

AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES

Professor Paul Allen Beck
beck.9@osu.edu
1010 Derby Hall (292-7689)
Office Hours: 2-3:30 M, W
& other times by appointment

Teaching Associate Erik Heidemann
Heidemann.3@osu.edu
100 Derby Hall (247-8743)
Office Hours:
& other times by appointment

Political parties are key institutions in the political process in the United States and other democracies. They are present in one form or another in every forum of democratic politics. In the United States, political parties appear in three forms: (1) the legally recognized and regulated organizations under political party names that have appeared in the localities, the states, and the nation; (2) the coalitions of voters who are united in professing loyalty to the same party; and (3) the teams of politicians who organize under the same label to contest and hold public office. This course will study the role and behavior of the American parties in each of these forms, as well as in the electoral process, and it will examine the interrelationships among them. It will pay particular attention to the 2004 elections, how American parties have changed in recent years, and what these changes imply for the American political process.

For all of their importance to democratic politics, there is considerable normative disagreement over the desirability of political parties and the roles they play. On the one hand, some claim that parties are indispensable to the development and operation of political democracy, especially in clarifying policy and candidate choices so that ordinary citizens can participate in the governmental process. It is difficult for these observers to imagine how democratic politics would operate without them. On the other hand, political parties have been the objects of considerable criticism throughout their existence. In the United States, reformers have championed initiatives, referenda, nonpartisan elections, and even public funding of candidates as alternatives to functions that political parties typically perform, and many reforms have been adopted with the express purpose of weakening the American parties. What their proponents see as their critical function in framing choices for the electorate, their critics see as tiresome partisan bickering, and the manufacturing of unnecessary political conflict. We will wrestle with these normative questions as well in this course.

Required Readings

The required readings for the course are all contained in two books: Marjorie Randon Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, 11th edition (New York: Longman, 2005); and Michael Nelson, *The Elections of 2004* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2005). Virtually all of the chapters in the books are required and will be covered on the examinations, so students are strongly encouraged to purchase them from one of the campus bookstores.

Grading Policy

Course grades will be based on a midterm and a final examination and, to earn a grade higher than a C+, a research paper. To exercise the research paper option, students must submit it

in final form by the deadline stated in the syllabus. For students submitting the research paper by the deadline, the midterm, the final, and the paper will each comprise 33 1/3rd % of the final grade. For students who do not submit a research paper, the midterm and the final will comprise 50% of the grade each, except that the course grade can be no higher than a C+. **In sum, submission of the research paper is required to receive a course grade of C+ or higher, but it does not guarantee a grade at that level or higher.** Class attendance and participation also will be taken into account at the margins in determining final grades. The mid-term will cover the readings and lectures for the first half of the course; the final will cover readings/lectures for the second half. Lecture and class discussions are designed mainly to complement (and only occasionally to repeat or review) the readings, so careful reading of the texts and regular class attendance are both necessary for a satisfactory grade in the course. Failure to take examinations at the scheduled times, unless excused in advance by the instructor, will result in a 0 for that exam. Copies of the research papers must be turned in directly to the course instructor or TA; no electronic copies will be accepted.

Guide to the Research Paper

The research paper is to be an original paper of no more than 10 pages in length, which analyzes the electoral setting and prospects for a 2008 presidential candidate in one of the 50 American states. Prospective candidates for president begin their planning and fund-raising at least two years before the election year. You are to play the role of a campaign advisor for the 2008 presidential aspirant of your choice in the state of your choice **other than Ohio**. Your specific job for now is to prepare a briefing paper of no more than 10 pages that analyzes your candidate's prospects in that state in both the contest for the party's nomination and the November general election. This requires you to become an expert on contemporary party and electoral politics in the state you have selected and, also, to know something about your candidate as well.

To win the presidency, your candidate has to first gain her/his party's presidential nomination. This is accomplished by winning a majority of delegates in party primaries and caucuses that are scattered across a 4-5 month election calendar. Your state may be important in the candidate's quest for the nomination. You need to advise her/him on its importance and, if important, what strategy needs to be employed to effectively contest it. Your analysis should contain descriptions of how and when delegates to the party's national nominating convention will be selected in the state, what the nature of the party's voter base and intra-party factions is there, and what prospects your candidate has to win voter support – so that she/he can gain momentum toward receiving the party's nomination. Should the candidate enter the state's contest for the nomination? What financial and other resources should be committed to winning this particular state relative to others if a campaign is launched there?

Once your candidate has received the nomination, a strategy needs to be developed for the general election campaign. Presidential elections are won by gaining a **majority** of the fifty states' and District of Columbia's electoral votes, which in turn are accumulated by winning a **plurality** of the popular vote in state by state. This requires a fifty-state electoral strategy, and you are expected by your candidate to provide the analysis that will be the foundation of such a strategy for your state. You should analyze your candidate's prospects for winning a plurality in the state's general election given its recent voting history and the characteristics of the state's voters. Based on that

analysis, you should recommend what share of limited campaign resources should be devoted to winning this state relative to other states where resources might be invested.

The best papers will demonstrate: (1) understanding of key concepts and election and party characteristics from the course's required readings and lectures; (2) knowledge of the state's party/electoral politics based on your own primary and secondary research about it; (3) appreciation for how the nature of your state affects your candidate's prospects and what the campaign can do to deal with them; and (4) an ability to address these topics thoughtfully and cogently in your report. The essays are expected to be free of spelling and grammatical errors (use your spell- and grammar-checks!!) and well written; the quality of the writing will affect the paper's grade. Students who have selected the same state are welcome to work together in doing the basic research on their state, but **the final draft must be entirely their own work** (see the section on Academic Honesty below). Papers on the same state will be compared to make sure they were written independently of one another.

Your paper should contain information on the following important aspects of a state, its parties and their supporters:

- background and recent history of the state's electoral and party politics (**key sources:** *The Almanac of American Politics 2006*, various state books on reserve in the main library, state newspapers)
- procedures used in the state to choose candidates for the party nominations and how they affect party control over candidates (**key sources:** Hershey and Nelson books, and Secretary of State websites)
- level of electoral competition between the major parties and factionalism within the party of your candidate (**key sources:** Ranney index from the Hershey book, recent electoral results for president and selected other offices from Secretary of State websites)
- strength of state and local party organizations and what role they can play in the nomination and general election phases of the campaign (**key sources:** chapter in Appleton and Ward book, Aldrich and LaRaja study results distributed in class, various state books on reserve in the main library)
- what the limits are for your state on candidate spending and how the nature of the state's media markets may affect spending needs and decisions (**key sources:** Federal Election Commission website, *The Almanac of American Politics*, state newspapers)
- how the electoral college works, especially with reference to that state
- distribution of party identifiers in the state and their likely turnout (**key sources:** party registration figures where there is party registration from *The Almanac of American Politics 2006*, exit polls from 2000 or 2004 [if they become available], public opinion polls, various state books on reserve in the main library)

There are many sources of information on the topics listed above. The sources suggested here and the *Guide to Sources* to be distributed in class will be valuable resources in tracking down the needed information, and you can also find information on your state by searching the web.

The name of the state and the presidential candidate selected for the paper should be submitted by the end of class on Monday, April 10. Students may choose any state (except

Ohio) for study, and they are encouraged to do some preliminary research to make sure that there is sufficient and easily-available material on the state for their analysis. **The research paper is due to the course instructor by 5 pm on Thursday, June 1.** Research papers will not be accepted after that deadline.

Academic Honesty

All of the work that students do in this course is expected to be their own. Cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas, including material from web sites, without proper citation) will not be tolerated. Any case of possible academic misconduct in the form of cheating or plagiarism will be reported automatically to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct and handled according to University policy. A committee finding of academic misconduct can be penalized by a failing grade on the paper/exam in question or in the course and possible academic probation or suspension.

Arrangements for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disabilities Services will be appropriately accommodated, and they should inform the course instructor immediately of their needs.

Course Syllabus

The following pages contain a topical outline for the course, the reading assignments for each topic, and the schedule of exam dates and paper deadlines. All readings should be completed in the week for which they are assigned.

PARTIES AND THE AMERICAN PARTY SYSTEM

March 27/29 What Are Parties and How Have They Developed?

Marjorie Randon Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Forward, pp. xvii-xxi; Part One, "Parties and Party Systems," pp. 1-3; Chapter 1, "What Are Political Parties?" pp. 5-24 + 317-18 (endnotes); and "Party Politics on the Internet," pp. 309-16.

Michael Nelson, "The Setting: George W. Bush, Majority President," Chapter 1, in Michael Nelson, ed., *The Elections of 2004*, Chapter 1, pp. 1-17.

Wilson Carey McWilliams, "The Meaning of the Election: Ownership and Citizenship in American Life," in Nelson, ed., *The Elections of 2004*, Chapter 9, pp. 187-213.

April 3/5 How Much a Two-Party System, and Why?

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 2, "The American Two-Party System," pp. 25-42 + 318-19.

<p>Monday, April 5: STATE AND CANDIDATE FOR RESEARCH PAPER DUE</p>

THE POLITICAL PARTY ORGANIZATIONS

April 10/12 Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Part Two, "The Political Party as an Organization," pp. 43-45 + 319.

What Organizational Presence at the Grass Roots?

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 3, "The State and Local Party Organizations," pp. 47-64 + 319-21.

A Reversal in Role for the National Party Organizations?

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 4, "The Parties' National Organizations," pp. 65-82 + 321-22.

What Motivates Party Activists?

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 5, "Party Activists," pp. 83-97 + 322-23.

THE POLITICAL PARTY COALITIONS

April 17/19 Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Part Three, "The Political Party in the Electorate," pp. 99-100 + 323.

Who Are the Democrats? Who Are the Republicans?

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 6, “Party Identification,” pp. 101-17 + 324-25.

Nicole Mellow, “Voting Behavior: The 2004 Election and the Roots of Republican Success, in Nelson, ed., *The Elections of 2004*, Chapter 4, pp. 69-87.

April 24/26 Why Vote for Them? Why Vote?

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 7, “Party Support and Party Realignment,” pp. 118-35 + 325-26.

Gerald M. Pomper, “The Presidential Election: The Ills of American Politics after 9/11,” in Nelson, ed., *The Elections of 2004*, Chapter 3, pp. 42-68.

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 8, “Who Votes – and Why It Matters,” pp. 136-54 + 327-28.

Wednesday, April 26: MID-TERM EXAMINATION, 3:30-5:18 pm
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POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

May 1/3 Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Part Four, “Parties, Nominations, and Elections,” pp. 155-56 + 329.

How Do Candidates Earn the Party Label?

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 9, “How Parties Choose Candidates,” pp. 157-72 + 329-30.

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 10, “Choosing the Presidential Nominees,” pp. 173-91 + 330-31.

Burden, Barry C., “The Nominations: Technology, Money, and Transferable Momentum,” in Nelson, ed., *The Elections of 2004*, Chapter 2, pp. 18-41

May 8/10 How Has Political Campaigning Changed?

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 11, “The General Election,” pp. 192-211 + 331-34.

Matthew Robert Kerbel, “The Media: The Challenge and Promise of Internet Politics,” in Nelson, ed., *The Elections of 2004*, Chapter 5, pp. 88-107.

May 15/17 Money and Politics: A Changing Party Role?

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 12, “Financing the Campaigns,” pp. 212-37 + 334-35.

Marian Currinder, "Campaign Finance: Funding the Presidential and Congressional Elections," in Nelson, *The Elections of 2004*, Chapter 6, pp. 108-32.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE GOVERNMENT

May 22/24 Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Part Five, "The Party in Government," pp. 239-41 + 335.

Where Is the Party in the Legislative Arena?

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 13, "Parties in Congress and State Legislatures], pp. 243-64 + 335-37.

Gary C. Jacobson, "The Congress: The Structural Basis of Republican Success," in Nelson, ed., *The Elections of 2004*, Chapter 8, pp. 163-86.

How Much Party Influence across the Government?

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 14, "The Party in the Executive and the Courts," pp. 265-80 + 337-39.

Paul J. Quirk and Sean C. Matheson, "The Presidency: The 2004 Elections and the Prospects for Leadership," in Nelson, ed., *The Elections of 2004*, Chapter 7, pp. 133-62.

What Are the Parties' Principles? What Do They Matter?

Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 15, "What the Parties Stand For," pp. 281-296 + 339-40.

ENDURING ISSUES FOR THE AMERICAN PARTIES

May 31 Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, Chapter 16, "The Place of Parties in American Politics," pp. 297-300 + 340-41.

Thursday, June 1: RESEARCH PAPERS DUE [by 5 pm]
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Wednesday, June 7: FINAL EXAMINATION [3:30-5:18 pm]
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