

Political Parties and Interest Groups
POS 3453
Fall 2007

Dr. Jocelyn Jones Evans
Office Hours: TR 12:30-2:30
W 3:00-5:00
and by appointment

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Course Description

This course is designed to examine the role of political parties and interest groups in America. While most of the discussion will focus on parties, we will examine the role of interest groups in comparison to and conjunction with parties and policymaking. First, we will discuss the origins and evolution of the American two-party system. From there we will examine parties as organizations structuring both electoral politics and government. Third, we will turn to the growing notion of party decline in the modern context of American politics. Finally, we will end our examination by focusing on the role of interest groups in our system as compared to political parties.

Student Objectives

The objectives of this course are three-fold. First, students will examine the role of parties in American political development, including: founding intent, historical evolution, party organizational structure, the dynamics of electoral politics and representation, partisan voting behavior, and policymaking. Secondly, students will critically evaluate interest groups, including: how they evolved, what they do, and what implications they have for governance and policymaking. Finally, students will demonstrate knowledge of the fundamental issues for debate concerning the role of parties and interest groups in the contemporary political system.

Required Readings

Hershey, Marjorie R. and Beck, Paul A. 2003 (12th ed.). *Party Politics in America*. New York: Longman.
Schattschneider, E. E. 1997. *The Semisovereign People*. International Thomson.

Required Online Materials

Americans Governing. 2006-2007. Soomo Publishing.

Grading:

Your grade will be based on two exams given during the semester, a paper, and online assignments. The dates for the two exams are listed on the syllabus. Except under extreme emergencies, the student wishing a make-up exam must call or stop by my office, in advance, to provide the reason for not completing the exam at the scheduled time. The student is not guaranteed the opportunity to make up the exam. The decision is up to the instructor. No one may take the final exam early. The weights for each exam and assignment are listed below.

Grading Scheme					
Midterm	30%	A	93-100%	C	73-76%
Final	30%	A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
Paper	20%	B+	87-89%	D+	66-69%
Online Assignments	20%	B	83-86%	D-	60-65%
		B-	80-82%	F	0-59%
		C+	77-79%		

Online Assignments

As part of your grade, you will be required to complete assignments using the resources provided by Soomo Publishing. The URL for our course material is: <http://americansgoverning.org/>. You will need to go to the site, sign up as a new student, and choose the course associated with **POS 3453**. Your performance on the assignments will be averaged, and the sum of these assignments will be worth 20% of your final grade. You must have your assignment completed and submitted to the site by the class date listed on the course schedule. We will be discussing these exercises in class on those days. Assignments will not be accepted late.

Expectations for Academic Conduct / Plagiarism Policy

As members of the University of West Florida, we commit ourselves to honesty. As we strive for excellence in performance, integrity – personal and institutional – is our most precious asset. Honesty in our academic work is vital, and we will not knowingly act in ways which erode that integrity. Accordingly, we pledge not to cheat, not to tolerate cheating, nor to plagiarize the work of others. We pledge to share community resources in ways that are responsible and that comply with established policies of fairness. Cooperation and competition are means to high achievement and are encouraged. Indeed, cooperation is expected unless our directive is to individual performance. We will compete constructively and professionally for the purpose of stimulating high performance standards. Finally, we accept adherence to this set of expectations for academic conduct as a condition of membership in the UWF academic community.

Assistance

Students with special needs who require specific examination-related or other course-related accommodations should contact Barbara Fitzpatrick, Director of Disabled Student Services (DSS), dss@uwf.edu, (850) 474-2387. DSS will provide the student with a letter for the instructor that will specify any recommended accommodations.

Student Conduct in the Classroom:

Classroom disruption will not be tolerated. The professor reserves the right to dismiss any student for disruptive behavior. According to the Office of Student Affairs, this includes, “behavior a reasonable person would view as substantially or repeatedly interfering with the conduct of a class.”

Paper Assignment:

The paper is worth 20% of your final grade. The due date for the paper is **11/28**. No papers will be accepted late. For the paper, you will choose a controversial topic of contemporary significance to the study of parties and interest groups, trace the topic through history, elucidate the major arguments surrounding the debate, and draw substantive conclusions about the future implications of this controversy for American politics. You will be graded on grammar, content, structure, presentation, creativity, and incorporation of course material. I would strongly discourage you from plagiarizing. Cases of plagiarism will be taken seriously. To avoid a failing grade and other serious repercussions, make sure you cite where all material originates.

Tentative Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings/Assignments
8/29	Syllabus – No Class	
9/5	In Search of Political Parties American Two-Party System	H/B 1, 2 <i>In the Beginning...¹</i> <i>Party Platforms</i>
9//12	The Parties' National Organizations	H/B 3, 4 <i>Party People</i>
9/19	The Political Party of the Activists	H/B 5 <i>Elizabeth the Elector</i> <i>Brandon Brown</i>
9/26	Party Identification, Support, and Realignments	H/B 6, 7 <i>Street Fight</i>
10/3	Who Votes – And Why It Matters	H/B 8 <i>Who Votes?</i> <i>Hip Hop Dreams</i>
10/10	How Parties Choose Candidates, and the Presidential Nominee	H/B 9, 10 <i>Primaries 101</i> <i>What's Conventional About Parties?</i> <i>Delegate Who?</i> <i>Howard Dean and the Media</i>
10/17	Midterm Exam	
10/24	The General Election and Campaign Finance	H/B 11, 12 <i>Campaign Commercials</i> <i>Campaign Strategists</i> <i>More Money...</i>
10/31	The Semi-Responsible Parties The Place of Parties in American Politics	H/B 15, 16 <i>Let's Put Politics Behind Us</i> <i>Politics and Values in a 51%-48% Nation</i>
11/7	The Party in the Executive and the Courts	H/B 14 <i>How They Rule</i>
11/14	Parties in Congress	H/B 13 <i>Learn About Congress</i> <i>How Members Vote</i> <i>United We Stand</i>
11/21	Introduction to Interest Groups The Contagiousness of Conflict Scope and Bias of the Pressure System	S Intro, 1, 2 <i>Sandra Froman Profile</i> <i>Lobbyist for a Day</i>
11/28	Whose Game Do We Play? Displacement of Conflicts Papers Due	S 3, 4 <i>Can't Buy Me Love</i>
12/5	Nationalization of Politics Semisovereign People	S 5, 8 Interest Groups
12/12	Final Exam	5:30-8:00

¹ Assignments in italics are to be completed at <http://americansgoverning.org>.