

## **POLITICAL SCIENCE 3300: AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES**

**Spring, 2009**

**ROSS HALL 215—11-11:50 P.M., MWF**

**Dr. Art English, 608J, Stabler Hall**

**Office Hours: MWF from noon to 1:00 PM and by appointment**

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### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Marjorie R. Hershey, **Party Politics in America, 17<sup>th</sup> edition (paper)**, Pearson-Longman publishers.

Stephen C. Craig, (Ed), **The Electoral Challenge: Theory Meets Practice, (paper)**, Congressional Quarterly Publisher.

**Class Handouts are fair game for examination purposes.**

**There is the expectation that as students of political parties you will keep up with major developments in our state and national party system through news sources. These are historic and challenging times for all of us so we should indeed keep up with what is going on with the new president and congress. Also from time to time I may provide you with a particular article to read that is especially relevant to our class.**

### **I. The Class Revealed**

In this class we investigate the contemporary place and status of American political parties in the American political system. We do this through a review of their theoretical origins, historical roots, and organizational development within the American Political System and culture. The major question we address is whether American Political Parties continue to play a key role in the maintenance of our Democracy and the organization of our electoral and governmental system. It was not too long ago that mid 20<sup>th</sup> century political scientists believed that our democracy was unthinkable without political parties, that they were central institutions in linking the citizen to the political system, that they were crucial in structuring electoral politics, that they were absolutely necessary in keeping the political system stable and politics relevant and robust. How parties work and perhaps should work in a candidate centered, media penetrated system populated by a public largely cynical about parties and politics will be a theme we will see a lot in our reading and analysis.

### **II. How we do the class.**

The best way to learn the political science of American political parties is to do it, hear about it from those who practice it, read about from our academic sources, and draw from my experience and knowledge in teaching it. To that purpose we will write a couple of applied papers and listen to some practical experts in the field. We can't do everything in one short semester but my goal is

to provide you with a good working knowledge of political parties and help you enhance your analytical skills in our subject matter.

### **III. What you need to do.**

Come to class regularly. Do your reading and assignments on time and be prepared for discussion. Be respectful of other points of view. Let me know ahead of time if you need to leave early or cannot be in class. Turn off your cell phones while in class. Bring your texts with you to class.

### **IV. Office Hours**

My office is in the Department of Political Science on the sixth floor of Stabler Hall (the building that looks like a parking garage) on the side that faces the library. The number of my office is 608-J. Regular office hours are noted above. I am also very accessible by appointment or by phone. I encourage you to call me if you have a question or problem. Call me at my UALR office number (569-8788 direct) or if I am not there leave a message on my voice mail. I may also be reached at home at 455-1275 or by [e-mail—ajenglish@ualr.edu](mailto:ajenglish@ualr.edu). Feel free to call me on my cell phone. I would rather address your question earlier rather than later. If I cannot be reached for some reason, check with our Department secretary Tina Tipton at 569-3331. E-Mail is a very convenient way to get me. I look at it several times a day. Because I am still recovering from an illness last semester it might be better for at least a few weeks or better to contact me by phone or e-mail.

**a. Class list serv---**We can post messages to each other in the class very simply posting to [pols330001@ualr.edu](mailto:pols330001@ualr.edu). Messages to me personally of course should come directly to my e-mail address.

### **V. Department and Course Learning Goals**

In particular, the political science department specifies four learning objectives for courses in American Political Institutions and Processes:

1. Students will assess the formal and informal powers belonging to an institution or political process and assess the effective and legitimate use of this power.
2. Students will identify political inputs applicable to the institution and evaluate their impact on the institution.
3. Students will identify significant organizational elements and discuss significant organizational relationships and their impact on institutional performance.
4. Students will perform an analysis of a topic or a text appropriate to the institution or political process. They will (1) apply appropriate concepts or theories (2) state an argument or hypothesis (3) use relevant evidence (4) and draw valid conclusions based on their analysis and evidence.

### **VI. How will my grade be evaluated?**

There will be a midterm and a comprehensive final exam that will emphasize the broad themes of the class. A blue examination booklet should be purchased from the bookstore for each exam. Exams tend to be essay and short answer but some objective

questions from the reading and class presentations may also appear. The midterm is worth 100 points and the final weighs at 150 points. There will also be two papers details to follow shortly. By summary however **paper 1** will be five to six pages and will focus on a state party organization and its success in electing officeholders. Students using the party's web site, history of that party, and any relevant interviews with party operatives in the selected party will write a paper analyzing that party's strength and weaknesses making an assessment of the party's strength in that state's political system. Students in doing this paper can assess the party's legal framework, whether the party's committees are complete or not, the quality of the web site, the nature of the party's technology, the success the party has had (maybe recent couple of elections), in electing state and national officials (elected legislators would be one measure) and perhaps voting results in presidential elections. The success in electing people who take the party's label is a key measure of party success and strength. We will try and devote a class to hearing the results of this research. There are benchmarks of party strength in our text and in my presentations that you can draw from and cite. The goal of this paper is to enhance your research, organizational, and writing skills in political science. Paper 1 is worth 100 points.

**Paper 2** should be a fun assignment as well as learning useful. Paper 2 requires you to write a political history of your family focusing on their party identification and how it evolved, their political ideology, the effect that residence, occupation, ethnicity, education, peer groups, may have had on their politics, the nature of intergenerational change, say from grandmother to mother to son and daughter, their level of party activism. This assignment is essentially qualitative in nature but has the goal of enhancing your ability to devise good interview questions and interpret data. Students are expected in this paper to cite generalizations and interpretations of their data within the context of what political scientists have already theorized and found about this process of party political socialization. There are plenty of cites and tables in our readings to help you with this process as well as our coverage in class. Interpret the term "family" generously; it might include grandparents and those who came before, parents, aunts and uncles, cousins as well as siblings. The wider you cast the net, the more interesting the results are likely to be. You want to tell a story about how your family positioned itself and participated in the stream of history that culminates in 2008. The final paper should be eight double spaced pages using font 12. Footnote and reference pages not included. You will be expected to include your research questionnaire and reference (a family tree) of all those interviewed. Phone interviews are quite acceptable to do. The final product should be a story, an evolution of sorts of the politics of your family and what variables appeared to influence those politics. Papers are to be neat and free of grammatical errors. Sloppy and late papers will be penalized. This paper is worth 150 points.

**a. Class effort**—Good class participation, attendance, and preparations are expected. While no direct points are allocated for this I do keep close track of this and it can help your grade in this class.

## **VII. Make up Exams.**

We are small so it may be possible to do a make up other than consultation day, perhaps after class in the political science office.

## **VIII. Grading Scale**

450-500 A  
400-449 B  
350-399 C  
300-349 D  
000-299 F

## **IX. Incompletes**

Incompletes are assigned only when the student does not fulfill the requirements of the course due to illness or injury or highly unusual personal circumstances. Incompletes are never assigned because a student is unable to complete the requirements of the course for other reasons or has a low grade on all required work in the course. If you have a problem or anticipate a problem, please see me. As your professor in this class I am interested in helping you.

## **X. Persons with a Disability Policy**

Students with Disabilities. It is the policy of UALR to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to state and federal law. Any such student who needs accommodation, for example in seating placement, or in arrangements for note-taking, examinations, or access to information on the web, should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. The chair of the department offering this course is also available to assist with accommodations. You may contact Dr. Neil Snortland at 569-3331. Students with disabilities are also encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Support Services located in Donaghey Student Center 103, telephone 569-3143, and on the web at <http://www.ualr.edu/~dssdept/index.html>.”

## **XI. Important University Dates**

Jan 12 <sup>th</sup>	Classes begin.
Jan 16 <sup>th</sup>	Last day to register, add, or drop a class by 4 p.m.; all tuition and fees due by 4.p.m.
Jan 19 <sup>th</sup>	Martin Luther King remembrance---No classes
March 23-28	Spring Break---yea
April 10 <sup>th</sup>	Last day to drop an individual class and receive a final grade of “W”
May 4 <sup>th</sup>	Classes end. Last day to withdraw from classes by 5 p.m.
May 5 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday, Consultation and Make up Day: our classroom at 9:00 a.m.
May 8 <sup>th</sup>	Our final at 10:30 a.m. in Ross Hall 215
May 14h	Grades due by noon
May 16 <sup>th</sup>	Commencement

## Class Assignments (Subject to adaptation)

Jan 12 <sup>th</sup>	Course introduction
Jan 14 <sup>th</sup>	what are political parties? (MRH 1)
Jan 16 <sup>th</sup>	what are political parties? (MRH 1)
Jan 19	No class
Jan 21 <sup>st</sup>	the American two party system (MRH 2)
Jan 23 <sup>rd</sup>	the American two party system (MRH 2)
Jan 26—30 <sup>th</sup>	the state and local party organizations (MRH 3) Craig 9
Feb 2-6 <sup>th</sup>	national party organizations (MRH 4)
Feb 9-13 <sup>th</sup>	party activists (MRH 5)
Feb 16-20 <sup>th</sup>	party identification (MRH 6)
Feb 20 <sup>th</sup>	midterm examination
Feb 23-27 <sup>th</sup>	Party Coalitions (MRH 7); Craig 1
Feb 27 <sup>th</sup>	first paper due in class—Student reports (Craig 7)
Mar 2-6 <sup>th</sup>	who votes and why (MRH) (Craig 3 and 8)
Mar 9-13 <sup>th</sup>	how parties choose candidates (MRH 9)
Mar 16—18 <sup>th</sup>	selecting the presidential nominees (MRH 10)
Mar 20 <sup>th</sup>	no class—research on paper day
Mar 30-Apr 3 <sup>rd</sup>	the General Election (MRH 11) Craig, 2, 10
Apr 6-10 <sup>th</sup>	financing the campaign (MRH 12) Craig, 4, 5, 6
April 13-16 <sup>th</sup>	Parties in a legislative setting (MRH 13) Craig 11
Apr 20-24 <sup>th</sup>	party in executive and courts (MRH 14)
April 26-May 4 <sup>th</sup>	catch up---complete reading; student reports  Final paper due in class on April 26th