INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most famous sentence in the vast literature and long history of studies of American political parties is the opening sentence of Professor Clinton Rossiter’s 1960 book on Parties and Politics in America. Rossiter wrote: “NO America without democracy, no democracy without politics, no politics without parties, no parties without compromise and moderation.” Although the last segment of Rossiter’s claim might be questioned in the face of the intense partisan polarization of recent decades and some skeptical reformers might even challenge the first premise of the statement, the centrality of political parties to organizing political conflict in American government as well as in the American public seems beyond dispute. The importance of political parties and partisanship has had its ups and downs, but even at their weakest point during the dealignment or decomposition phase that the major parties went through in the 1970s and early 1980s, American politics could only be understood well by understanding American party politics—the intra-party politics as well an inter-party politics. This course is an attempt to chart out the broad range of research on American party politics, from internal party processes to inter-party competition and at both the mass, activist, and leadership levels.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

The course grade for each student in this class will be based on the following four components:

- Discussion Leadership 15%
- Observation Papers & Class Participation 30%
- Term Paper 25%
- Final Exam 30%

Or, in lieu of the term paper and final exam, a research paper (55%)

Discussion Leaders: Every student will be assigned to be a discussion leader for a week. You are responsible for taking a leadership role for the all the assigned reading in that week. For the meeting in which you are the discussion leader you should be especially well versed about the week's reading and should help direct the class discussion, either through questions or comments designed to provoke further analysis of the reading, its methodological soundness, its theoretical contribution, its general importance, and implications for other research. Discussion leaders should present a brief (no more than 6 to 8 minutes) summary of the book at the beginning of the class meeting. You should clearly present the following information:
you should not present a lengthy summary of the book. After this brief presentation and any clarifying questions from other class participants, your responsibility is to raise questions and offer commentary to spur discussion in order to illuminate the quality and importance of the research presented in the book.

Class Participation. Active class discussion and preparation is a major component of any good seminar. It should go without saying, but I will say it in any case, that attendance at and preparation for every class meeting is expected. You should also bring your copy of the week’s book and articles with your notes on it to each class. Each student, whether leading the discussion or not, should be well-prepared and should participate actively and thoughtfully in the class discussions. Each student will also be assigned three weeks in which he or she is required to prepare in writing a critical (positive, neutral, or negative) comment or question regarding the week's reading. These are the reading observation papers. This should be brief, normally a single paragraph. They should be sent via e-mail to other members of the class by at least 11pm of the Tuesday evening before the Wednesday night class. Several of these comments may be read for the class. The comments should concern the reading as political science and absolutely not as literature. That is, comments regarding whether or not you think that a book is well-written are NOT appropriate for these observation papers. You will not receive a grade on these papers per se, unless they are unacceptable. However, your grade for participation may be affected by how insightful these papers are about the readings.

Discussion leader assignments have been randomly assigned and will be distributed at the first class meeting. Late registrants to the course will be assigned to achieve balance in coverage of the material.

Term Paper. Since graduate students and junior faculty are often unaware of a good deal of older research and since a major premise of any discipline, particularly a scientific one, is that knowledge is cumulative and builds in one way or another on prior research, the term paper assignment for the course is to write a critical book analysis paper on one of the classic books that have been written on American political parties. The subfield of American political parties has a rich research tradition and I have pared down the list of “classics” in the subfield to 25 books from which you are to choose to write on one. The list is as follows:

25 Classic Studies of American Political Parties


Bond, Jon R. and Richard Fleisher. 1990. The President in the Legislative Arena. Chicago:
Next week, you will be asked to pick one of these for your paper assignment. No book can be selected by more than one student. You may not get your first pick, so rank order your top three or four picks. You will have an opportunity to select your book in a random draft.
As to the essay: You should write a 10 to 12 page paper (double-spaced) on one of the classic studies of American parties listed above. The essay should address how the study influenced or did not influence subsequent research in its subfield. What was or might have been its contribution to research on its topic? In retrospect, what was its particular strengths or weaknesses? How did future research extend, revise, or refute the study’s conceptual framework, findings, or conclusions? What research questions posed or suggested by the classic study are still open for further investigation? Which of these questions you wish to address is up to you. The paper, however, should in some way place the classic study in the broader context of research on its subject. In what respects was political science successful or unsuccessful in building upon this study and why? Be specific in making and supplying evidence of your claims and thoroughly reference your essay.

Final Examination: The final component of your grade is a take-home final examination. It will consist of two essay questions. The questions will be distributed at the last class meeting and will be due eight days later. The essays are limited to eight pages each (double-spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins).

Research Project Option: An option to writing the term paper and taking the final examination is to conduct research project and prepare a paper on it. The topic for the research paper must be approved by me before the end of the fourth week in the semester.

COURSE READINGS

The following seven books have been ordered through the UB Bookstore:


CLASS TOPICS & READING ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 1. JANUARY 28
The Syllabus and Course Requirements
Introduction: American Political Parties Subfield
   A Mediating Institution: Organizing Political Conflict
   Aggregation and Articulation
   Mass and Elite
   Intra-Party and Inter-Party
Responsible Party Government
Polarized Parties, Policy Gridlock, and Divided Government
The Polarization Book
   Chapter 6: Why are Parties More Polarized?
   Chapter 7: Is Party Polarization One-Sided or Asymmetric? And if so, why?
   Chapter 8: On the Median Voter Puzzle: Why are Parties Polarized at All?

WEEK 2. FEBRUARY 4
Types of Parties and Why Parties?
Read:
   In A Comparative Study of Party Organization, ed., William E. Wright. Columbus, OH:
Brewer and Maisel (ed.) The Parties Respond:
   Jeffrey M. Stonecash, “Political Science and the Study of Parties,” (chapter 1).
   Nicol C. Rae, “The Diminishing Oddness of American Political Parties,” (chapter 2).

   Discussion Leaders:
   Reading Observations:

WEEK 3. FEBRUARY 11
Read:

   Discussion Leaders:
   Reading Observations:
WEEK 4. FEBRUARY 18
Party Identification I

Read:
Brewer and Maisel (ed.) The Parties Respond:
Mark D. Brewer, “Attempts to Build a Winner,” (chapter 3).
Green, Coffey, and Cohen (eds.), The State of the Parties:

Discussion Leaders:
Reading Observations:

Recommended:

WEEK 5. FEBRUARY 25
Party Identification II

Read:
Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, Partisan Hearts and Minds.

Discussion Leaders:
Reading Observations:

WEEK 6. MARCH 4
Macropartisanship

Read:


Discussion Leaders:
Reading Observations:

**WEEK 7. MARCH 11**
Realignment I
*Read:*
Mayhew, *Electoral Realignments*.

Discussion Leaders:
Reading Observations from:

Recommended:


Theodore Rosenof. 2003. *Realignment: The Theory that Changed the Way We Think about American Politics*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.* This was ordered for the class, but it is no longer in print.

**SPRING BREAK – MARCH 18**

**WEEK 8. MARCH 25**
Realignment II
*Read:*
Brewer and Maisel (ed.) *The Parties Respond*

Alan Abramowitz, “American Political Parties in an Age of Polarization,” (chapter 13)


Green, Coffey, and Cohen (eds.), *The State of the Parties*:

Discussion Leaders:
Reading Observations:

**WEEK 9. APRIL 1**

**Party Nominations I**

**Read:**
Cohen, Karol, Noel, and Zaller, *The Party Decides*. Chapters 1-7 (pp.1-234)

Discussion Leader:
Reading Observations from:

**WEEK 10. APRIL 8**

**Party Nominations II**

**Read:**
Cohen, Karol, Noel, and Zaller, *The Party Decides*. Chapters 8-10 (pp.235-362)
Green, Coffey, and Cohen (eds.), *The State of the Parties*:
Brewer and Maisel (ed.) *The Parties Respond*:
Barabara Norrander, “Parties and the Presidential Nominating Contests,” (chapter 7).

Discussion Leader:
Reading Observations from:

**WEEK 11. APRIL 15**

**Party Activists**

**Read:**
Green, Coffey, and Cohen (eds.), *The State of the Parties*:
Brewer and Maisel (ed.) *The Parties Respond*:

**Party Organizations I**

*Read:*
Green, Coffey, and Cohen (eds.), *The State of the Parties:*

Discussion Leader: Reading Observations from:

**WEEK 12. APRIL 22**

**Party Organizations II**

*Read:*
Brewer and Maisel (ed.) *The Parties Respond:*
Paul S. Herrnson, “National Parties in the Twenty-First Century,” (chapter 6)

**Parties in Campaigns**

*Read:*
Green, Coffey, and Cohen (eds.), *The State of the Parties:*
Diana Dwyre and Robin Kolodny, “Political Party Activity in the 2012 Elections: Sophisticated Orchestration or Diminished Influence?” (Chapter 13).
David Magleby, “Classifying Super PACs,” (chapter 14).

Brewer and Maisel (ed.) *The Parties Respond:*
Diana Dwyre, “Political Parties and Campaign Finance: Challenges and Adaptations,” (chapter 8).
Diana Owen, “Political Parties and the Media: The Parties Respond to Technological Innovation,” (chapter 10).

Discussion Leader: Reading Observations from:
WEEK 13. APRIL 29
Parties and Government I
Read:
Mayhew, Partisan Balance

Discussion Leader:
Reading Observations from:

WEEK 14. MAY 6
Parties and Government II
Read:
Green, Coffey, and Cohen (eds.), The State of the Parties:
  Michael J. Ensley, et. al., “Are These Boots Made for Walking? Polarization and Ideological
  Change among U.S. House Members,” (chapter 7).
  Boris Shor, “Party Polarization in America’s State Legislatures: An Update,” (chapter 8).
Brewer and Maisel (ed.) The Parties Respond:
  Sean Theriault and Jonathan Lewallen, “Congressional Parties and the Policy Process,”
  (chapter 11)
  G. Calvin MacKenzie, “Partisan Presidential Leadership: The President’s Appointees,”
  (chapter 12)

RESEARCH PAPER – May 15
The Debate over Responsible Party Government

A long intellectual history:

I. Criticisms of Conventional American Party Politics
A. The Parties Themselves
   1. Fragmented
   2. Unprogramatic, Deemphasize Issues
   3. Not Cohesive, Not Disciplined
   4. Indistinct - Too Centrist, Too Muddled
B. Consequences for Voter Behavior
   1. Unthinking, Knee-jerk Party Votes
   2. Unsystematic, Candidate-driven Non-Party Votes
C. Consequences for Interest Groups - More Influential as they fill the power void
D. The Bottom-line: Irresponsible Parties
   1. Parties Lack Power Within Government
   2. Parties NOT Clearly Accountable to Public
      In a system of separated powers requiring coordinated action to govern, the only meaningful accountability is collective accountability and the only clear collective accountability is party accountability.
   3. Low Power + Low Accountability = Irresponsible

II. The Doctrine of Responsible Party Government
A. Popular Control Requires Responsible Parties
   1. Parties Strong Enough to Run Government
   2. Parties Identifiable Enough to be Answerable for the Running of Government
B. The Requirements of Responsible Parties
   1. Clear and Distinct Party Positions
   2. Party Unity/Cohesiveness in Leadership through:
      a. Selection of Candidates
      b. Party Discipline
      c. Constitutional Imperatives - Votes of Confidence
      d. Natural Ideological Agreement
   3. Party Voting
      a. Voters Accurately Perceive Party in Power
      b. Voters Associate Party and Policy
      c. Voters Hold Party Collectively Accountable
   4. Interest Groups Shut Out of Direct Power
III. Defense of Conventional Aggregating “Weak” Party Politics (Loose Coalition Parties, 940s to 1970s)
   A. Responsible Parties are Unrealistic
      1. Voters are not sufficiently issue-oriented
      2. Uncompromising Parties would encourage Third Parties
      3. Discipline is not easily available – violates democratic norms
      4. Government Structure encourages Party Fragmentation
   B. Responsible Parties are Undesirable
      1. Would Intensify Social Conflicts
      2. Party Discipline may cost Intra-Party Democracy
      3. "Deadlock" or Compromised Coalition Government may be Desirable
         a. Stimulates Deliberation
         b. Permits a Mix of Policies, Flexibility
         c. Provides Stability to Policy, No lurching from left to right and back
      4. Would Lower General Satisfaction with Electoral Choice
         a. May lead to less competition in some areas of the nation
         b. May lead to multi-party system & gridlock among these more ideological parties

IV. Retrospective on Party Development: Evolution into Responsible Parties (The 1980s to 2006)
   A. Parties are Polarized with Clear and Distinct Positions
   B. Party Cohesion in Government is High, though Not Perfect
   C. Partisanship in the Electorate is Strong
      1. High Percentage are Partisan
      2. High Loyalty Rates in Voting
      3. Low level of Split-Ticket Voting
   D. Realignment Induced Responsible Parties rather than Discipline Induced Responsible Parties
Table 2. Divided Government following Presidential and Midterm Elections, 1860-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Years</th>
<th>Presidential elections %</th>
<th>Midterm elections %</th>
<th>All elections %</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1860-1894</td>
<td>22% (2 of 9)</td>
<td>67% (6 of 9)</td>
<td>44% (8 of 18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1896-1966</td>
<td>6% (1 of 18)</td>
<td>28% (5 of 18)</td>
<td>17% (6 of 36)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968-2014</td>
<td>58% (7 of 12)</td>
<td>83% (10 of 12)</td>
<td>71% (17 of 24)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1860-2014</td>
<td>26% (10 of 39)</td>
<td>54% (21 of 39)</td>
<td>40% (31 of 78)</td>
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Note: The numbers in parentheses are the actual number of elections in the category that resulted in divided government and the total number of presidential or midterm elections held during that period.


Table 3. Party Polarization in Divided and Unified Government

<table>
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<th>Nature of Political Divisions</th>
<th>Less Polarized Heterogenous Parties</th>
<th>Highly Polarized Homogenous Parties</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unified Government</td>
<td>Divided Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Divisions</td>
<td>Slightly Less Conflict</td>
<td>Slightly More Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideological Divisions</td>
<td>Less Conflict</td>
<td>Less Conflict</td>
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and observation note assignments will be linked to your discussion leader week’s assignment (3 weeks after, 5 weeks after, and 8 weeks wrapping around back to the course’s second week).