

# POL 211 – Parties, Voters, and Elections

Spring 2022

Kirby Hall 109 – M/W 12:30 – 1:45

Instructor: Prof. Zack Scott  
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Office Hours: R 12:00 – 3:00 p.m.; By  
Appointment

Course Description: "The political parties created democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties." – E.E. Schattschneider

Political parties are ubiquitous to democratic systems, and yet are poorly understood. They structure almost all acts of politics and governance, with campaigns and elections providing no exception. This course will seek to provide an in-depth analysis of political parties combined with a topical analysis of the role of political parties among voters and on elections. We will discuss what political parties are, whose interests they serve, the normative role they play in democracy, and the normative implications of trying to undermine them. We will discuss how and why people form attachments to political parties, attachments that in turn affect how they act as voters. We will discuss recent changes to the American party system including policy shifts, factional infighting, strengthening ideological commitments, polarization, and the potential for a realignment. We will discuss how agents of parties like formal organizations, machines, and activists attempt to win elections and how such efforts differ based on the type of electoral contest. And we will use all of this to assess the health of the American political system.

Course Goals: By the end of the semester, students should...

- Know what political parties are, theories on how and why they develop, and their relationship to democratic forms of government
- Understand theories of partisan identification
- Be aware of the ways American political parties appear to be changing
- Understand how campaigns are conducted
- Understand differences across types of campaigns
- Have reflected on the normative implications of campaigns and political parties
- Developed a level of familiarity with the empirical study of political parties, campaigns, and elections
- Have improved as critical writers
- Have improved as advocates for their logic-based, critical, respectful arguments

These goals are ambitious but eminently achievable. Accomplishing these goals will require the professor and each student to buy in to a collective learning enterprise. You should expect me to

come to class prepared to explain core concepts and ready to moderate a discussion of the most intellectually contentious and intriguing aspects of those concepts. Here is what I expect and need from you. I expect you to do the assigned readings before the associated class period. I expect you to keep up to date with current events related to American politics. I expect you to come to class ready to discuss the readings, the implications, and the practical applications to current events. I expect you to take the assigned papers and projects seriously, give them your best effort, and turn in work you can be proud of.

I do *not* expect you to have mastered all of the materials and skills on Day 1. If it were that easy, there wouldn't be much of a point to having the class. If you find yourself struggling with a reading or assignment, please know that this is part of the educational journey. And it's a journey you do not undertake alone. Please seek out help from the resources available to you including your fellow students and the professor.

Reading Materials: There are no required books for this class. All readings will be posted on the course site.

Laptop Policy: The policy of the department of political science is that laptop computers only be used classrooms for note taking and other academic purposes as designated by the instructor. I will permit laptops on a contingency basis. I reserve the right to ban computer use in their courses should this policy be repeatedly violated.

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty constitutes attempting to pass off the work of others as your own without proper attribution. It is unacceptable in this course, just as it is unacceptable in life. If I find that you plagiarized, cheated, or were otherwise dishonest about your work on an assignment, you will automatically receive a 0. There will be no exceptions or excuses. Such situations not only go against my classroom policies but are also violations of the [Wake Forest Honor Code](#). As such, they will be referred to the Honors and Ethics Council. If you are unsure if you are providing proper attribution or have any other questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Accommodations: Wake Forest University provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you are in need of an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact me privately as early in the term as possible. Retroactive accommodations will not be provided. Students requiring accommodations must also consult the Learning Assistance Center & Disability Services (118 Reynolda Hall, 336-758-5929, [lac.wfu.edu](http://lac.wfu.edu)).

Assignments: Grades will be calculated as following:

- Response Papers – 40%
- Participation – 10%

- Research Projects – 50%
  - Research Question – 2%
  - Methodology – 5%
  - Preliminary Results Memo – 8%
  - Research Paper – 35%

*Response Papers* – Students will turn in 4 response papers throughout the semester, each worth 10 percentage points of the final grade. Each paper will respond to a provided prompt. There are 8 total prompts from which to choose, each due on the listed date. Students can choose whichever four of the 8 prompts they would like. Papers should generally be 4-5 pages, double spaced. A primer with specific guidelines and a breakdown of grading procedures will be posted online.

- **Prompt 1** (Jan. 26): Do you agree or disagree with the Responsible Party Theory's assertion that distinct, polarized parties representing discrete agendas are good for democracy? If you disagree, what is the theory missing or why is it wrong? If you agree, why is there so much modern concern over polarization?
- **Prompt 2** (Feb. 16): Explain the difference between affiliating with a political party and developing an identity with or attachment to a political party. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a partisan social identity? Is widespread partisan social identity normatively good or bad for democracy?
- **Prompt 3** (Feb. 23): Come up with examples of strong and weak intraparty factions. What makes those examples strong and weak within their associated political party? How have the associated political parties attempted to manage those factions? Under what conditions are parties more or less successful in such management endeavors?
- **Prompt 4** (March 2): Assuming that the asymmetric politics theory is correct, why isn't the Democratic party more ideological? What would it take for the Democratic party to become an ideological coalition?
- **Prompt 5** (March 16): Are the American political elites polarized? Is the American public polarized? If both are polarized, is elite polarization driving mass polarization or is mass polarization driving elite polarization? If only one is polarized, why isn't that causing polarization in the other? If neither is polarized, why is there so much popular concern about polarization?
- **Prompt 6** (March 23): What are the advantages and disadvantages of two-party systems relative to multiparty systems? Taking the logistical changes that would have to occur into consideration, would you advocate for switching the United States to a multiparty system?
- **Prompt 7** (April 6): Design a better means of selecting party nominees. Why would this system be better to our current primary system?

- **Prompt 8** (April 20): Most theories of democracy posit an electorate that, if not fully informed, is generally capable of rationally assessing the electoral options and deciding which is preferable. What information is most useful to the electorate in doing so and why is that information particularly valuable? Are campaigns incentivized to provide that information? If not, how could we construct better incentives?

*Participation* – Students are expected to be active participants in their learning. Participation will be holistically and subjectively assessed based on the frequency and quality of contributions to class discussion. Attendance is part of participation as if you are not there, you necessarily cannot participate.

*Research Project* - Students, either by themselves or in a group of no larger than four, will identify a political topic related to political parties or campaigns. They will identify a research question about their political topic. They will identify a methodological approach to answering this question. They will then apply this methodological approach to study their topic and answer this question. Students will then write a research paper (~10 pages) based on these results. A more detailed primer on this project is posted on the course site and I will discuss this at greater length in class. All students in a group will get equal grades on each element of the project unless an inequality in workload and contributions has been registered and verified.

Grades: Letter grades will be assigned based on the following:

<i>Letter grade</i>	<i>Percent grade</i>
A	93.5 or greater
A-	89.5 – 93.49
B+	86.5 – 89.49
B	83.5 – 86.49
B-	79.5 – 83.49
C+	76.5 – 79.49
C	73.5 – 76.49
C-	69.5 – 73.49
D+	66.5 – 69.49
D	59.5 – 66.49
F	59.49 or below

Course Schedule: I reserve the right to modify the course schedule and/or readings as needed. Modifications will be announced in class and via email.

Module	Date	Topic	Key Question	Required Readings	Recommended Readings	Assignments	
Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Parties	Jan. 10	Syllabus Day	*Did you read the syllabus?	1) The syllabus			
	Jan. 12	Defining parties	*What is a political party?	1) <a href="#">Federalist #10</a> 2) Schattschneider – Party Government, chapters 1-3	1) Hofstadter – The Idea of a Party System, chapter 6		
	Jan. 17	<b>MLK Day – No Class</b>					
	Jan. 19	Elite and organized parties	*Why do we have parties?	1) Aldrich – Why Parties, chapter 2 2) Downs – An Economic Theory of Democracy, chapter 2	1) Hershey – Party Politics in America, chapter 1	Topic Day	
	Jan. 24	Network parties	*Why do we have parties?	1) Bawn et al. – “A Theory of Party Politics” 2) Koger, Masket, & Noel – “Partisan Webs” 3) Skocpol & Hertel-Fernandez – “The Koch Network and Republican Party Extremism”	1) Karol – “Parties and Leadership in American Politics” 2) Albert – “Partisan Policymaking in the Extended Party Network”		
	Jan. 26	Responsible parties	*Do parties help or hurt democracy?	1) APSA Report – “The Need for Greater Party Responsibility, Summary of Conclusions and Proposals & Part I” 2) Azari – “ <a href="#">Weak Parties and Strong Partisanship are a Bad Combination</a> ”	1) White – “E.E. Schattschneider and the Responsible Party Model” 2) Stokes – “Political Parties and Democracy”	Response Paper 1 Due	
	Jan. 31	Anti-partisanship	*Can you get rid of or otherwise weaken parties?	1) Masket – The Inevitable Party, chapters 7 and 8 2) Schaffner, Streb, & Wright – “Teams Without Uniforms”	1) Masket – The Inevitable Party, chapter 5		
Come Join the Party	Feb. 2	<b>Fertilizer Plant Fire – No Class</b>					
	Feb. 7	Rationality and partisan identity	*How rational is affiliation with a party?	1) Downs – An Economic Theory of Democracy, chapter 3 3) Bartels – “Beyond the Running Tally”	1) Fiorina – “An Outline for a Model of Party Choice” 2) Kam – “Who Toes the Party Line?” 3) Lodge and Hamill – “A Partisan Schema for Political Information Processing”		

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	Feb. 9	Personality and partisan identity	*Are partisans just different people?	1) Carney et al. – “The Secret Lives of Liberals and Conservatives” 2) Bakker, Lelkes, & Malka – “Rethinking the Link Between Self-Reported Personality Traits and Political Preferences”	1) Mooney – The Republican Brain, chapter 3 2) Jost, Nosek, & Gosling – “Ideology”	Research Questions Due	
	Feb. 14	Partisanship and identity politics	*How do group identities influence party affiliation?	1) White & Laird – Steadfast Democrats, chapter 3 2) Jardina – White Identity Politics, chapter 8	1) Wohlbrect & Corder – A Century of Votes for Women, chapter 7 2) Barnes & Cassese – “American Party Women” 3) Giles & Hertz – “Racial Threat and Partisan Identification”		
The Parties Are A-Changin’	Feb. 16	Partisanship as a social identity	*What does it mean to identify with a party?	1) Green, Palmquist, & Schickler – Partisan Hearts and Minds, chapter 2 2) Klar & Krupnikov – Independent Politics, chapter 3	1) Campbell et al. – The American Voter, chapter 7 2) Lewis-Beck et al. – The American Voter Revisited, chapter 7 3) Ogura, Miwa, & Iida – “What Do You Mean by ‘Democrat’ and ‘Republican’?”	Response Paper 2 Due	
	Feb. 21	Policy change	*How and why do parties shift their issue positions?	1) Karol – Party Position Change in American Politics, chapters 1 and 3	1) Zaller – The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion, chapter 3	Methodologies Due	
	Feb. 23	Factionalism	*How do parties manage internal factional disputes?	1) Blum – How the Tea Party Captured the GOP, chapters 1, 3, and 6	1) Scott – “Inviting the Populists to the Party”	Response Paper 3 Due	
	Feb. 28	Ideology	*What is the relationship between parties and ideology?	1) Noel – Political Ideologies and Political Parties in America, chapters 1, 3, & 4	1) Hopkins & Noel – “Trump and the Shifting Meaning of ‘Conservative’”		
	March 2	Asymmetry	*Are the parties mirror images of each other?	1) Grossman & Hopkins – Asymmetric Politics, chapter 3 2) Morisi, Jost, & Singh – “An Asymmetric ‘President-in-Power’ Effect”	1) Grossman & Hopkins – Asymmetric Politics, chapter 1	Response Paper 4 Due	
	March 7 & 9	<b>Spring Break – No Class</b>					
	March 14	Realignments	*Are the parties realigning?	1) Schickler – Racial Realignment, chapter 1	1) Black – “The Transformation of the Southern Democratic Party”		

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				2) Cramer – The Politics of Resentment, chapter 3	2) Barber & Pope – “Race and Realignment in Recent American Elections”	
	March 16	Polarization I	*Are the parties polarized?	1) Fiorina – Culture War?, chapters 2 and 3 2) Abramowitz & Saunders – “Is Polarization a Myth?”	1) Hetherington – “Putting Polarization in Perspective” 2) Carsey & Layman – “Changing Sides or Changing Minds?”	Response Paper 5 Due
	March 21	Polarization II	*Why do we feel polarized?	1) Mason – Uncivil Agreement, chapters 1, 4, & 5	1) Iyengar et al. – “The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States” 2) Abramowitz & Webster – “Negative Partisanship”	
	March 23	Two-party doom loop	*What are the consequences of a two-party system and what could we do about it?	1) Drutman – The Two-Party Doom Loop, chapters 1, 8-9	1) Scarrow – “Duverger’s Law, Fusion, and the Decline of American ‘Third’ Parties”	Response Paper 6 Due
Before the Starting Gun	March 28	Party activists	*What role do party activists play in campaigns	1) Roscoe & Jenkins – “Amateur Hour” 2) Layman et al. – “Activists and Conflict Extension in American Party Politics”	1) Enos & Hersh – “Party Activists as Campaign Advertisers”	
	March 30	Party machines and organizations	*What role do party organizations play in campaigns?	1) <a href="#">The Last Boss documentary</a> 2) Herrnson – “Do Parties Make a Difference?”	1) Herrnson – “The Roles of Party Organizations, Party-Connected Committees, and Party Allies in Elections”	Preliminary Results Memo Due
	April 4	Candidate ambition and recruitment	*Who decides to run for office?	1) Fox & Lawless – “If Only They’d Ask” 2) Fox & Lawless – “Uncovering the Origins of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition”	1) Karpowitz, Monson, & Robinson Preece – “How to Elect More Women” 2) Fox & Lawless – “To Run or Not to Run for Office”	
And We’re Off	April 6	Presidential primaries	*How do the parties pick their standard-bearers?	1) Bartels – Presidential Primaries and the Dynamics of Public Choice, chapter 2 2) Cohen et al. – “Party Versus Faction in the Reformed Presidential Nominating System” 3) Masket – <a href="#">“How Can We Fix the Broken Primary Election System?”</a>	1) Azari – “How the News Media Helped to Nominate Trump” 2) Norrander – “Presidential Nomination Politics in the Post-Reform Era” 3) Albert & Barney – “The Party Reacts”	Response Paper 7 Due

Module	Date	Topic	Key Question	Required Readings	Recommended Readings	Assignments
				4) Albert & La Raja – “Who Should Decide the Party’s Nominee?”		
	April 11	Presidential general elections	*How do we pick our presidents?	1) Shaw – “The Methods behind the Madness” 2) Holbrook – Do Campaigns Matter?, chapters 2 and 3	1) Slonim – “The Electoral College at Philadelphia” 2) Sides, Tesler, & Vavreck – Identity Crisis, chapter 8	
	April 13	Congressional contests	*How do we pick our members of Congress?	1) Jacobson – “It’s Nothing Personal” 2) Hassel – “Party Control of Party Primaries”	1) Fiorina – “The (Re)Nationalization of Congressional Elections”	
	April 18	State and local races	*How do we pick our local political elites?	1) Hopkins – The Increasingly United States, chapter 3 2) Troustine – “Turnout and Incumbency in Local Elections”	1) Holman & Lay – “Are You Picking Up What I Am Laying Down” 2) Bernhard & Freeder – “The More You Know”	
Winning the Race and What Comes After	April 20	Campaign messaging	*How do campaigns decide on a message?	1) Vavreck – The Message Matters, chapter 3 2) Geer – In Defense of Negativity, chapter 3 3) Peng – “What Makes Politicians’ Instagram Post Popular?”	1) Vavreck – The Message Matters, chapter 5 2) Sides – “The Origins of Campaign Agendas” 3) Coppock, Hill, & Vavreck – “The Small Effects of Political Advertising...” 4) Arceneaux & Nickerson – “Comparing Negative and Positive Campaign Messages”	Response Paper 8 Due
	April 25	Turnout	*Can campaigns convince more people to vote?	1) Gerber & Green – “The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct...” 2) Panagopoulous – Bases Loaded, chapter 4	1) McDonald & Popkin – “The Myth of the Vanishing Voter” 2) Holbrook & McClurg – “The Mobilization of Core Supporters”	
	April 27	Persuasion	*Can campaigns convince people to change their minds?	1) Kalla & Broockman – “Reducing Exclusionary Attitudes through...” 2) Arceneaux – “Do Campaigns Help Voters Learn?”	1) Gerber et al. – “How Large and Long-lasting are the Persuasive effects of Televised Campaign Ads?”	
	April 29	Interpreting elections	*How do we make sense of the results of an election?	1) Masket – Learning from Loss, chapter 3 2) Masket – “ <a href="#">The Conversation Republicans Don’t Want to Have</a> ” 3) Masket – “ <a href="#">The Party of Self-Doubt</a> ”	1) Scott – We Love Him, We Love Him Not 2) Azari – Delivering the People’s Message, Introduction 3) Azari - “Institutional Change and the Presidential Mandate”	Final Papers Due



