POLSC 227W Professor Andrew J. Polsky

Spring 2012 Office: Room 1723 HW

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**Political Parties**

Course Description

Political parties stand at the center of American politics. Although often the target of criticism, parties perform vital functions, including communicating information, framing the terms of political debate, and mobilizing social resources in political competition. Parties link the mass public, active citizens, and organized interests to office-seeking and office-holding politicians. Parties also help organize office holders to make governance possible in the fragmented American political system.

Important as political parties may be, however, it is not obvious why they arose and why they have persisted. According to one influential school of thought within political science, building and maintaining political organizations is a costly form of “collective action,” with uncertain benefits for those who undertake such work. We shall examine why political actors have decided to invest their effort and resources in creating, sustaining, and reforming parties. Political parties have also changed over time. Some analysts speak of the decline of parties, the increasing importance of interest groups, and the emergence of independent voters who refuse party labels. On the other side, evidence suggests that the American political system since the 1970s has become more partisan, while party organizations have become more professionalized and command greater resources than ever before. We shall explore the theoretical logic behind political parties, their historical development in the United States, the forces that have tended to weaken them in the modern period, and the countervailing pressures that have sustained and strengthened parties as organizations and tools of governance.

Course Objectives

This course has both a substantive focus and skill development goals. The syllabus is designed to introduce you to influential analytical perspectives on parties that can illuminate broad historical patterns and contemporary trends.

In substantive terms, at the end of the term you will know a good deal more about why parties form, their roles in the American political system, why third parties have had a significant but limited impact, how and why parties have changed over time, and why parties remain so central in shaping public debate and policy outcomes.

At the same time, this course aims to improve your critical thinking skills, understood here to mean your capacity (1) to grasp abstract concepts and theories, (2) to appreciate how such concepts and theories can be translated into concrete empirical claims about how the political system operates, and (3) to grapple with the difficulty of using evidence to evaluate the validity of these claims. You will be pressed to “interrogate” evidence – to ask questions about whether it is conclusive or indeterminate, to reconcile conflicting evidence that seems to support different theories (or no theory), and to consider why particular authors select certain evidence and omit other material. Finally, the written assignments and exams are designed to improve different writing skills, including your ability to summarize and answer questions about readings, to explain theories clearly, to use language precisely and demonstrate command of political science terminology, and to make an argument in which you state a thesis and support it through the use of evidence.

Accessibility

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical and/ or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1124 to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance please call (212- 772- 4857)/TTY (212- 650- 3230).

Statement on Academic Integrity

Hunter College is strongly committed to the principle that students should do their own work, give proper credit for information gained from any source, and acknowledge any help received in completing assignments. I will pursue any suspected violations on written assignments (including non-graded ones) through the college’s formal mechanism for adjudicating such cases and seek the most severe penalties permitted under college policy. Students will be required to submit their papers to a plagiarism detection service.

Course Requirements

1) Complete assigned reading before class meetings (see attached schedule).

2) Submit nine short writings (maximum 700 words apiece) over the course of the semester. The first two short writings will be summaries of individual readings that I will designate during the previous class; if I do not specify which reading to summarize, you may choose any listed for the next session. After you do the two summaries, you must write six question responses over the remainder of the semester. Questions are based on the assigned readings, and are designed to push you to extract specific information and apply it. Questions will be posted on Blackboard and/or be included in updated versions of the syllabus. Finally, you must submit one op-ed piece on a current issue involving American political parties. (The 2012 presidential and congressional races should supply ample opportunities.)

Short writings must be submitted at the start of class in which we discuss the relevant reading; they may not be transmitted via e-mail or fax. If you miss a class, even for a valid reason, you may not submit the writing late. Failure to submit the nine pieces will result in a reduction of your class participation grade (see below under grading). Although I do not grade individual short writing assignments, I may reject ones I find inadequate (usually because a summary is too vague or based only on the first few pages of the reading or a question response is nothing more than a summary). If I reject a short piece as unacceptable, you will need to do another one. You may submit only one short writing piece per class, so it is vital that you do them regularly – you will not be able to catch up at the end. Individual short writing assignments are not graded, but completion of the required number factors into the class participation component of the grade (see below under grading).

2) Attend class regularly and on time. No student shall be permitted to enter the classroom more than two minutes after we begin (except students with accessibility issues). I will refuse to admit late arriving students or treat such lateness as an unexcused absence. Students who miss three or more classes without a valid, documented reason shall be penalized (see below under grading.)

3) Participate in class discussion. Your participation grade will also reflect your active contribution to class meetings.

4) Complete all graded written assignments. Written work for the course consists of two essay exams and one research-based paper or review essay of 8-10 pages. The second (final) exam may be either an in-class or a take-home essay due at the scheduled final exam time for the course. I will determine the format at a later date. For in-class exams, questions will be distributed in advance. Details on the paper assignment will follow. All papers must be submitted to turnitin.com. You will be given the opportunity to revise the paper to improve the grade. I require a hard-copy of all papers and take-home exams.

Grading

In the calculation of your course grade, each of the exams, class participation, and the research-based paper will be given equal weight (that is, each of the four grades is 25% of the final course grade). For students who submit a paper rewrite, the rewrite grade will replace the original.

The class participation grade builds on your short writings and attendance. Students who complete all nine pieces (two summaries, six question responses, and one op-ed piece) and who have three or fewer unexcused absences will have a base participation grade of B. This will decline by one-third of a letter grade if you submit fewer than nine short writings, by one full letter grade if you submit fewer than six, and by two full letter grades if you submit fewer than two. In addition, for three or more undocumented absences, your participation grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter grade, increasing to a full letter grade off for six absences and two full letter grades for ten or more absences. You can raise your final participation grade through regular, informed contributions to class discussions.

I expect you to complete the graded written tests and assignment on time. If you miss an exam, you will be permitted to take a make-up test only when you have a valid excuse supported by written documentation. Late papers, without a documented, valid excuse, will be penalized through grade deductions and loss of the right to revise the paper for a better grade. Incompletes will be granted only with a documented excuse and only for a limited time (usually no longer than the time you were incapacitated), the duration to be set at the time the incomplete is approved.

*Note on credit/no credit grading:* College rules specify that to be eligible for credit/no credit, students must complete all course requirements. In this course, students who wish to be graded on the credit/no credit system must take the first exam, submit the paper assignment on time, and attempt the final. Failure to do all these things will void a credit/no credit request, and a conventional letter grade will be entered instead.

Books and Other Readings

Readings for this course include one book, various book chapters, and many scholarly journal articles. The following title has been ordered for purchase at Shakespeare Books on Lexington Avenue near 69th Street:

John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? A Second Look* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Note that this is a new edition; do not purchase the earlier one. The book chapters have been compiled in a course pack, produced by Campus Course Paks, Inc., that is also available at Shakespeare and on line at www.ccpaks.com. One copy of the course pack will be on reserve in the library, but I recommend that you not rely on the library copy. The journal articles are accessible through the Hunter College Library electronic reserve system (ERES).

**Schedule of Class Assignments**

The dates below are only approximate. As this schedule is subject to revision, students are responsible for keeping up with any announced changes, including changes in test dates. If you miss a class, e-mail me to confirm the next assignment. Please note the notations [course pack] and [ERES] for specific readings.

January 30th and February 2nd. Introduction: The Problem of Collective Action.

Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, chaps. 1 and 2. (Please read chapter 1 before the first class, but do not summarize it.)

February 6th. The Temporal Logic of Party Systems.

David Mayhew, *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), chaps. 2 and 3. [course pack]

Andrew J. Polsky, “Partisan Regimes in American Politics,” *Polity* 44 (1) January 2012: 1-33. [course pack]

Part One: Political Parties in Historical Perspective

February 9th. The Rise and Decline of the First National Political Parties.

Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, chap. 3.

Ronald P. Formisano, *The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s-1840s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), chap. 6. [course pack]

February 13th. No Class – Lincoln’s Birthday

Fbruary 16th and 21st (Tuesday). The Emergence of Mass Parties in Jacksonian America.

Jerome M. Mileur, “The Rise of Mass Democracy in America,” in Richard A. Harris and Daniel J. Tichenor, eds., *A History of the U.S. Political System: Ideas, Interests, and Institutions* (Boulder, CO: ABC-CLIO, 2010): 11-21. [course pack]

Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, chap. 4.

Richard R. John, “Affairs of Office: The Executive Departments, the Election of 1828, and the Making of the Democratic Party,” in Meg Jacobs, William J. Novak, and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 50-84. [course pack]

Joel H. Silbey, *The American Political Nation, 1838-1893* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), chaps. 2 and 3. [course pack]

February 23rd. Replacing a Major Party: From Whigs to Republicans in the 1850s.

Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, chap. 5.

William E. Gienapp,, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York: Oxford University, 1987), chap. 9. [course pack]

February 27th. Partisan Politics and Civil War.

Andrew J. Polsky, “‘Mr. Lincoln’s Army’ Revisited: Partisanship, Institutional Position, and Union Army Command, 1861-1865,” *Studies in American Political Development* 16 (2) (Fall 2002): 176-207. [ERES]

Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Union Divided: Party Conflict in the Civil War North* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), chap. 7. [course pack]

March 1st. Partisan Regimes in the Mass Party Era.

Howard Gillman, “How Political Parties Can Use the Courts to Advance Their Agendas: Federal Courts in the United States, 1875-1891,” *American Political Science Review* 96 (3) (September 2002): 511-24. [ERES]

Curt Nichols and Adam S. Myers, “Exploiting the Opportunity for Reconstructive Leadership: Presidential Responses to Enervated Political Regimes,” *American Politics Research* 38 (5) (2010): 806-41. [ERES]

March 5th. Continuity and Change in Party Ideology.

John Gerring, “A Chapter in the History of American Party Ideology: The Nineteenth-Century Democratic Party (1828-1892),” *Polity* 26 (4) (Summer 1994): 729-68. [ERES]

March 8th. Race and Party Competition (1): The Mass Party Era.

Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances: Race and Party Competition in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), chap. 3. [course pack]

March 12th. Challenges to the Two-Party System (1): Third Parties.

Mark Voss-Hubbard, “The ‘Third Party Tradition’ Reconsidered: Third Parties and American Public Life, 1830-1900,” *Journal of American History* 86:1 (June 1999): 121-150. [ERES]

Peter H. Argersinger, *The Limits of Agrarian Radicalism: Western Populism & American Politics* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), chap. 10. [course pack]

March 15th Mid-Term Exam.

March 19th and 22nd. Challenges to the Two-Party System (2): Progressivism as Anti-Party Reform.

Nancy L. Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship* ((Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), chapter 4. [course pack]

Alan Ware, “Anti-Partism and Party Control of Political Reform in the United States: The Case of the Australian Ballot,” *British Journal of Political Science* 30:1 (January 2000): 1-29. [ERES]

Melanie Gustafson, “Partisan Women in the Progressive Era: The Struggle for Inclusion in American Political Parties,” *Journal of Women's History* 9 (2) (Summer 1997): 8-30. [ERES]

Part II: Political Parties in the Contemporary Era

March 26th. Party Transformation: From Mass Parties to the Modern Era.

Mark D. Weiner, “The Party’s Still On: American Political Parties from 1950 to 2005,” in Richard A. Harris and Daniel J. Tichenor, eds., *A History of the U.S. Political System: Ideas, Interests, and Institutions* (Boulder, CO: ABC-CLIO, 2010): 22-49. [course pack]

Andrea Louise Campbell, “Parties, Electoral Participation, and Shifting Voting Blocs,” in Paul Pierson & Theda Skocpol, eds., *The Transformation of American Politics: Activist Government and the Rise of Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 68-102. [course pack]

March 29th and April 2nd. Citizen Activists in Modern Party Politics.

Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, chap. 6.

Thomas Frank, *What’s the Matter with Kansas?* (New York: Henry Holt/Owl Books, 2004, 2005), chap. 5. [course pack]

Bruce Miroff, “Movement Activists and Party Insurgents,” *Studies in American Political Development* 21 (1) (Spring 2007): 92-109. [ERES]

April 5th. Partisan Identification in a Candidate-Centered Electoral System.

Ronald B. Rapoport, “Partisanship Change in a Candidate-Centered Era,” *Journal of Politics* 59:1 (February 1997): 185-199. [ERES]

Mark D. Brewer, “The Rise of Partisanship and the Expansion of Partisan Conflict within the American Electorate,” *Political Research Quarterly* 58 (2) (June 2005): 219-29. [ERES]

April 9th and 12th. No Classes – Spring Recess.

April 16th. The New Face of Party Organization.

Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, chap. 8.

April 19th. Race and Party Competition (2): African-Americans as a Captured Group.

Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances: Race and Party Competition in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), chap. 4. [course pack]

Peter W. Wielhouwer, “Releasing the Fetters: Parties and the Mobilization of the African-American Electorate,” *Journal of Politics* 62:1 (February 2000): 206-222. [ERES]

April 23rd. Partisan Regimes in the Modern State: The Reagan Revolution “Unbuilds” the State.

Daniel M. Cook and Andrew J. Polsky, “Political Time Reconsidered: Unbuilding and Rebuilding the State under the Reagan Administration,” *American Politics Research* 33 (4) (July 2005): 577-605. [ERES]

Mark A. Smith, “Economic Insecurity, Party Reputations, and the Republican Ascendance,” in Paul Pierson & Theda Skocpol, eds., *The Transformation of American Politics: Activist Government and the Rise of Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 135-59. [course pack]

April 26th and April 30th. Partisan Polarization in Congress.

John J. Coleman, “The Decline and Resurgence of Congressional Party Conflict,” *Journal of Politics* 59:1 (February 1997): 165-184. [ERES]

Gregory L. Hager and Jeffery C. Talbert, “Look for the Party Label: Party Influences on Voting in the U.S. House,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 25:1 (February 2000): 75-99. [ERES]

Richard Fleisher and Jon R. Bond, “The Shrinking Middle in the US Congress,” *British Journal of Political Science* 34 (3) (2004): 429-51. [ERES]

May 3rd and 7th. Parties and Organized Interests in Modern American Politics.

John R. Wright, “Interest Groups, Congressional Reform, and Party Government in the United States,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 25:2 (May 2000): 217-236. [ERES]

Scott H. Ainsworth, “The Role of Legislators in the Determination of Interest Group Influence,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 22 (4) (November 1997): 517-33. [ERES]

Ronald G. Shaiko, “Reverse Lobbying: Interest Group Mobilization from the White House and the Hill,” Allan J. Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis, *Interest Group Politics*, 5th ed.(Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1998), pp. 255-82. [course pack]

May 10th and 14th. Summing Up: The Place of Parties in American Politics.

Aldrich, *Why Parties?,* chap. 9.

Thursday, May 24th. Final Exam, 11:30-1:30.