

POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

Political Science 215

Fall 2010

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays
11:30 am – 12:20 pm, Old Main 205

Instructors: Dr. Chris Gilbert, Dr. Kevin Byrne Office phone: 933-6093 (Gilbert), x6152 (Byrne)
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**Kevin Byrne is teaching this course for the first six weeks (through October 15)
while Chris Gilbert is on parental leave**

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

Chris Gilbert's office hours (starting Oct. 18): Mondays and Tuesdays, 1:30 – 3:30 pm
Other times by appointment

Kevin Byrne's office hours: Mondays, 4:30 – 5:30 pm
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00 – 4:00 pm

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 contrasts between presidential elections and congressional elections as we study this subject during the 2010 election cycle, which sets the stage for the next two years of national politics leading into the 2012 presidential race.

FORMAT: Expect to discuss what you have read with the instructors. In order for you to contribute meaningfully and comprehend more in class, **reading assignments should always be completed in advance**. No other topic in U.S. politics 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. The 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 one another, 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* (2nd edition ONLY)
- Fiorina, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America* (3rd edition ONLY)
- Hershey, *Party Politics in America* (14th edition ONLY)
- Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (7th edition ONLY)
- Nelson, *The Elections of 2008*

CLASS HOME PAGE: The web page contains this syllabus and additional materials about parties and elections. The web page will have class handouts and supplementary readings; it will be the only place to obtain exam study guides and other additional materials.

ASSIGNMENTS:

First exam (October 15)	15%*
Second exam (November 15)	15%*
Final exam (December 16)	20%
Election prediction paper (due Nov. 1)	10%
Election analysis paper (due Dec. 10)	20%
Group project	10%
Class participation/attendance	10%

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 is a valued form of participation, too. 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 the instructor in advance when possible. Missing class due to illness is not going to adversely affect your grade. **Due to concerns 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). We will be very accommodating to anyone who gets the flu this fall!! However, we 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 will be up to the instructor (Kevin for first exam, Chris for second exam and final exam); the final exam will have a brief comprehensive section.

ELECTION PAPERS: Each student will be assigned one specific U.S. House, U.S. Senate, or gubernatorial election taking place on Tuesday, November 2. **Chris will assign the elections by mid-September and post this on the course webpage.** You will write two papers about your assigned election:

- the **Election Prediction paper** is due the day before the election (Monday, November 1) but will be written from the point of view of the day **AFTER** the election – **predict** the outcome (write as if the election has already occurred) and **explain** why the outcome happened. This paper should

have some discussion of the context of the election, although the full discussion of electoral context will appear in the final paper. This paper should be about 3 pages and can be no more than 4 pages in length. Note that this paper should predict what you believe WILL happen (what you WANT the outcome to be is completely irrelevant and inappropriate in this paper), and the persuasiveness and accuracy of your prediction will factor into your grade.

- the **Election Analysis paper**, due about a month after the actual election, will offer a complete assessment of your assigned race – discuss the election and results (the real results this time) in the context of the state or district, the candidates and campaign, influences from the presidential race, and other relevant factors (including information about voter preferences from exit polls, if available). This paper should be 6-8 pages, plus any tables or other material you wish to include. The grade for this paper is independent of the grade for the first paper (although there can be and probably will be some material you will use in both papers).

Both papers are research papers: the conclusions you draw (before AND after the election) should be solidly supported by material you find in the course of your research. Proper attribution of sources (using any standard citation method), and a final complete list of works cited and consulted, are required as well. The papers should be typed and double-spaced, with a separate title page, normal margins and fonts.

Assignment of elections will take place no later than the end of the third week of classes (Monday, September 20); specific assignments will be posted on the course web page.

The Election Prediction paper is due on Monday, November 1, by 4:30 pm at Chris's office, without exception. Due to the nature of the assignment, there can be no such thing as a late paper! Late papers receive a 0.

The Election Analysis paper is due Friday, December 10, by 4:30 pm at Chris's office. There will be **no extensions** to this due date unless extraordinary circumstances arise; all students should plan on turning in a completed paper by this date. Late papers will be penalized 20 points (two letter grades) for each day late.

GROUP PROJECT: A group project focused on U.S. third parties will be organized by Kevin during the first six weeks; further details will be forthcoming.

ADDITIONAL CLASS POLICIES

WHO'S IN CHARGE? For the first six weeks, Kevin Byrne is in charge of all aspects of the course, including grading of any assignments that fall during this time period. During this time Chris Gilbert will be checking e-mail and keeping the course webpages up to date, but Chris will NOT be on campus – contact Kevin first on all course-related matters. **Starting Monday, October 18**, Chris is back and in charge through the end of the semester.

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 one of the instructors as soon as the conflict dates are known. 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), 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 your instructors well in advance of such conflicts. This policy is consistent with the Academic Schedule Conflicts policy found in the *College Catalog*.

HELP FOR STUDENTS WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE IS NOT ENGLISH: The Writing Center has on staff a part-time tutor with professional training in ESL/ELL instruction. Students can schedule work with this tutor by contacting the Writing Center. Students may bring their instructor's documentation concerning their ELL status. Where it is appropriate, we may choose to allow such students more time to complete either in- or out-of-class writing assignments. For further information and discussion about your specific needs and concerns, please come see the instructor and/or contact the Advising Center (located in the Johnson Student Union, across the hall from Linner Lounge).

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 or x6286), who will review the concerns and decide with the student what accommodations are necessary. Following this review, the student and the instructor will determine specific, reasonable accommodations for our course, maintaining confidentiality throughout the process. **Kevin and Chris encourage any student who qualifies for accommodations to discuss individual needs with us.**

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.

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; we promise to notify you ASAP if/when the schedule is changed.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topics covered</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Assignments & announcements</i>
W September 8	Introduction to the study of parties and elections	None	
F September 10	American political parties and the 2-party system	Hershey 1, 2	
M September 13	Party organizations: local, state, national	Hershey 3, 4	
W September 15	Activists: the parties' core supporters	Hershey 5	
F September 17	Party identification: who votes for whom	Hershey 6 B&F 3	
M September 20	Party coalitions: changes over time	Hershey 7	Election paper assignments will be posted by today
W September 22	Have campaigns become nastier and less substantive?	B&F 6, 10	
F September 24	Looking back to last time: the 2008 election cycle	Nelson 1	
M September 27	Determining the 2008 nominees	Hershey 10 Nelson 2	
W September 29	General election strategies	Hershey 11 B&F 5, 12	

F October 1	Understanding the 2008 outcome	Nelson 3, 7	
M October 4	Media roles in campaigns	Nelson 6 B&F 7, 8	
W October 6	NO CLASS		NOBEL CONFERENCE
F October 8	The meaning of the 2008 results	Nelson 9	
M October 11	Group project presentations		
W October 13	Group project presentations		
F October 15	FIRST EXAM		
M October 18	Congressional elections: the political and social context	Jacobson 1, 2	By this time, you should be following your assigned election closely
W October 20	Incumbents and challengers	Jacobson 3	
F October 22	Party roles in candidate selection, primaries and caucuses	Hershey 9	
M October 25	NO CLASS		FALL BREAK
W October 27	Financing campaigns	Hershey 12 B&F 4 Nelson 8	
F October 29	Congressional campaign strategies	Jacobson 4	
M November 1	Who votes?	Hershey 8 Jacobson 5 B&F 1	Election prediction paper due TODAY by 4:30 pm
W November 3	2010 election recap	None; we will discuss Nov. 2 election results	
F November 5	More 2010 recap	Further discussion of Nov. 2 elections	
M November 8	Congressional elections and national politics	Jacobson 6	
W November 10	Congressional elections and representation	Jacobson 7 Nelson 5	
F November 12	Congressional elections and representation, part II	Same as Nov. 10	
M November 15	SECOND EXAM		
W November 17	Parties and legislatures	Hershey 13	
F November 19	Parties, the executive branch, and courts	Hershey 14; one additional reading to be posted	
M November 22	How responsible are the political parties, how	Hershey 15, 16 B&F 9	wouldn't it be nice to have your election

	responsible should they be?		analysis paper done before break?! ☺
W November 24	NO CLASS		Thanksgiving break
F November 26	NO CLASS		Thanksgiving break
M November 29	Origins of the culture war thesis	Fiorina 1, 2	
W December 1	Examining red and blue states	Fiorina 3, 4	
F December 3	Hot button issues: abortion, homosexuality	Fiorina 5, 6	
M December 6	Electoral cleavages	Fiorina 7, 8	
W December 8	Evaluating the culture war thesis	Fiorina 9, 10	
F December 10	Considering the culture war today & in the future	Fiorina Epilogue	Election analysis paper due TODAY by 4:30 pm
M December 13	Final thoughts	To be announced	
Thursday, December 16	FINAL EXAM 10:30 – 12:30 Old Main 205		