

# **POLI 208: Political Parties & Elections**

Summer Session II 2018  
Monday-Friday 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
Hanes Art Center 118

**Instructor:** Ryan Williams

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 10:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

**Office:** Hamilton Hall 312

## **Course Overview and Objectives**

Our class meets at an historic moment in American political history. Polarization between the two major political parties is at an all time high. Partisan warfare characterizes the working environment in the United States Congress, and both presidential and congressional elections attract record levels of outside spending and media attention. This class seeks to examine and contextualize these phenomena through a broad survey of American political parties and elections.

The first half of the class will focus on the origins and functions of political parties in the United States, with an emphasis on the theories political scientists have advanced to understand parties' role in the American political system. A linchpin of American politics, parties serve as avenues for legislative organization, links between voters and officeholders, and organizers and resources for political candidates. In this class, we will chart the history of political parties, how party influence has ebbed and flowed as a power center in Congress, and how partisan polarization has affected American government.

In the second half of the class, we will turn to exploring campaigns and elections, assessing the rules of American elections, the strategies candidates employ to win elected office, and recent developments in the electoral landscape, especially recent changes to rules governing money in elections and the influence of new technology and social media on how campaigns are run and how elections are covered.

We will also be attentive to how theories of political parties and elections apply to current events and the problems that government and citizens face today. Thus, students will supplement the knowledge gained from published academic work with selected articles from newspapers and magazines. Along the way, students will develop practical skills that will be beneficial in their future coursework and beyond.

By the end of this class, students will:

- Understand the roles that political parties and elections play in the American political system and how such roles have changed over time.
- Acquire a working knowledge of political party history and recognize how this history informs the contemporary polarized political environment.
- Gain an increased awareness of current developments in political campaigns, including campaign finance restrictions and election laws.

- Improve their ability to formulate and defend ideas through critical analysis of evidence and communicate these ideas through speaking and writing.

### Required Texts:

- John Sides, Daron Shaw, Matt Grossman, and Keena Lipsitz. 2015. *Campaigns and Elections*. 2nd edition. W.W. Norton & Company.
- Mark D. Brewer and Jeffrey M. Stonecash. 2009. *Dynamics of American Political Parties*. Cambridge University Press.
- John H. Aldrich. 2011. *Why Parties? A Second Look*. University of Chicago Press.

The above texts are required and can be purchased at UNC Student Stores. In the schedule of required readings listed below, *Campaigns and Elections* refers to the Sides, Shaw, Grossman, and Lipsitz text, and *Dynamics* refers to the Brewer and Stonecash book. Several book chapters assigned during the semester will be made available to students on E-Reserves through our Sakai site. These readings are labeled E-RES on the syllabus. Please note that this is a rigorous and demanding course that requires a fair amount of reading, particularly given the condensed nature of a summer class. Students should complete all readings prior to class time and be prepared to discuss.

### Course Requirements

- **Please note that students must complete all assignments to receive a passing grade for the course.**
- **Papers (2) 35%** Two papers will be assigned during the class, and both will be five pages in length. The first paper will count for **15%** of the course grade and will be due on **July 6**. The second paper will count for **20%** of the course grade and will be due on **July 24**. Paper topics will be made available to students approximately one week prior to the assignment's due date. Students may use any citation style they choose on papers so long as they remain consistent throughout that paper. Papers turned in late will be penalized a third of a letter grade for each day late. (For example, a B+ paper would become a B if turned in within 24 hours after it was due.) In addition, written assignments that do not follow the guidelines of the assignment and/or have poor grammar and spelling will be penalized. I am happy to assist students with any questions about the paper. However, I will only read and provide comments on outlines, thesis statements, or a brief paragraph in advance of the paper's due date.
- **Midterm Exam 20%** A midterm exam will be given in class on Wednesday, July 11, 2018. The exam will consist of a variety of question forms, including multiple choice, short answer, and essay. As a general rule, make-ups for exams will not be given. Students who must miss exams because of scheduled activities of an official UNC student organization, a religious holiday, or a verifiable illness should contact me in advance of missing an exam so that alternative arrangements can be made.
- **Final Exam 25%** A final exam will be given in the normal classroom during the period set by the Office of the Registrar. **For our class, the final exam is scheduled on Monday, July 30, 2018, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.** As with the midterm, the final exam will consist of a variety of question forms, including multiple choice, short answer, and essay.

- **Your Contribution to the Class 10%** Because learning is a collaborative process, students will be evaluated based on their engagement in class. Students who would like to earn a high grade for this portion of the course grade should actively and consistently participate in all aspects of class discussion, including discussion about the class readings, in-class group activities, simulations, and debates. Participation is more than just attending class. Participation means engagement in class discussion and activities and can take the form of asking questions to spur class discussion, completing in-class writing assignments and reading quizzes, stopping by office hours to discuss course readings and materials, sharing thoughts about the course material with me via email, contributing ideas for topics I could cover in class, and sending me videos, articles, websites, etc. that could be used for class. I want you to demonstrate that you are engaging with the material. I expect both quality and quantity with respect to class participation, and I will be taking note of your participation during our class meetings. Midway through the semester, I will provide estimates of where students are in terms of participation, and I will also ask students to evaluate aspects of the class.
- **Thought Questions 5%** Prior to each class, students will be required to submit at least two thought questions about the readings for that day. You may be confused about something and want clarification, you might disagree with something an author says, or you might point out an interesting part of the readings for our class to consider during discussion. Thought questions may also be broader questions that link the issues raised in the readings with other topics already considered in the course or with events in from the real political world. These questions will help to structure the day's discussion. Submitted questions should be brief (one or two sentences in length). These questions will be graded on quality, so students should not submit questions that require only factual explanation. Thought questions should be emailed to the instructor by 9:00 a.m. on the day that we will be covering the readings.
- **Attendance 5%** Attendance in this class is **mandatory** and will be taken each class period. Students cannot expect to earn high participation scores without being in class to engage in class discussion and ask questions during lecture. I recognize that emergencies and unexpected events arise which require students to miss class. Thus, students are afforded one unexcused absence from class, after which every additional unexcused absence will count against your attendance grade. Legitimate excuses are required for all absences, and I reserve the right to ask for documentation. If multiple classes are missed due to circumstances beyond your control, including illness, family emergency, participation in official UNC functions such as athletics or performances, etc., please let me know, and we can talk about how you can make up the lost class time without your grade being adversely affected. I will post attendance records after each class on Sakai. If you think you have been unfairly marked absent, please address this with me sooner rather than later in the semester.

## Grading Scale

- A (93%-100%); A- (90%-92%)
- B+ (87%-89%); B (83%-86%); B- (80%-82%)
- C+ (77%-79%); C (73%-76%); C- (70%-72%)
- D+ (67%-69%); D (60%-66%)
- F (0%-59%)

A final grade of “incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and if the research requirement is not met. An “incomplete” is solely at the discretion of the instructor. If a student needs to withdraw from the class, students should follow the rules specified by the Office of the University Registrar at <http://registrar.unc.edu/guide/registration-policies/drop-add-procedures/rules-course-drops/>. In addition, student support services are offered through the Office of the Dean of Students. See <https://deanofstudents.unc.edu/student-support> for information. Finally, students should contact their Academic Deans to assist with academic matters that relate to their specific school or college. Please visit <http://www.unc.edu/academics/> to find your College or school’s Academic Dean.

## **Office Hours and Communication**

Outside of class or office hours, please communicate with me through my campus email account, which I have provided at the top of the first page of this syllabus. I will respond to email communication as promptly as possible.

My office hours are listed at the beginning of this syllabus, and I strongly encourage students to make use of office hours for help with any and all class questions and assignments. I really enjoy talking with students, whether it be about class discussions, assignments, obscure movies and books, places to eat in Chapel Hill, etc. Office hours are for your benefit, so please make the most of them. If you are not able to make it to office hours during the times listed, please email me to schedule a more convenient appointment time. Email is reserved for brief communications. Please come to office hours if you have lengthy or complicated questions. Moreover, following the return of graded assignments, I will not answer questions about the assignment for twenty-four hours. Please use those twenty-four hours to reflect on the comments given before contacting me with questions.

## **Poll Everywhere**

I love finding interactive, educational, and enjoyable uses for technology in the classroom. One such use of classroom technology for us this semester will be Poll Everywhere, which enables me to poll the class about a particular topic and then instantly collect and display the results. You can respond to in-class polls through sending a text message, accessing our Poll Everywhere webpage, or downloading and using the Poll Everywhere app. I encourage you to bring your phone, tablet, laptop, etc. to class for this purpose. You will need to register for a Poll Everywhere account and can visit this website for instructions on doing so: <http://help.unc.edu/help/poll-everywhere-faq/>.

## **Electronics Policy**

When we’re not taking a poll through Poll Everywhere or doing another activity that involves using electronic devices, I ask that you keep these devices put away. Research has shown that students take better and more effective notes in longhand than when they type their notes on laptops. Laptop usage has also been shown to hinder the learning of both the student using the laptop as well as students sitting near the laptop user. Cell phones should be silenced and put away before class begins and should not be used for the duration of the class period, except for answering Poll Everywhere questions or in case of emergency.

## Classroom Decorum

This class is an environment where students should feel free and safe to offer their own thoughts and feelings on the issues and topics we discuss. All viewpoints are welcome in this classroom, but comments meant to intimidate, ridicule, or dismiss the contributions of others will not be tolerated. I expect all students to behave courteously to one another and to refrain from offering rude and insensitive remarks.

## Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty means violating the standards of integrity all students pledge to adhere to as a condition of enrollment at UNC. Such dishonesty shall result in a failing grade on that assignment and will also result in a referral to the Honor Court. Students with questions about what qualifies as academic dishonesty should contact me and can also consult the Honor Court website at <http://honor.unc.edu/>.

## Student Accessibility

Any student with a documented condition who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations should contact the instructor and Accessibility Resources (<https://accessibility.unc.edu/>). Accessibility Resources can be reached by phone at 919-962-8300 or by email at [accessibility@unc.edu](mailto:accessibility@unc.edu).

## Schedule of Topics and Required Readings

*Note:* The readings listed below are subject to change. Depending on the pace of the class and the interests of the students, I might add, remove, or swap readings as the semester progresses. I will notify everyone in advance if and when such changes occur. **All readings not in the assigned texts will be available on our class Sakai site under the “Resources” tab, through the course reserves, or through the UNC Library.**

June 25: Introduction

- Syllabus
- Masket, Seth. 2015. “The Star Wars Galactic Senate Needed a Minority Party,” article from *Vox*. Available online at <http://www.vox.com/mischiefs-of-faction/2015/10/6/9459735/galactic-senate-minority-party>.
- Chapter 6 of *Campaigns and Elections*, pages 154-157

June 26: What are Political Parties? How Do We Study Them?

- John Aldrich, Chapter 1: “Politics and Parties in America” from *Why Parties? A Second Look*, (pp. 3-6 and 8-27)
- Kathleen Bawn, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2012. “A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands, and Nominations in American Politics.” *Perspectives on Politics* 10: 571-97.

#### June 27: Why Do Parties Form? Why Two Parties?

- Chapter 6 of *Campaigns and Elections*, pages 157-168
- John Aldrich, Chapter 2: “Why Parties Form” from *Why Parties? A Second Look*
- Amanda Skuldt, “Could a third-party candidate win the U.S. presidency? That’s very unlikely,” article from the *Washington Post*.

#### June 28: Development of American Political Parties I

- John Aldrich, Chapter 3: “Founding the First Parties” from *Why Parties? A Second Look*, (pp. 70-84 and 94-99)
- John Aldrich, Chapter 4: “Jacksonian Democracy” from *Why Parties? A Second Look*, (pp. 102-129) ERES

#### June 29: Development of American Political Parties II

- John Aldrich, Chapter 5: “Whigs and Republicans” from *Why Parties? A Second Look*, (pp. 130-139 and 143-150) ERES
- Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of *Dynamics*

#### July 2: Development of American Political Parties III

- Chapters 6 and 7 of *Dynamics*

#### July 3: Parties in Government I: Early Days, Reeds Rules, and Conservative Coalition

- David Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. Chapter 1. ERES (pp. 1-11)
- Jason Roberts, “House Rules and Procedure” from *New Directions in Congressional Politics* ERES

#### July 4: Independence Day!

- Holiday! No Class!

#### July 5: Parties in Government II: From Reform to Partisan Warfare

- David Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. Chapters 1 and 2. ERES (pp. 11-39)
- Sarah Binder, “How Political Polarization Creates Stalemate and Undermines Lawmaking,” article from the *Washington Post*
- Kyle Kondik, “Rooting for Failure: Democrats Use a Familiar Playbook in the Trump Era,” article from *Sabato’s Crystal Ball*

#### July 6: Mass Partisanship

- **Paper 1 Due!**
- Emily Badger and Niraj Chokshi, “How We Became Bitter Political Enemies,” article from *The New York Times*

- Amanda Taub and Brendan Nyhan, “Why Objectively False Things Continue to Be Believed,” article from the *New York Times*
- John Sides, “Democrats Are Gay, Republicans Are Rich: Our Stereotypes of Political Parties Are Amazingly Wrong,” article from the *Washington Post*

#### July 9: Polarization I: Introduction and Debates

- Chapters 8 of 9 of *Dynamics*
- Nolan McCarty, “What We Know and Don’t Know About Our Polarized Politics,” article from the *Washington Post*
- Thomas Byrne Edsall, “Disconnect: The Breakdown of Representation in American Politics, by Morris P. Fiorina and Samuel J. Abrams and The Disappearing Center: Engaged Citizens, Polarization, and American Democracy, by Alan I. Abramowitz,” article from the *Washington Post*.
- Nolan McCarty, “Hate our polarized politics? Why you can’t blame gerrymandering,” article from the *Washington Post*

#### July 10: Polarization II: Causes and Effects

- Matthew Levendusky, “Are Fox and MSNBC Polarizing America?” article from the *Washington Post*
- Kevin Arceneaux, “Why You Shouldn’t Blame Polarization on Partisan News,” article from the *Washington Post*
- Frances Lee, “American Politics Is More Competitive Than Ever. That’s Making Partisanship Worse,” article from the *Washington Post*
- Thomas Carsey and Geoffrey Layman, “Our Politics Is Polarized on More Issues Than Ever Before,” article from the *Washington Post*

#### July 11: Mid-Term Exam

- Bring bluebook and pen!

#### July 12: Introduction to Campaigns and Elections and The 2016 Election (and Beyond)

- Chapter 1 of *Campaigns and Elections*
- Nate Cohn, “How the Obama Coalition Crumbled, Leaving an Opening for Trump,” article from the *New York Times*
- Dylan Scott, “Trump is the Target of Historic Voter Backlash Ahead of the 2018 Midterms,” article from *Vox*

#### July 13: Rules of American Elections

- Chapter 2 of *Campaigns and Elections*
- Vann R. Newkirk II, “How Voter ID Laws Discriminate,” article from *The Atlantic*

- Garrett Epps, “Will the Supreme Court Legitimize Partisan Gerrymandering?,” article from *The Atlantic*.
- Amy Howe, “Court Stays Out of Merits on Partisan Gerrymandering, at Least for Now,” article from *ScotusBLOG*

#### July 16: Voter Participation

- Chapter 12 of *Campaigns and Elections*
- Sasha Isenberg, Chapter 3: “The New Haven Experiments,” from *The Victory Lab.*” ERES
- Robert M. Bond, Christopher J. Fariss, Jason J. Jones, Adam D. I. Kramer, Cameron Marlow, Jaime E. Settle, and James H. Fowler, A 61-Million-Person Experiment in Social Influence and Political Mobilization. *Nature* 498: 295-8.

#### July 17: Voter Choice

- Chapter 13 of *Campaigns and Elections*
- John Zaller and Stanley Feldman, ”A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences,” article from *American Journal of Political Science*

#### July 18: Campaign Finance

- Chapter 4 of *Campaigns and Elections*
- Chris Cillizza, “How Citizens United changed politics, in 7 charts,” article from the *Washington Post*
- Jeffrey Toobin, “Money Unlimited,” article from *The New Yorker*

#### July 19: Campaign Strategy

- Chapter 5 of *Campaigns and Elections*
- Lynn Vavreck, “Why This Election Was Not About the Issues,” article from the *New York Times*
- Cristina Rivero, “How marketing helped Donald Trump win the 2016 election,” article from the *Washington Post*

#### July 20: Media and Elections

- Chapter 8 of *Campaigns and Elections*
- “The role of technology in the presidential election,” article from *The Economist*
- Angie Drobnic Holan, “2016 Lie of the Year: Fake News,” article from *Politifact*

#### July 23: Presidential Elections

- Chapter 9 of *Campaigns and Elections*
- John Sides, “Do Presidential Debates Really Matter?” article from *Washington Monthly*
- Nate Silver, “Clinton’s Ground Game Didn’t Cost Her the Election,” article from *FiveThirtyEight*



- Katy Collin, “The Electoral College Badly Distorts the Vote. And It’s Going to Get Worse,” article from the *Washington Post*

#### July 24: Congressional Elections

- **Paper 2 Due!**
- Chapter 10 of *Campaigns and Elections*
- Carson, Jamie L. and Jason M. Roberts. 2011. “House and Senate Elections.” In Oxford Handbook of Congress. Frances Lee and Eric Schickler, editors. Oxford University Press. Available in electronic form through the UNC Library.
- “Democrats Breathe Sigh of Relief After Tuesday’s Primaries,” article from *NPR*

#### July 25: State and Local Elections

- Chapter 11 of *Campaigns and Elections*
- Jacob Smith, “Cherie Berry put her picture in every North Carolina elevator. Here’s how that affected her reelection,” article from the *Washington Post*

#### July 26: Reforming Campaigns and Elections

- Chapter 14 of *Campaigns and Elections*

#### July 27: Reading Day

- No class!

#### July 30: Final Exam

- 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Bring a bluebook and a pen.