

Political Parties
Winter 2007
Professor Masket
Syllabus

Contact Info:

e-mail: smasket@du.edu

Phone: x12718

Office Hours: Fridays 9 to 12, 466 Sturm Hall

Purpose

Most observers of American politics agree that parties are stronger than they were a few decades ago. There the agreement ends. Indeed, there is little agreement as to what a party even is. This makes the study of political parties both frustrating and fascinating.

This class focuses primarily on the two major American political parties, both at the national and local level. We'll look at three different conceptions about what parties are: the party in the electorate (the collective opinions and voting patterns of voters), the party in government (coalitions of elected officials), and the party organization (a group of people who work to get people they like elected to office). We'll examine the extent to which these three views really capture what's going on in modern party politics. We'll also look at changes in party structure and behavior over the years and try to understand why the parties (whatever they are) are stronger and more polarized than they were just a few decades ago.

Work

The readings I have selected for this class, for the most part, lay out complex arguments about what parties are and how they function. Despite their complexity, they tend to be well written and, in many cases, quite entertaining. All this is to say that doing the reading for this course is absolutely essential. Really. We will be talking about the readings in great detail during class time, so doing the readings prior to class will greatly aid your ability to contribute to discussions. I will also have occasional in-class reading quizzes, so, seriously, do the reading.

You will be required to write two short (4-6 pages) essays and one long (8-10 pages) research paper over the course of this class. There will also be a midterm taken in class at the end of week six. Your final grade for the class will be a weighted average of all your work, broken down as follows:

Short essay 1 (20% of grade)

Short essay 2 (20%)

Midterm (20%)

Research paper (30%)

Class participation (5%)

Quizzes (5%)

Etiquette

Although I will spend some of our class time lecturing, we will have many dialogues in class. In these discussions, you are encouraged to use your personal experiences and perspectives, as well as your understanding of the course material and current events. Direct personal attacks against others in the class are not permitted. Insulting anyone one inside or outside the class on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, or national background is not permitted. Violations of these rules will be reflected in your grade and, if they continue, may result in disciplinary action by the University.

Contacting Me

I frequently check e-mail (smasket@du.edu), so that is usually the best way to get in touch with me. I can also be reached on my office phone (x12718). I will also have regular office hours on Fridays from 9AM-12PM in 466 Sturm Hall. If you need me to get back to you within the same day, definitely e-mail me before 9PM. I can't promise I'll look at e-mail after that.

Students with Special Needs

Please contact me as soon as possible if you have a documented learning disability or other condition that requires accommodations, such as a separate testing room or extra time on exams.

Required Texts (available in DU Bookstore)

- Cohen, Fleisher & Kantor, *American Political Parties: Decline or Resurgence?* (CQ Press, 2001)
- Brewer and Stonecash, *Split: Class and Cultural Divides in American Politics* (CQ Press, 2007)
- Royko, Mike, *Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago* (Plume, 1971)

Syllabus

(Those readings marked with a computer symbol (🖨) are available on the course Blackboard website. If you have trouble accessing any of those readings, please notify me immediately.)

Week 1 – Introductions (January 3rd)

Topics: Outline of class, competing definitions of political parties.

Week 2 – Parties: What They Are, and How We Choose Among Them (Jan. 8th, 10th)

Topics: Understanding what parties are and aren't, the united front, risks and benefits of parties, voters as members of parties, partisanship among voters.

Readings:

- Madison, *Federalist 10* 🖨
- Schattschneider, *Party Government* chapters 1-3 🖨
- Campbell, “Presidential Election Campaigns and Partisanship,” in CFK

Week 3 – The Party in the Electorate: Red and Blue America (January 17th)

Topics: Liberalism, conservatism, polarization, elites and rank-and-file voters, party identification, party vs. ideology, culture vs. class

Readings:

- Bishop, “The Schism in U.S. Politics Begins at Home,” *Austin American-Statesman* 🖨
- Stonecash and Brewer, *Split*, Chapters 1, 4, 7, 8

Week 4 – The Party in the Electorate: Regimes and Realignment (January 22nd, 24th)

Topics: Party regimes in history, realignments, critical elections, party membership

Readings:

- Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*, Chapters 1-3 🖨
- Key, “A Theory of Critical Elections” 🖨

Week 5 – The Party in Government: How it Works (January 29th, 31st)

Topics: The logic of the partisan legislature, the long coalition, presidential-congressional relations, partisanship in state legislatures

Readings:

- Aldrich, *Why Parties?* Chapter 2 🖨
- Greenblatt, “The Partisan Divide” *CQ Researcher* 🖨
- Davidson “Congressional Parties, Leaders, and Committees” in CFK

First short paper due Monday, Jan. 29th, in class

Week 6 - The Party in Government: Does it Work? (February 5th, 7th)

Topics: Strong party vs. weak party government, responsible party government, representation, accountability

Readings:

- Binder, “Can the Parties Govern?” in CFK
- Burke, “Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents” 🖨

- Selection from Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* 📖
- Schmitt, “Parliament Lament” 📖

Midterm in class Wednesday, Feb. 7th

Week 7 – The Party Organization: The Machine (February 12th, 14th♥)

Topics: Organizations and staff, classic machines, modern machines, nominations, the importance of the primary

Readings:

- Lyford, “Candidate” 📖
- Royko, *Boss*, Chapters 1,4,5,6

Week 8 – The Party Organization: Reforms and Responses (February 19th, 21st)

Topics: McGovern-Fraser Commission, informal party organizations, coordination

Readings:

- Masket, “If We Don’t Control You, Who the Hell Does?” 📖
- Royko, *Boss*, Chapters 7, 9

In class film: “Gangs of New York”

Week 9 – Activists (February 26th, 28th)

Topics: Motivations for activists, the modern party network, bloggers

Readings:

- Selection from Wilson, *The Amateur Democrat* 📖
- Weigel, “Blogging Down the Money Trail,” *Campaigns and Elections* (10/05) 📖
- Koger, Masket, and Noel, “Family Squabbles: Cooperative Party Factions in American Politics,” *Akron* 2005 📖

Second Short Paper Due in Class Monday, February 26th

Week 10 – What Kind of Government Do We Want? (March 5th, 7th)

Topics: The advantages and disadvantages of strong parties, nonpartisanship, third parties

Readings:

- Cohen and Kantor, “Decline and Resurgence in the American Party System,” in CFK
- Lowi, “Political Parties and the Future State of the Union,” in CFK
- Key, *Southern Politics*, chapter 14 📖
- Masket, “Are We Having Fun at the Party?” 📖

Final papers due in my mailbox on Monday, March 12th