

If you think an error has occurred in the calculation of your grade, it is your responsibility to provide me copies of your work. To that end, it is prudent to save anything returned from me until you receive your final grade report.

Class Participation (7% of overall grade)

Attendance will be noted in class from time to time either through roll call, short in-class assignments, or quizzes. Attendance will not be verified every class meeting, and is not mandatory; nor is there a penalty for not attending class. However, while in class, students will be expected to contribute to discussion when applicable. Therefore, please note that merely attending class is not sufficient for earning class participation points; you must participate in class discussion and activities as well.

Finally, class discussions are an important ingredient to any Political Science class from which both students and teachers can learn. I ask that you respect the diverse views of your fellow students and utilize common courtesies during class. While in class, refrain from talking while others are talking, eating, using the phone, etc... I will ask you to leave the class if you engage in behavior disrespectful to your fellow students or me. If you feel the need to engage in these activities (for example, if there is an emergency), please leave class.

*Note: The University requires me to verify your attendance at least once during the first two weeks of the semester for financial aid and other administrative purposes. Students whose attendance is not verified after a certain period will automatically be dropped from the class and any financial aid will be adjusted accordingly. Please see <http://olemiss.edu/gotoclass> for more information.

Quizzes (6 @ 2.5% each, or 15% of overall grade)

To encourage reading the assigned material, we will have in class quizzes from time-to-time. Six quizzes will count toward your final grade. I will drop your lowest quiz grade(s), should we have more than six, so that only six quiz grades count toward your final average. Quiz dates are not predetermined.

Examinations (midterm @ 25% and cumulative final @ 35%, or 60% of overall grade)

Tests will cover material from lectures, course readings, and any assigned supplemental readings. Students cannot keep copies of the exams on exam day. There are two exams scheduled for: October 6 and December 6. (Note: The exam scheduled for December 6 will not change. It is during our final exam time, which is Tuesday, December 6 from 8-11am.)

Make-up Work

If you are unable to take an exam at the scheduled time, you must talk with me *in advance of the exam* to receive any consideration for taking the exam with full credit. If you miss an exam and have not cleared it with me beforehand, any late exams will be deducted points. Make-up exams can only happen when you obtain a University approved excuse. In lieu of a University-approved excuse, any student missing an exam will receive a zero on that exam.

Papers (3 @ 6% each, or 18% of overall grade)

There will be three paper assignments, each approximately 3 pages in length. Papers are to be typed, double-spaced in 12 point, Times New Roman font. Papers must be handed in at the BEGINNING of class on the due date—one letter grade will be deducted for papers not received at the beginning of class, with an additional grade deducted for every day the paper is late—late papers will not be accepted more than three days after the due date. Plagiarizing will automatically result in a failed paper.

These paper assignments aim to develop and tap student creativity and ability at applying the material discussed in class to real world situations. These assignments are not formal research papers; they do not

require research sources or bibliographies. However, they can be supplemented with outside sources, such as other books, journal articles, or newspapers. Any sources you do use MUST be appropriately cited.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Academic Honesty

I do not tolerate cheating or plagiarizing in any form. Anyone caught cheating will, at the very least, fail that assignment and possibly the class. You may also face university disciplinary action. Please see the university handbook for more information on what constitutes academic misconduct and the official university procedure for dealing with such misconduct. For more information, please see the university's Student Academic Conduct and Discipline Policy.

Reading

Make sure you have read before class. This is a crucial component to understanding the material in this course. This means you need to read the assigned material for each class meeting *before* that class meeting. The class will be more interesting for all involved and your grades will improve.

Communication

It is the student's responsibility to check his/her University email address, preferably daily, since Blackboard works through University email addresses and this is how I will communicate with you. If you prefer another email address, set up forwarding from your University address.

The best way to contact me is to stop by my office during office hours, schedule an appointment, or by email.

A note about email communications

Do not hesitate to email me with any questions or concerns you may have. However, please be professional in your emails. Before sending an email, please make sure you cannot easily get the answer from another source, such as the syllabus or other class documents. In addition, in many cases, I may request you meet with me to discuss your question rather than engage in a series of back and forth emails.

Getting Help

If you do not understand something that we are discussing in class please let me know as you are almost certainly not alone. However, if no one asks for clarification there is no way for me to know when something needs to be clarified or reviewed. Some of the material we cover in each class will build on the material from the previous classes so if you don't understand something from one class you will almost certainly not understand the material for the next class.

In summary: Do NOT wait until you have been lost for several classes to ask for help!

While I may not respond to emails immediately, during the week I will respond within 24 hours.

Miscellaneous, but Still IMPORTANT Information

- Changes to the syllabus may be made from time to time in order to correct errors, adjust the schedule, fine tune course details, or to address unforeseen issues. Changes will be discussed and announced in class. It is the student's responsibility to attend class to be aware of any syllabus changes. The official syllabus will always be available on Blackboard.
- I will make appropriate allowances for those with disabilities, but it is your responsibility to notify me of needed accommodations. In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require accommodations should work with Student Disability Services.

- Cell Phones: I do not want to hear or see them (including holding the phone underneath your desk while sending a text message). Turn them off.
- Laptops: I permit the use of laptops or another electronic device for note-taking purposes. However, if I see that you are using the device for something other than taking notes, I will ask you to turn it off.

Course Schedule

Week	Day	Date	Exams/Papers	Topic	Hershey
Week 1	Tuesday	8/23		Course Overview and Introduction	
	Thursday	8/25		Why Parties?	H 1
Week 2	Tuesday	8/30		Party Systems and Realignment	H 7
	Thursday	9/1		""	
Week 3	Tuesday	9/6		The Two-Party System and Third Parties	H 2
	Thursday	9/8		""	
Week 4	Tuesday	9/13		Party Identification	H 6
	Thursday	9/15	Paper 1 Due	""	
Week 5	Tuesday	9/20		Parties in Primary Elections	H 9, 10
	Thursday	9/22		""	
Week 6	Tuesday	9/27		<i>Class Cancelled</i>	
	Thursday	9/29		Parties and Voter Turnout	H 8
Week 7	Tuesday	10/4	Paper 2 Due	Parties in General Elections	H 11
	Thursday	10/6		Spillover/review	
Week 8	Tuesday	10/11	Midterm Exam		
	Thursday	10/13		Parties as Organizations	H 3, 4
Week 9	Tuesday	10/18		Party Activists	H 5
	Thursday	10/20		Campaign Finance	H 12
Week 10	Tuesday	10/25		""	
	Thursday	10/27		Group Theories of Politics and Collective Action	
Week 11	Tuesday	11/1		Interest Group Development and Growth	
	Thursday	11/3	Paper 3 Due	Advocacy and Lobbying	
Week 12	Tuesday	11/8		<i>Election Day – Vote!? (no class)</i>	
	Thursday	11/10		<i>Post-Election hangover (no class)</i>	
Week 13	Tuesday	11/15		Parties and Interest Groups in Government	H 13, 14
	Thursday	11/17		""	
<i>Thanksgiving Break – No Class</i>					
Week 14	Tuesday	11/29		The Place of Parties and Interest Groups	H 15, 16
	Thursday	12/1		Parties, Interest Groups, and Inequality (or, Pluralism and Democracy)	
Final	Tuesday	12/6	Final Exam	Final Exam - Cumulative (8am)	

Note: The Hershey readings are recommended. All *required* readings will be posted on blackboard.