

**University of Missouri - St. Louis  
Department of Political Science  
Fall 2008**

**Political Science 3350  
Political Parties and Elections  
MW 11:00-12:15 in Benton 445**

David Kimball

Email: [dkimball@umsl.edu](mailto:dkimball@umsl.edu)

Home page: <http://www.umsl.edu/~kimball/>

Office Hours: MW 2:00-4:00, TuTh 10:00-11:00, and by appointment

office: 348B SSB

phone: 516-6050

Political parties are important institutions that appear in virtually every forum of American politics, especially in elections. In fact, many scholars believe that the development of democracy in the United States would not have occurred without political parties. However, the activities of political parties have changed substantially over the last forty years – both as important players in national politics and as objects of public support and voter loyalty. This course will examine the role of political parties in American elections.

In addition, this course will review several ongoing debates about campaigns and voting behavior in the United States. In recent years, there is renewed debate about a variety of election reform proposals (including areas such as voter registration, campaign finance, voting technology, and presidential nominations, to name a few). This course will examine how election laws influence the strategies and tactics of parties and candidates, as well as many debates about reform.

#### OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students will be able to: (1) describe the historical foundations of the two-party system in the United States; (2) explain why voter turnout is low in the United States compared to other countries; (3) describe the major coalitions supporting each major party; (4) explain why incumbents win re-election so often in the United States; (5) explain basic election laws governing campaign finance, nominations, and election administration; (6) understand the basic issues and disagreements in several current election debates.

#### REQUIRED BOOKS

Morris P. Fiorina. 2006. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Pearson Longman.

Mark Halperin and John Harris. 2006. *The Way to Win*. Random House.

Edward I. Sidlow. 2004. *Challenging the Incumbent: An Underdog's Undertaking*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Stephen Wayne. 2007. *Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

There will be some short articles assigned as well (which I will provide on the MyGateway web site for the course or are available on the internet).

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exams: There will be a midterm and a final exam. The exams will be closed-book, in-class tests based on assigned readings, course lectures, and discussions. The exams will include an essay and some identification and short answer questions. The final exam will be comprehensive. Failure to take the exams at the scheduled time, unless excused by the instructor in advance, will result in an F for that exam.

Journals: I expect students to read the assigned materials on time, attend class, and participate in discussions on a regular basis. Five times during the semester you are required to turn in a one-page journal entry answering an assigned question about the readings for that week.

### First Paper:

For the first paper, you will discuss the current presidential election in relation to the Halperin and Harris book and some other assigned readings. The paper should be no more than 7 pages long. You will discuss three lessons of presidential elections from the Halperin and Harris book. You will also discuss three factors that influence presidential elections, based on some other readings. The first paper is due October 3. More details on this paper will come soon.

Election predictions: On Monday, November 3, you will turn in your predictions for the number of seats each party will gain or lose in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as the outcome of the presidential race in the November 4 elections. Include a brief explanation (roughly 2 pages) of how you arrived at your predictions. I will present my predictions to the class November 3 as well. If you beat my predictions, you will get extra credit for the assignment.

Final Paper: For the final paper, you will prepare a 15-page argument on an election reform proposal that you will choose. More details on the final paper will come soon. The final paper is due December 3.

Attendance and Participation: I will take attendance on ten randomly chosen days during the semester. Students who miss more than two of those days will lose points on the attendance and participation part of their grade. Regular attendance and participation is likely necessary to receive an A for the course.

Follow Campaigns and Political Parties in the News: You will get more out of the course (and you will have more information for the written assignments) if you follow party activities, campaign news, and other political developments. As an aid, the MyGateway web site for the course includes links to various sites on political parties, campaigns and elections in the United States.

#### Campaign or Election Work

You can earn a small amount of extra credit for this course by working 15 hours on a campaign this fall or by working as an election judge on November 4. Local election authorities are looking for college students to serve as election judges (and it pays money!).

IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY DONE SO, REGISTER TO VOTE!

### GRADING

Final grades will be based on the following proportions:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Due date</u>
First Paper	15%	Oct. 1
Midterm Exam	15%	October 12
Election Predictions	10%	November 3
Final Paper	25%	December 3
Final Exam	20%	December 8
Journals	10%	various
Attendance and Participation	5%	

### ACADEMIC HONESTY

I take academic misconduct (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) very seriously, and any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the university committee on academic misconduct and handled according to university policy. In addition, students will receive a grade of “0” for that assignment. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, plagiarism is “stealing and using the ideas or writings of another as one’s own” (p. 524). If you are uncertain about this definition or how it applies to your work, please come see me.

### STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If anyone has a health condition or disability, which may require accommodations in order to effectively participate in this class, please contact me and the **Disability Access Services Office in 144 Millennium Student Center at 516-6554**. Information about your disability will be regarded as confidential.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS  
Readings marked with an asterisk (\*) will be on the MyGateway site.

**I. Introduction to Political Parties and Elections**

August 18-20: Introduction

Why do we have elections? Why do we have political parties

- Wayne, chapter 1
- Halperin and Harris, Introduction and Section 1

August 25-27: The Historical Evolution of American Parties

How did we get political parties? Are they necessary?

- Wayne, chapter 6
- Halperin and Harris, Section 2

Video: *Chicago 1968*

**No Class on Labor Day – Monday, September 1**

**Journal report #1 due Wednesday, September 3**

Journal question (Halperin and Harris): Describe one of the trade secrets of Bill Clinton's campaigns and explain how that strategy helped him win.

September 3-10: The Two-Party System and Minor Parties in American Politics

Why are there only two major political parties in the United States?

- Wayne, chapter 3
- Halperin and Harris, sections 3 and 4
- (\*) Douglas J. Amy, "How Proportional Representation Elections Work" (<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/polit/damy/BeginningReading/howprwor.htm>)
- (\*) David Beiler, "The Body Politic Registers a Protest," *Campaigns & Elections*, Feb. 1999 (<http://www.campaignline.com/news/index.cfm?id=4>)

Video: alternative voting systems

**Journal report #2 due Wednesday, September 10**

Journal question (Beiler): Describe one of the obstacles facing independent and third party candidates in the United States, and explain one factor that helped Jesse Ventura overcome that obstacle in his campaign for governor of Minnesota.

September 15-22

Do the news media hold candidates accountable?

- Wayne, chapter 5
- Halperin and Harris, sections 5 and 6

**Constitution Day – Wednesday, September 17**

## II. Voting Behavior and Mass Support for Parties

### September 24-29

Why is there so much polling in campaigns and elections?

How do political scientists predict elections?

- Halperin and Harris, sections 7 through 10
- (\*) Herbert Asher, “Polls and Elections” (chapter 7), from *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington: CQ Press (2004).
- (\*) Readings on election forecasting

### **First Paper due Wednesday, October 1**

#### October 1-6

Why is voter turnout so low in the United States? Why don't young people vote?

Does it matter?

- Wayne, chapter 2

### **Wednesday, October 8: Midterm Exam**

#### October 13-15

How important is party loyalty in elections?

Just how divided are voters in the United States? Is there a “culture war?”

- Morris Fiorina – *Culture War?* (read entire book)
- (\*) Alan Abramowitz and Kyle Saunders, “Why Can't We Just Get Along? The Reality of a Polarized America”
- See where you fit among party coalitions by completing a survey for the Pew Center Typology of American Voters (<http://typology.people-press.org/>)

### **Journal report #3 due Wednesday, October 15**

Journal question (Fiorina): Describe the best evidence or argument Fiorina provides to support his claim that there is no culture war in the United States. Explain whether you are convinced by this evidence or argument.

## III. Parties and Institutions in the Electoral Process

### October 20-22

Why do we have primary elections when other countries don't?

Does the current system of primary elections work well?

- Wayne, chapter 7
- Joshua Green, “The Front-Runner's Fall” (\*)

### **Journal report #4 due Wednesday, October 22**

Journal question (Wayne): Explain the main difference between a primary election and a caucus for selecting presidential nominees in the United States. Explain whether the distinction made a difference in determining the 2008 major party nominations.

October 27-November 3

Campaign Strategy and Advertising: Do negative ads work? Are they bad for democracy?

- Wayne, chapter 8
- Halperin and Harris, section 7
- (\*) William H. Riker. 1986. "Lincoln at Freeport." *The Art of Political Manipulation*, chapter 1.
- Take *Applebee's America* quiz (<http://www.applebeesamerica.com/quiz.html>)

### **Election Predictions due Monday, November 3**

November 5

Evaluate 2008 Election Results

November 10-12

Congressional elections: Why do incumbents win (almost) all the time in?

- Ed Sidlow – *Challenging the Incumbent* (read entire book)

### **Journal report #5 due Monday, November 10**

Journal question (Sidlow): Describe one of the biggest obstacles facing Lance Pressl in his campaign for Congress.

November 17-19

How important is money in politics? Can we reform campaign finance?

- Wayne, chapter 4

**No Class the week of November 24 (Thanksgiving break)**

## **IV. The State of Political Parties and Elections in America**

December 1-3

Do parties and elections help citizens hold government accountable?

- Wayne, chapter 9
- (\*) "Democracy Unleashed," *National Journal*, July 1, 2000, pp. 2140-2149.
- (\*) Daniel A. Smith, "Direct Democracy and Candidate Elections"

### **Final Paper due Wednesday, December 3**

### **Final Exam**

**Monday, December 8, 10:00-12:00 Noon**