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Government 2055: Political Parties in the U.S.

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Druckenmiller 004
Tues/Thurs, 10:05 to 11:30 AM

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What are political parties, why do citizens join them, and what role do they play in the operations of American government? Edmund Burke defined a political party as a group of people united upon “some particular principle” to promote the “the national interest.” What kinds of principles (if any) do citizens unite upon to form parties? Do parties always serve “the national interest”? This course addresses these and other questions concerning the status of parties in political science and in the American political tradition. In the process, we will examine how the organization of parties and party “systems” frame public debate, influence policy formation, and shape the hopes and aspirations of citizens participating in the political process.

Course Requirements

All exams and assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade for the course.

1. Participation (20%)—this includes several components:

- In-class participation
- Quizzes. There will be unannounced quizzes and the results of these quizzes will be incorporated into your participation grade. Quizzes are designed to ensure that you are keeping up with the reading.
- Attendance. You are required to attend all class sessions. Of course, people do get sick, have doctor’s appointments, etc. Nevertheless, I will grant excused absences sparingly. If you should miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain lecture notes from one of your classmates and to make arrangements to make up any missed work.

2. Two Argumentative Essays (5 pages each) (20% each)

3. Midterm Exam (20%), October 16th

4. Final Exam (20%), TBA

All written assignments must meet the following specifications. Failure to do so may result in a deduction of *at least* one-third of one grade (e.g. A- to B+, B+ to a B, B to B-):

- Stapled
- Page numbers indicated on each page (page one need not be numbered)
- Double-spaced
- Please save a copy of your work and keep it until I return the submitted copy to you with a grade.
- Endnotes or footnotes required for all writing. All students must abide by the Bowdoin Academic Honor Code. If you have any concerns or questions about how to cite work appropriately, *please do not hesitate to ask*.

Late Papers: Paper extensions will be granted only with a doctor or a dean's note. Late papers will be penalized by two-thirds of a grade per day (weekday or weekend day) late. The letter grade scale is A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, and so on. A reduction of two-thirds of a grade would, for example, downgrade an A to a B+ and a B+ to a B-. Keep in mind: if you will be unable to submit a quality paper on time, it may make sense to take an extra day (and a one-day late penalty) to give yourself enough time to write a good paper. *You must inform me*, however, if you do plan to take a late day penalty. Failure to do so may result in an additional penalty.

Required Readings

You should find two books on the shelves of the campus bookstore. Both are required.

David Karol, *Party Position Change in American Politics*

You must come prepared to discuss/write about all the reading for each day. Most of the readings are posted on Blackboard and on the Library's e-reserve; other readings are journal articles that are available through the Bowdoin Library web portal. It is your responsibility to read and/or print these articles off the web. Please create a binder for this class and bring assigned readings to class with you.

Some Fineprint

This syllabus is subject to change, and *probably will* change during the semester. Once we begin, I will get a better sense of the pace of our progress and of the reading preferences of the class. I will notify you of any changes that I make, as soon as I make them. The most up-to-date version of the syllabus will *always* be available on Blackboard—please note the “Updated on . . .” date printed on the upper left-hand corner of page 1.

Aug 30, Session 1: Introduction

Part I: The American Founding and Party Formation

Sept 4, Session 2: “A Realist View of Democracy”

- Schattschneider, *Semi-Sovereign People* (1960), chaps. 1 and 4
- The Federalist Papers #10 and 51

Sept 6, Session 3: The Constitutional Construction of Party Politics

- Jeffrey S. Selinger, “Economic Collapse and the Constitutional Construction of Party Politics,” in *Embracing Dissent*, Chap. 2 [Bowdoin Library EBook]

Sept 11, Session 4: A Peaceful Transfer of Power: was it fore-ordained?

- Robert Dahl, "Preface" in *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* [e-reserve]
- Michael Bellesiles, " 'The Soil Will be Soaked With Blood': Taking the Election of 1800 Seriously"

* Required viewing of *John Adams*, Episode 5

Sept 13, Session 5: Early American Views of the Role Political Parties Play in American Government

- Washington's Farewell Address
- Martin Van Buren's letter to Thomas Ritchie, 1827
- One additional selection, TBA

Sept 18, Session 6: Political instability *after* the Civil War?

- Gregory Downs, "The Mexicanization of American Politics: the United States' Transnational Path from Civil War to Stabilization," *American Historical Review* 117 (April, 2012): 387-409.

Part II: The Making and Unmaking of Distributive Parties in the Long Nineteenth Century

Sept 20, Session 7: Policy and the Culture of Parties in the 19th Century

- Richard McCormick, "The Party Period and Public Policy: An Exploratory Hypothesis," *Journal of American History* 66 (September 1979): 279-298.
- Alexis de Tocqueville on parties in the United States

Sept 25, Session 8: Linking Policy with Ethnocultural Messaging

- Richard Bessel, "The American Ballot Box: Law, Identity, and the Polling Place in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Studies in American Political Development*, 17 (Spring 2003): 1-27.

Sept 27, Session 9: Progressivism and Party Reform

- Selected readings from Robert LaFollette and/or Woodrow Wilson, TBA
- Selections from Alan Ware on the linkage between the Australian Ballot and party primaries, TBA

Oct 2, Session 10: Progressivism and Party Reform, cont'd

- Harvey Boulay and Alan DiGaetano, "Why Did Political Machines Disappear," *Journal of Urban History* 12, 1985, pp. 25-49.

Part III: Why two parties? Why the *same* two parties? And how shall the two remaining parties organize their nomination procedures?

Oct 4, Session 11: Parties and the Study of Politics

- Selected pages from William Riker, "The Two-Party System and Duverger's Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 76 (1982): 753-766.
- Rosenstone et al., *Third Parties in America*, Chapter 2

Fall Break

Oct 11, Session 12: Two-Party System or Electoral Duopoly?

- Disch, *The Tyranny of the Two-Party System*, Chapter 2
- Howard Scarrow, "Duverger's Law, Fusion, and the Decline of American 'Third' Parties," *Western Political Quarterly* 39 (Dec. 1986): 634-647.

Recommended (as a resource): Richard Winger, How Ballot Access Laws Affect the U.S. Party System," *The American Review of Politics* 16 (1995): 321-350.

Oct 16, Session 13: Midterm

Oct 18, Session 14: Presidential Nomination Procedures

- Leon Epstein, *Parties in the American Mold*, pp. 88-102
- Aaron Wildavsky, "On the Superiority of National Conventions," *The Review of Politics* 24 (July 1962): 307-319.

Oct 23, Session 15: Presidential Nomination Procedures, cont'd

- Marty Cohen et al., "Party Versus Faction in the Reformed Presidential Nominating System"

Part IV: What do the parties stand for? Why (and how) do party positions change?

Oct 25, Session 16: Realignment Theory and its Limits

- Schattschneider, *Semi-Sovereign People* (1960), chap. 5
- Karol, *Party Position Change in American Politics*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Oct 30, Session 17: The Politics of Race and Party Position Change

- Karol, *Party Position Change in American Politics*, Chapter 4

Nov 1, Session 18: The Politics of Abortion and Gun Control

- Karol, *Party Position Change in American Politics*, Chapter 3

Nov 6, Session 19: Has the "Center" Shifted? National Defense and Fiscal Policy

- Karol, *Party Position Change in American Politics*, Chapter 5

Part V: Studying and evaluating polarization in Congress, and in the electorate, and in the media

Nov 8, Session 20: Polarization in Congress

- Michael Barber and Nolan McCarty, "Causes and Consequences of Polarization," *Task Force on Negotiating Agreement in Politics*, Chapter 2

Nov 13, Session 21: In the electorate . . .

- Alan Abramowitz, "The New American Electorate: Partisan, Sorted, and Polarized"

Nov 15, Session 22: In the media . . .

- Selected pages from Robert Faris et al., *Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation: Online Media and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election*

Nov 20, Session 23: A new theory of parties for a new, asymmetrically-polarized party system . . .

- Selections from Kathleen Bawn et al., "A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands, and Nominations in American Politics," *Perspectives on Politics* 10 (September 2012): 571-597.

Thanksgiving

Nov 27, Session 24: The idea of party "responsibility"

- Charles O. Jones, *The Presidency in a Separated System*, ch. 1
- Barbara Sinclair, "Dream Fulfilled?"
- Matthew Iglesias, "The Case for Partisanship," *The Atlantic*

Nov 29, Session 25: A critique of “party responsibility”—and a defense of “middle-men”

- Banfield, “In Defense of the American Party System” *Political Parties, U.S.A.*

Dec 4, Session 26: A 21st century defense of “middle-men”

- Jonathan Rauch, “How American Politics Went Insane,” *The Atlantic* (July/August 2016)
- Jonathan Chait, Response to Rauch, *nymag.com*

Dec 6, Session 27: Polarization and the ‘guardrails’ of American government

- Readings TBA

Final Exam: Date TBA