

POSC 313: AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES

FALL 2014

Dr. Jack D. Collens

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Course Time: 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Monday, Wednesday, & Friday
112 Kiernan Hall

Office Hours: 2–4pm Mon. & Wed.
9–11am Tues. & Thurs.
321C Siena Hall

“The Democrats are the party that says government will make you smarter, taller, richer, and remove the crabgrass on your lawn. The Republicans are the party that says government doesn’t work and then they get elected and prove it.”

—Political humorist P.J. O’Rourke

Americans love to hate our political parties. Parties are perceived as too ideological, combative, selfish, and unprincipled; even many of the Founders dreaded the rise of political parties. In reality, however, our parties are often mere reflections of those of us who participate in the electoral process. Moreover, the functions they serve are indispensable for a republic as large and unwieldy as our own. This course will familiarize students with these functions of parties, as well as the interactions between parties, elected officials, organized interests, and the public. Students will become familiar with how political scientists study our parties and learn to evaluate public discourse on the proper role and power of political parties in America. The end of the course will feature an extended case study on the role of the Tea Party in shaping the contemporary American party system.

Texts

The texts below are **required** and can be found in the Siena College bookstore or online. Note that some may be available as eBooks or for rental via Amazon or the publisher’s website. Both are often cheaper options than purchasing the books. Other required readings can be found on the course Blackboard page or via links in the syllabus.

Hershey, Marjorie Randon. 2015. *Party Politics in America, 16th ed.* Boston: Pearson. ISBN: 978-0205992096.

Stonecash, Jeffrey M., ed. 2010. *New Directions in American Political Parties.* New York: Routledge. ISBN: 978-0415805247.

Skocpol, Theda and Vanessa Williamson. 2013. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism.* New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0199975549.

Learning Goals

This course addresses the following college, school, and departmental learning goals:

Siena College Learning Goals

1. INFORMED REASONING: Students will think critically and creatively to make reasoned and informed judgments. Through engagement with contemporary and enduring questions of human concern, students will solve problems in ways that reflect the integration of knowledge across general and specialized studies, and they will demonstrate competence in information literacy and independent research.

2. **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION:** Students will read texts with comprehension and critical involvement, write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences, speak knowledgeably, and listen with discernment and empathy.
4. **REGARD FOR HUMAN SOLIDARITY AND DIVERSITY:** Students will affirm the unity of the human family, uphold the dignity of individuals, and delight in diversity. They will demonstrate intercultural knowledge and respect.

School of Liberal Arts Learning Goals

1. Apply evaluative thinking skills to investigate the complexities of the human past and its connections to artistic, ethical, sociopolitical, moral, and spiritual dimensions of contemporary life.
2. Use analytical problem-solving skills and appropriate theoretical and methodological approaches.
3. Utilize effective oral, written, and artistic communication relevant to academic disciplines.
7. Develop a perspective that recognizes diversity within and among cultures.

Major/Program Learning Goals

The Political Science program aims to provide students with:

- A foundation for future careers;
- A solid theoretical, empirical, and methodological foundation for future graduate study;
- A knowledge and awareness, as citizens, of the responsibility that membership within a democratic society entails;
- A sensitivity to the cultural and political diversity within the United States and the world community.

Learning Outcomes

To accomplish these learning goals, students in this class will:

- ☑ Engage relevant research on the functions and functioning of American political parties
- ☑ Address current debates in the public sphere as to the role of parties and party-like organizations
- ☑ Hear and contribute a diversity of opinions in a classroom environment which mimics the pluralistic nature of our society
- ☑ Improve their critical thinking, oral communication, and writing skills through carefully designed course discussions, debates, and writing assignments
- ☑ Learn to use the [Chicago style](#) of citation and reference management (author-date style)

Student Responsibilities

Attendance & Participation

Reading is necessary for a successful college experience, but it is far from sufficient. Class attendance is more than mere reinforcement of material you may have read in the assigned readings. As such, students must attend class regularly, take comprehensive notes, ask for clarification when necessary, and participate in discussion. I will draw test questions from the texts, short lectures, and discussion material, so you

must pay attention. While I will not take attendance each day, note that a satisfactory participation grade requires regular attendance. Furthermore, active participation will make the class more interesting for all involved. Participation grades will be based on students' regular attendance and active and informed participation.

Active & Informed Participation

Attendance is not sufficient to earn a satisfactory participation grade. This course requires *active* and *informed* participation. As such, students are expected to speak up in class and contribute to all discussions and debates with relevant points. Note that this approach emphasizes quality of participation over quantity. I will monitor your contributions each week and provide you with a current participation grade at the midpoint of the semester. This will not affect your final participation grade, but will provide you with an assessment of your current progress in the class, thereby allowing students to adjust their participation accordingly. Participation is worth 20 percent of the final course grade and will assess students' critical thinking and oral communication skills.

Exams

You will receive two exams—a midterm and a *non-cumulative* final. These exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. I shall draw exam questions from short lectures, discussions, and the required texts. Be punctual on test days, as you will have no extended time. Makeup exams will differ significantly from the original exam and will only be granted with a valid, college-recognized excuse.

Reaction Papers

Ten percent of your final grade will come from two short reaction papers, due on specific dates assigned to each student. In these papers, students will address a set of discussion questions affiliated with the readings for that particular section of the course. These questions are provided within the syllabus. Papers will be due **before** we discuss the readings in class. **Students may not choose which questions or topics to address—they are assigned.** Further details on these assignments will be provided in the first week of class.

Final Project

The capstone of the course will be a research paper addressing some current question facing scholars of American political parties. This project will comprise 20 percent of your final grade. Students will choose a question of interest to *contemporary* scholars and/or public figures. Note that this will require justification; students must demonstrate that their question is relevant to current public debate.

To begin, students will share their topics with me via Google Drive (as a Google Doc) in the form of a 2-page, double-spaced paper identifying their question, discussing the question's relevance to contemporary politics, and identifying at least five non-syllabus sources, three academic and two non-academic (from newspapers, magazines, etc.). These will be due **September 29** by the start of class at 11:30am.

Students must also meet with me outside of class to discuss their progress. During the meeting, students will discuss the scholarly approaches they have identified to answering their chosen question and present at least eight non-syllabus sources (five academic and three non-academic). These meetings are mandatory and will be held **the week of October 27**. I will provide a sign-up sheet for these meetings well in advance.

Finally, students must turn in their completed projects on **Friday, December 5** as a *hard copy*; electronic submission is prohibited without pre-approval or a valid excuse (sickness, death in the family, etc.). The final papers must be 10 to 12 pages in length, employ proper formatting and Chicago citation style, and

include at least eight non-syllabus sources (at least five academic and three non-academic). Note that this means the eight sources you present in your meetings with me will suffice as your sources for this paper.

I will provide additional information about this project as the semester progresses.

Quizzes

There will also be six reading quizzes administered during the semester. These will cover material you will be expected to read for the week the quizzes are offered. Three of these will be announced ahead of time (and must be completed on Blackboard) while the others will not be announced in advance. These quizzes will constitute 10 percent of your final grade. I will drop the lowest quiz grade at the end of the semester.

Grading

A = 93–100; A- = 90–92; B+ = 87–89; B = 83–86; B- = 80–82; C+ = 77–79; C = 73–76; C- = 70–72; D+ = 67–69; D = 63–66; D- = 60–62; F ≤ 59.

Item	Percentage
Midterm Exam	20 percent
Final Exam	20 percent
Final Project	20 percent
Participation	20 percent
Reading Quizzes	10 percent
Reaction Paper 1	5 percent
Reaction Paper 2	5 percent
TOTAL	100 percent

Availability

The best way to contact me is via email. Please include the course number in your subject line (“POSC 313”). If your question requires more than a few sentences to ask, please feel free to visit my office hours. My door is always open. If you have concerns about your grade, I highly recommend that you come to see me as soon as possible. I am available to help you, but it is your responsibility to demonstrate to me that you want to improve your performance. If you cannot meet during office hours, feel free to email me to schedule another time. Note, however, that failure to appear during any meetings scheduled outside of my regular office hours will count against your participation grade.

Disabilities & Illnesses

Students with disabilities of any kind are strongly encouraged to notify me and the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities at the beginning of the semester, so the appropriate accommodations can be made. Please note that I am willing to work with students who contract illnesses, but it is the student’s responsibility to contact me as soon as they are aware of the illness to plan their coursework for the duration of the illness. I can help you during and immediately after any illnesses, but I cannot help you if you wait until the end of the semester to make up any missed work.

Academic Honesty

All Siena College policies relating to academic honesty will be upheld in this course. An outline of the college’s Academic Integrity Policy is available at <https://www2.siena.edu/pages/2667.asp>. Please note that I have a “zero tolerance” policy towards cheating and plagiarism. It is your responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism and cheating.

Assistance

Students requiring assistance with their writing may see me in my office or contact the Siena College [Writing Center](#). As you will not be allowed to rewrite any assignments, I suggest you take advantage of the resources available to help you with your writing before turning in any written assignments.

Laptop Policy

The current generation of college students grew up in the connected age; as such, computers are as much a part of your learning experience as textbooks and pens. However, the [most current research](#) on laptop and tablet use in classrooms suggests that significant majorities of students who use laptops in class spend more than 10 minutes in class on social networking sites and non-course related sites, that these types of activities can distract those around you, and that taking notes by hand is a far more effective strategy than using a laptop. As such, I require that any students who choose to use laptops must sit in the back half of the classroom. Students taking notes by hand may sit in the front half of the classroom, free from the distractions of their neighbors' favorite YouTube clips and cat photos.

A final word on the use of laptops: Most faculty members recognize the tension between wanting to allow laptops (which will help students develop the skills they will need to incorporate technology in their future careers) and wanting to ensure adequate delivery of course material. My policy is somewhat of a compromise. Note, however, that I retain the right to alter this policy and ban laptops from my classroom (exceptions would apply to those with relevant disabilities). My goal in this class is to ensure that you become better-informed consumers of political information and are able to participate in the political process. I will work with you to ensure that you are able to use your laptops effectively to that end and will, from time to time, encourage the use of laptops or even smart phones to retrieve relevant material in class, but students should be careful not to take this as a *carte blanche* to distract themselves and others.

Class Schedule[†]

09.03 Course Introduction

Readings: Course Syllabus (Blackboard)

09.05 Political Parties in America

Discussion Questions: Are our parties more responsive or responsible? Is there any difference?

Readings: Hershey, Chs. 1 & 2

09.08–09.12 Party Development

Discussion Questions: After reading about party development throughout American history, do you foresee any major changes to the structure or coalitional makeup of the parties in the near future? Why or why not?

Readings: Hershey, Ch. 7

Aldrich, John H. and Ruth W. Grant. 1993. "The Antifederalists, the First Congress, and the First Parties." *Journal of Politics* 55(2): 295–326. (Blackboard)

Brewer, Mark D. 2010. "Strategic Maneuvers: Political Parties and the Pursuit of Winning Coalitions in a Constantly Changing Electoral Environment." In Jeffrey M. Stonecash, ed., *New Directions in American Political Parties*. New York: Routledge. (Ch. 3)

[†]I reserve the right to alter the class schedule as I see fit.

09.15–09.19 Rethinking Political Parties

Discussion Questions: After reading about party “networks,” discuss how we might be able to differentiate between an organization/individual comprising a part of a party’s network and organizations/individuals operating outside of the party network. Provide some examples of those organizations/individuals you believe are on the periphery of the network and those who are fully outside of the network, but are still active in politics. Justify your decisions.

Readings: Masket, Seth. 2014. “Our Political Parties are Networked, Not Fragmented.” *The Monkey Cage*, February 14, 2014. (Blackboard)

Bawn, Kathleen, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2012. “A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics.” *Perspectives on Politics* 10(3): 571–597. (Blackboard)

Herrnson, Paul S. 2009. “The Roles of Party Organizations, Party-Connected Committees, and Party Allies in Elections.” *Journal of Politics* 71(4): 1207–1224. (Blackboard)

***** Quiz 1 due by start of class on Monday, 09.15**

09.22–09.26 Party Organizations (*Street Fight*)

Discussion Questions: Discuss and evaluate your experiences with party organizational workers (if any). What do you believe is the role of the party organization in modern, “networked” parties?

Readings: Hershey, Chs. 3 & 4

Dwyre, Diana. 2010. “Party Organization and Mobilization of Resources: Evolution, Reinvention, and Survival.” In Jeffrey M. Stonecash, ed., *New Directions in American Political Parties*. New York: Routledge. (Ch. 5)

09.29–10.03 Party Activists and Coalitions

Discussion Questions: Would you consider yourself a party “activist”? Why or why not? Also, evaluate the role activists play in the political arena—is their influence good or bad for our system of government?

Readings: Hershey, Ch. 5

Haynie, Kerry L. and Candis S. Watts. 2010. “Blacks and the Democratic Party: A Resilient Coalition.” In Jeffrey M. Stonecash, ed., *New Directions in American Political Parties*. New York: Routledge. (Ch. 6)

Carmines, Edward G. and James Woods. 2002. “The Role of Party Activists in the Evolution of the Abortion Issue.” *Political Behavior* 24(4): 361–377. (Blackboard)

*****Paper topics due Monday, 09.29**

10.06–10.10 Parties and the Public

Discussion Questions: Discuss your own political identity (focusing on partisanship). What factors do you believe have contributed to this identity and why? Do you believe others form their identities around similar logic?

Readings: Hershey, Chs. 6 & 8

Cook, Zachary F. 2013. “The Younger, More Independent Republican Leaner.” *The Forum* 11(2): 259–275. (Blackboard)

Kellstedt, Lyman A. and James L. Guth. 2014. “Catholic Partisanship and the Presidential Vote in 2012: Testing Alternative Theories.” *The Forum* 10(4): 623–640. (Blackboard)

10.13 Catch Up & Midterm Exam Review

10.15 MIDTERM EXAM

10.17 No Class—Fall Holiday

10.20–10.24 Parties & Candidates

Discussion Questions: What role do you think the parties should play in recruiting candidates to run for public office? How and when do you think the parties can be most effective in their recruitment efforts?

Readings: Hershey, Chs. 9 & 10

Fox, Richard L. and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2010. "If Only They'd Ask: Gender, Recruitment, and Political Ambition." *Journal of Politics* 72(2): 310–326. (Blackboard)

Goldmacher, Shane. 2013. "Why Would Anyone Ever Want to Run for Congress?" *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 19, 2013. (Blackboard)

10.27–10.31 Parties & Money

Discussion Questions: Using Skinner's work and other research on money in campaign politics, evaluate La Raja's argument for increasing the role of formal parties in campaign finance.

Readings: Hershey, Ch. 12

Skinner, Richard, Seth Masket, and David Dulio. 2013. "527 Committees, Formal Parties, and Party Adaptation." *The Forum* 11(2): 137–156. (Blackboard)

and either

La Raja, Raymond J. 2012. "Why Super PACs: How the American Party System Outgrew the Campaign Finance System." *The Forum* 10(4): 91–104. (Blackboard)

or

La Raja, Raymond J. 2013. "Richer Parties, Better Politics? Party-Centered Campaign Finance Laws and American Democracy." *The Forum* 11(3): 313–338. (Blackboard)

Note: Students with papers assigned this week must read all articles.

*****Paper meetings this week**

11.03–11.07 Parties in Government

Discussion Questions: What are the advantages and disadvantages of strong parties in government? Would you advocate for stronger party leaders in Congress and the executive branch? Why or why not?

Readings: Hershey, Chs. 13 & 14

Milkis, Sidney M. 2010. "The President as a Partisan Actor." In Jeffrey M. Stonecash, ed., *New Directions in American Political Parties*. New York: Routledge. (Ch. 12)

Rohde, David and John Aldrich. 2010. "Consequences of Electoral and Institutional Change: The Evolution of Conditional Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives." In Jeffrey M. Stonecash, ed., *New Directions in American Political Parties*. New York: Routledge. (Ch. 13)

***** Quiz 2 due by start of class on Monday, 11.03**

11.10–11.14 Parties & Ideology (Part I)

Discussion Questions: What do you believe is the source of the polarization in contemporary American politics? Is polarization occurring among the public? Or only among political elites? Explain why you believe this.

Readings: Hershey Ch. 15

Abramowitz, Alan. 2010. "Ideological Realignment among Voters." In Jeffrey M. Stonecash, ed., *New Directions in American Political Parties*. New York: Routledge. (Ch. 8)

Olson, Laura R. 2010. "Religion, Moralism, and the Cultural Wars: Competing Moral Visions." In Jeffrey M. Stonecash, ed., *New Directions in American Political Parties*. New York: Routledge. (Ch. 9)

11.17–11.21 Parties & Ideology (Part II)

Discussion Questions: Do you believe that partisan polarization is inherently bad? Why or why not? If yes, be sure to include any potential remedies you may think will help ease the side effects of polarization.

Readings: Stonecash, Jeffrey M. 2010. "Class in American Politics." In Jeffrey M. Stonecash, ed., *New Directions in American Political Parties*. New York: Routledge. (Ch. 7)

Thomsen, Danielle M. 2014. "Ideological Moderates Won't Run: How Party Fit Matters for Partisan Polarization in Congress." *Journal of Politics* 76(3): 786–797. (Blackboard)

Rae, Nicol C. 2007. "Be Careful What You Wish for: The Rise of Responsible Parties in American National Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10: 169–191. (Blackboard)

***** Quiz 3 due by start of class on Monday, 11.17**

11.24 Case Study: The Tea Party (Part I)

Discussion Questions: What is the Tea Party? Who affiliates with the Tea Party and why? Finally, why do you believe it arose at this point in American history?

Readings: Skocpol and Williamson, Introduction–Ch. 2

11.26–11.28 No Class—Thanksgiving Break

12.01–12.05 Case Study: The Tea Party (Part II)

Discussion Questions: What long-term consequences—if any—do you foresee the Tea Party having on American political parties more generally? Finally, do you believe the Tea Party is good or bad for our government? Why?

Readings: Skocpol and Williamson, Ch. 3–Epilogue

[New York Times: How Strong is the Tea Party? \(Room for Debate\)](#)

Additional readings on the Tea Party in the 2014 Elections, TBD (suggestions encouraged)

*****Final Paper Due as hard copy on 12.05 at the start of class**

12.08 Catch Up & Final Exam Review

12.12 FINAL EXAM, 11:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.