

# POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

Political Science 215-001/002

Fall 2009

Tuesdays, Thursdays

8:30-9:50 am Old Main 06 (section 001), 10:30-11:50 am Old Main 205 (section 002)

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**Class home page** (see below for more): <http://www.gustavus.edu/~cgilbert/p215/elect.htm>

**Chris's Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 9:50 – 10:25 am, 12 noon – 1:20 pm  
Thursdays, 8:00 – 8:25 am, 9:50 – 10:25 am  
plus occasional Monday/Wednesday afternoons, too

*COURSE OVERVIEW:* U.S. politics encompasses many, many organizations and activities. But to most ordinary citizens, the true driving forces of politics in America are the two major political parties and the elections they contest every 2/4 years. Parties have traditionally been the primary mediating institutions between citizens and their governments. Elections are the means by which citizens choose their leaders at regular intervals; no other political events generate as much public interest in politics, especially in presidential election years. This course will consider the numerous functions that parties and elections serve in our political system. We will pay particular attention to the major issues and themes of presidential elections, focusing in depth on the 2008 election results and what they mean for the future of U.S. politics.

*FORMAT:* Typically I open each class with a brief (10-15 minutes) overview of the day's reading, elaborating on the key ideas; this is followed by discussion time and other activities. In order for you to contribute meaningfully and comprehend more in class, **reading assignments should always be completed in advance**. There is no other topic in U.S. politics that has as much accumulated research as parties and elections. Nevertheless, there are still new things to discover, and your perspectives on all class topics are valued and welcomed. My goal is to talk **WITH** you throughout the semester, as opposed to merely talking to you or at you. Make it your goal to talk with, listen to, and learn from each other, whether discussing in class or online.

*BOOKS:* all are available in the Book Mark, and all are required:

- Baumgartner & Francia, *Conventional Wisdom and American Elections: Exploding Myths, Exploring Misconceptions*; a very good supplement to the topics in our main texts
- Hershey, *Party Politics in America* (13<sup>th</sup> edition ONLY); our main 'parties' textbook
- Nelson, *The Elections of 2008*; anthology covering many facets of the 2008 campaigns
- Wayne, *The Road to the White House 2008* (8<sup>th</sup> edition ONLY); our main 'elections' text
- West, *Air Wars: Television Advertising in Election Campaigns, 1952-2008* (5<sup>th</sup> edition ONLY); a detailed examination of TV's impact on the electoral process

*CLASS HOME PAGE:* The web page contains this syllabus and additional materials about parties and elections, plus a link to our POL-215 discussion blog. The web page will have all class handouts and supplementary readings; it will be the only place to obtain exam study guides and other additional materials. Bookmark the URL and use it!

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

First exam (October 13)	15%*
Second exam (November 17)	20%*
Final exam (December 19)	25%
Election research paper (due Dec. 9)	20%
Group project – third parties (October 20)	10%
Class participation/attendance	10%

\* the **lower** of the first two exam scores will count for 15% and the **higher** score will count for 20%

**GRADING:**

A =	93.000 average and above
A- =	90.000 through 92.999
B+ =	87.000 through 89.999
B =	83.000 through 86.999
B- =	80.000 through 82.999
C+ =	77.000 through 79.999
C =	73.000 through 76.999
C- =	70.000 through 72.999
D+ =	67.000 through 69.999
D =	60.000 through 66.999
F =	less than 60.000

**EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**CLASS PARTICIPATION:** Come to class prepared to discuss what you have read and to speak up with questions or opinions; reading in advance is essential if you are going to be a meaningful, active participant in this course. Participation involves more than just speaking up; listening to your professor and classmates, and showing your engagement in the course material through class comments and blog postings, are also forms of participation that I will take note of. Participation counts for much more than attendance in determining this portion of your grade.

**CLASS ATTENDANCE:** Please plan to attend every class session; attendance will be taken daily. If you are unable to attend, please advise me in advance when possible. Missing class due to illness is not going to adversely affect your grade. **Due to concerns this fall about the H1N1 flu, it is possible that you may end up missing significant class time – in fact, if you do come down with flu, it is IMPERATIVE that you DO NOT come to class while infectious and sick (recommendations are to stay home for at least one week). I will be very accommodating to anyone who gets the flu this fall!! However, I reserve the right to lower the final course grade of HEALTHY students who make it a habit of skipping this class.**

**EXAMS:** The exams will cover material from the readings and class discussions. The format for all three exams will be a combination of multiple choice questions, short paragraphs on key terms, and an essay question; in addition, the final exam will have a brief comprehensive section. Exam study guides will be posted online at least one week before each exam.

**ELECTION RESEARCH PAPER:** Each student will write a research paper on a topic of your choosing. You may choose **ANY topic that is related to parties and elections in the United States**. In the past, students have typically chosen to write about some aspect of a specific election (e.g. negative ads in the 2004 presidential election), to analyze one or more political figures with respect to their electoral campaigns (e.g. the 1968 comeback of Richard Nixon), or sometimes to find out more about a specific political party or time period (e.g. the decline and fall of the Whig Party). Note that your topic need not be presidential or national; state and/or local elections are also just fine (for example: U.S. House, U.S. Senate, governor, state legislature, state supreme court, state ballot propositions, significant local elections). I will be happy to discuss possible topics with you.

**This is a research paper; while the paper should have a thesis to demonstrate or a point of view to argue, the conclusions you draw should be solidly supported by material you find in the course of your research.** These papers should utilize a range of sources. Examples of appropriate sources include newspaper, periodical and web coverage of campaigns and candidates, candidate/party/political websites, books and academic journal articles, maps and statistical information about elections. **A paper that fails to include a range of sources (particularly including academic analyses of the topic) is not likely to be a good paper.**

**REQUIREMENTS: 8-10 pages of text, plus** any tables, maps, or other materials you wish to include (when appropriate). The paper should be typed and double-spaced with normal margins and fonts; use a separate title page and give your paper an interesting title. **Proper attribution of sources (using any standard citation method) and a final complete list of works cited and consulted are required as well.**

**TOPIC DEADLINE:** By **Tuesday, November 3**, please tell me what your topic is (in writing or via e-mail).

**THESIS STATEMENT/PRELIMINARY SOURCE LIST:** A preliminary thesis or theme for the paper, and an in-progress list of works consulted, are due on **Friday, November 20** (so I can comment and return it to you in class on November 24, right before Thanksgiving break).

**DUE DATE: Your research paper is due by 5 pm on Wednesday, December 9, without exception.** Penalties (at least 10 points/one letter grade down) begin accumulating immediately until the paper is turned in.

**GROUP PROJECT – THIRD PARTIES:** The class will be divided into small groups (most likely 3 students per group) for this assignment. Each group will research and report on one of the significant third parties and/or third candidates in U.S. political history. Each group will prepare two things for the class: a *one-sheet summary* (one piece of paper, both sides) of the party and/or candidate, containing whatever your group thinks the class should know; and an *oral presentation* by members of the group. The summary should be typed and **e-mailed to Chris by 8 pm on Monday, October 19** (presentations are on Tuesday, October 20) so I can make copies in time for class; all handouts will also be posted on the class website. The oral presentation should take *about 15-20 minutes*. This presentation should comment and elaborate on the summary, not merely repeat what is on paper. While you have freedom to structure the 1-sheet summary and oral presentation however you wish, some topics that should be covered include:

- the *historical context* in which the party/candidate arose, helping to explain why the party/candidate chose to challenge the major parties
- the *platform* of the party/candidate, especially the issues that made the party/candidate unique or different from the major parties of the time period
- the *results* – how did the party/candidate do when contesting elections and/or when

pursuing its policy goals in legislatures and Congress, and what factors explain the election results

- the *long-term impact* of the party/candidate – how did the party/candidate change the U.S. political system and what if anything is the party's/candidate's legacy?

It is not necessary to give a bibliography of sources consulted to the class. **However, you must prepare a list of works consulted for me** (due on the day of your presentation) so that I know where your information came from. If you have any problems in finding information, please feel free to come see me or consult with a reference librarian. Some books on third parties will be placed on reserve in the Gustavus library to assist in your research.

**KEY DATES:** Formation of groups and sign-up for specific parties/candidates will take place in class on **Thursday, October 1**; possible parties/candidates will be posted on the class website a week before this date. **Presentations** are scheduled for **Tuesday, October 20** (see daily schedule).

**Note on grading:** Each group's grade will be based on the quality of the group's handout and oral presentation. Each member of the group will receive the same grade for the assignment. An exception will be made if it is demonstrated to me that one group member has failed to do his/her fair share of the work. **You are responsible for developing a productive collaborative arrangement within your group.**

### ADDITIONAL CLASS POLICIES

*CELL PHONES, IPODS, and other such electronic devices:* Turn them OFF when class is in session – no ringing, no vibrating, no IM, no distractions for yourself or your classmates.

*SCHEDULE CONFLICTS:* Students with advance notice of schedule conflicts (e.g., school-related activities that conflict with our class time) should present a list of these to me at the beginning of the semester. There should be few or no schedule conflicts that cannot be resolved in ways acceptable to you and to me – the key is early notification. The Academic Schedule Conflicts policy found in the *College Catalog* exists to inform you of your obligations and to help us work out any problems.

*POLICY ON EXCEPTIONS:* It is expected that all exams will be taken at the appointed time and all other work will be completed by indicated due dates. Because of events beyond your control (e.g. illness), I realize that sometimes this is not possible despite good-faith efforts on your part. Therefore, exceptions and extensions will be considered on an individual basis. **In general, nonacademic personal commitments and end-of-semester travel plans are NOT valid reasons for requesting extensions or exceptions. Nor are activities scheduled well in advance, e.g. extracurricular activities or obligations for other classes.** As with class attendance, please inform me well in advance of such conflicts. This policy is consistent with the Academic Schedule Conflicts policy found in the *College Catalog*.

*ACCOMMODATIONS for students with documented disabilities:* Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) work together to ensure “reasonable

accommodation” and non-discrimination for students with disabilities in higher education. A student who has a physical, psychiatric/emotional, medical, learning, or attentional disability that may have an effect on the student’s ability to complete assigned course work should contact Laurie Bickett, the Disability Services Coordinator in the Advising Center ([lbickett@gustavus.edu](mailto:lbickett@gustavus.edu) or x6286), who will review the concerns and decide with the student what accommodations are necessary. Following this review, the student and I will determine specific, reasonable accommodations for our course, maintaining confidentiality throughout the process. **I am very happy to discuss this process with any student who qualifies.**

*ACADEMIC HONESTY:* Plagiarism or cheating in any form corrupts the intent of all that we do as a community of scholars. Consistent with the Gustavus Academic Honesty Policy (found in the *College Catalog*) and the Honor Code (also in the *College Catalog*), the policies and procedures for this course are as follows:

- Violations of the Academic Honesty Policy will result in at least a grade of 0 for the specific assignment, and failure for the course in the case of egregious violations. Students accused and/or penalized for these violations, AND students who become aware of such violations, have specific rights and responsibilities, as outlined in the Honor Code section of the *College Catalog*.
- Each exam and graded paper will contain the statement "**On my honor, I pledge that I have not given, received, or tolerated others' use of unauthorized aid in completing this work.**" Students are required to sign on each exam or paper; typing the statement on a paper submitted electronically is equivalent to signing.
- Students CAN consult with each another and with the professor while working on assignments, developing the group project materials (obviously!) and preparing for exams; these are examples of "authorized aid."
- Under the Honor Code, proctoring of exams is at the instructor's discretion; I have chosen to be present in the classroom during all exams, to answer questions that may arise.

## DAILY SCHEDULE: TOPICS, READING ASSIGNMENTS

The web version of this syllabus has links to all handouts distributed in class ("Topics covered" column) as well as additional readings, exam study guides and other materials. If this schedule changes for some reason, the web version will be changed and should be considered the "official" schedule; I promise not to change the schedule without alerting you first!

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topics covered</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Assignments &amp; announcements</i>
T September 8	Introduction to the study of parties and elections	none	
Th September 10	American political parties and the 2-party system	Hershey 1, 2	
T September 15	The party core: structure and membership	Hershey 3, 4, 5	
Th September 17	Party roles in legislatures, the executive branch and the courts	Hershey 13, 14; reading on judicial elections to be posted	
T September 22	Intro to presidential elections, 2008 race	Wayne 1, Nelson 1, BF 5	
Th September 24	Campaign finance	Wayne 2, Hershey 12, Nelson 8	list of group assignment topics posted by today
T September 29	Citizen participation and voter turnout	Wayne 3, Hershey 8, BF 1	
Th October 1	Party identification, party systems	Hershey 6 and 7, BF 3	groups, topics for third party presentations determined today in class
T October 6	NOBEL CONFERENCE	no class	first exam study guide posted by today
Th October 8	Party coalition differences; polling	BF 2, 6, 8	class today includes time for exam-related questions
T October 13	<b>FIRST EXAM</b>		
Th October 15	Third parties, an overview	third party reading to be posted	
T October 20	<b>Group presentations on third parties</b>	Group presentation handouts to be posted	group presentation handouts should be e-mailed to Chris <b>by 8 pm Monday, October 19</b>

Th October 22	Primary elections, nomination processes	Hershey 9, Wayne 4	
T October 27	FALL BREAK	no class	research paper topic is due one week from today ☺
Th October 29	Congressional elections	BF 10, Nelson 5	
T November 3	Presidential nominations and party conventions	Wayne 5-6, Hershey 10	inform Chris of your research paper topic by today in class
Th November 5	Presidential general election strategy and tactics	Wayne 7, Hershey 11, BF 9 and 11	
T November 10	Media roles, coverage and bias	Wayne 8, Nelson 6, BF 4 and 7	second exam study guide posted by today
Th November 12	Electoral outcomes	Wayne 9	class today includes time for exam-related questions
T November 17	<b>SECOND EXAM</b>		
Th November 19	The 2008 election: choosing candidates, how Obama won	Nelson 2, 3	Research paper thesis, preliminary source list due to Chris <b>by Friday, November 20, 12 noon</b>
T November 24	The 2008 election: interpreting the outcome	Nelson 4, 7, 9	
Th November 26	THANKSGIVING BREAK	no class	
T December 1	Air Wars: air time and messages	West 1, 2, 3	
Th December 3	Air Wars: media coverage, agenda setting	West 4, 5, 6	
T December 8	Air Wars: the overall impact of advertisements	West 7, 8, 9	<b>Research paper due Wednesday, December 9 by 5 pm!</b>
Th December 10	Reforming parties and elections	Hershey 15 and 16, Wayne 10	final exam guide posted by today
T December 15	Final thoughts	no new reading	final exam review, course evaluation
Saturday, December 19	<b>FINAL EXAM 10:30 am – 12:30 pm Old Main 06</b>		<b>both sections are together for the final exam</b>