

Political Science 426

POLITICAL PARTIES AND INTEREST GROUPS

Autumn 2005

2:30-3:45 Monday and Wednesday

Professor Marie Hojnacki
Office hours: Tuesday 11:00 to 1:00
& Wednesday 4:00 to 5:00

Office: 233 Pond
Office phone: 865.1912
Email: marieh@psu.edu

Course Description

Political parties appear in one form or another in virtually every aspect of American politics. In fact, some scholars believe that democracy could not exist without parties. Like political parties, interest groups are a conspicuous presence on the political scene. Indeed, a variety of organizations of interests -- business organizations, professional associations, public interest law firms, unions, corporations, governments at the national, state, and local level, and citizen groups advocating on behalf of a multitude of issues and causes -- provide a mechanism for representation and contribute to the growth and diversity of the interest group universe. Although interest groups and parties remain critical to an understanding of political behavior and institutions in American politics, both types of political organizations are increasingly cited as being responsible for everything that is wrong with our political system and government. We need not look far to find examples of politicians, media commentators, and other political observers decrying the appeasement of "special interests" at the expense of ordinary people, the advantage that is enjoyed by those candidates and causes who benefit from the financial largess of political parties and groups, and the policy gridlock that occurs because of the cacophony of interest group voices impeding the legislative process.

This semester we will look beyond these simplistic assertions and study systematically the roles, the characteristics, and the activities of parties and groups in American politics. We will first explore how opinions and ideas about factions affected the actions taken by the designers of the U.S. Constitution. Next, we will consider the roles political parties and organized interests occupy in American political life, with specific attention given to how these organizations shape political and policy conflicts. After this introduction to parties and interest groups, we will examine closely organized interests. We will explore the difficulties of organizing individuals with shared interests and consider how these difficulties affect the size and character of the interest group system. Next we will study the ways in which groups try to advance their preferences for policy through their interactions with other organizations, their members, the media, and policymakers in all branches of government.

In the second portion of the course, we will shift our attention to how parties have evolved in the U.S. and why minor parties have had difficulty gaining enough strength to become viable competitors to the Republican and Democratic parties. We will next turn our attention to the sociodemographic groups that comprise the two major parties and consider how the composition of the parties has shifted (or not) over time, and whether and how the composition of the parties matters for how they contest elections and make appeals. We also will examine two of the most important activities of parties -- contesting elections and running electoral campaigns. Subsequently, we look closely at the financing of campaigns and the involvement in this activity of both parties and Political Action Committees. We will conclude the semester with an examination of party organization of government, with a specific focus on the causes and implications of divided as opposed to unified control of government.

The objective of this course is to think critically about the development and characteristics of political parties and groups in America in order to better understand why these organizations exist in their present form, how they affect democratic governance and decision making, and how they shape (and are shaped by) political outcomes and public policy. The course schedule provides a set of questions that will guide our discussions of both types of political organizations throughout the semester.

Books & Other Reading Materials

Most of the reading for this course will be drawn from three texts. The books are: (1) Lowery, David and Holly Brasher. 2004. *Organized Interests and American Government*. Boston: McGraw Hill; (2) Hershey, Marjorie Randon. 2005. *Party Politics in America*, 11th edition. New York: Longman Classics in Political Science; and (3) Fiorina, Morris P. with Samuel J. Abrams and Jeremy C. Pope. 2005. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. New York: Pearson Longman. These three books are available in the bookstore and through regular reserve.

I will assign additional reading either in class or through ANGEL (you are responsible for checking ANGEL regularly). I will either provide these additional readings for you or make them available through electronic reserve.

Parties and interest groups are frequent fodder for news stories. Although this is not a course on current events, I strongly recommend that you read a national newspaper such as *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*. Reading the news will provide you with specific information about parties and groups, and it will also bring into focus the concepts and ideas we talk about in class. In addition, newspaper reading will almost certainly be useful for completing the papers and projects in this class. Please feel free to introduce into our discussion information that you have come across when reading the paper.

There are also various sites available on the Internet that offer good coverage of parties, elections, and interest groups. Some examples include: www.vote-smart.org, www.democrats.org, www.rnc.org, www.rollcall.com, www.people-press.org, sopr.senate.gov (federal lobbyist registrations online), www.opensecrets.org, and lobby.la.psu.edu (a Penn State-based project run by Professors Baumgartner and Hojnacki about the activities of organized interests and other political actors on about 100 different public policy issues). In addition, most interest groups have their own websites. Both *Party Politics in America* and *Organized Interests and American Government* have extensive listing of relevant websites on pages 309-314, and 281-283, respectively.

Grading/Course Requirements

Organized interests & judicial nominations paper	30%
Issues & party support paper	30%
Final essay exam	20%
Participation/attendance/quizzes	20%

The papers are described following the course schedule.

The exam in this course will have an essay format. Exam questions may require that you define and explain relevant terms and concepts, that you consider the implications of ideas and concepts, and/or that

you explain how certain ideas and concepts apply (or not) in different circumstances. The examination will be given on the scheduled date during exam week. ***Make-up exams will not be given.***

Class participation and attendance are an important part of your grade. I expect students to read *carefully* the assigned materials on time, to attend class, and to contribute to class discussions. You'll learn a lot more if you come to class than if you don't, and you'll also get more from the class if you participate actively in the learning process (by engaging in class discussions, asking questions, and listening attentively to me and to others in the class). ***If you miss a substantial number of classes (more than seven) for any reason, you will not receive a passing grade for participation and attendance.*** This applies even if you have missed these days because of illness. If you become so sick that you miss more than seven classes (equivalent to more than 25 percent of the class meetings this semester), then your illness will have prevented you from fulfilling the participation/attendance requirement for the class. ***If you do not contribute to the class discussion, your grade for the participation portion of the course will be adversely affected.***

Quizzes also are an important part of your course grade. Over the course of the semester I will give you *at least* 6 quizzes on the assigned reading, 5 of which will count toward your quiz grade. Missed quizzes cannot be made up. I may give you questions to answer that I will expect to be completed for the next class – these may be graded as quizzes. If you do not have the assignment completed for the appropriate class, then you will receive a zero quiz grade for that exercise.

Note that it is not possible in this class to submit extra assignments in an effort to raise your grade, unless I have specified in advance to the entire class that such an opportunity exists.

The statement at the end of the syllabus provides information regarding academic misconduct and dishonesty.

Course Schedule

*I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus as the semester progresses. **You are responsible for keeping up with these changes, which will be announced either in class or via ANGEL. You are responsible for checking the class site on ANGEL regularly.***

Unless I indicate otherwise, the first reading listed will be due on the first day of each of the units mapped out below (e.g., Aldrich, Chapter 1 is due on 7 September). As we approach each unit, I will tell you precisely when the other readings will be due.

Why parties? Why interest groups? What functions do these organizations perform in our political system? What functions *should* parties & groups perform in a representative democracy? Are either or both of these intermediaries necessary? If so, for what are the necessary? (7-14 September)

Aldrich, John H. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Party Politics in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chapter 1. **Note:** Available through electronic reserve.

Hershey, Introduction to Part 1, Chapter 1 (pp. 5-11 & 22-24)

Lowery & Brasher, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-16)

Schattschneider, E.E. 1960 [1975]. *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, Chapter 3. **Note:** Available through electronic reserve.

INTEREST GROUPS

How do groups form? Why do some groups survive while others fail? How, if at all, do the forces shaping group formation and survival affect the composition of the interest group community? Whose interests and what types of interests are represented? (19-21 September)

Lowery & Brasher, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 (pp. 90-103)

What are interest groups trying to achieve through advocacy? (26 September-3 October)

Lowery & Brasher, Chapter 4 (pp. 108-118) and Chapter 5

Lowery & Brasher, Chapter 7

POLITICAL PARTIES

Why two parties? (5-10 October)

Hershey, Chapter 2

Lowi, Theodore J. 2003. "Toward A More Responsible Three-Party System: Deregulating American Democracy." In *The State of the Parties*, 4th edition, eds. John C. Green and Rick Farmer. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. **Note:** Available through electronic reserve.

Paper on Groups and Judicial Nominations, Due in Class: 10 October

What shifts have occurred in the parties and party coalitions over time? How strong are the links between individual citizens and political parties? How do citizens' ties to parties shape their political involvement, policy ideas, and political choices? (12-24 October)

Hershey, Chapters 7 (skim the information about the first through fifth party systems on pages 119-122), and 6 (skim this chapter to get an understanding of how partisan loyalties develop, change, and shape voting behavior)

Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope. 2005. *Culture War?*

How do parties shape election campaigns and elections? How, if at all, do parties affect candidate selection and the conduct of a candidate's campaign? Who else participates in the conduct of elections? (26 October-9 November)

Hershey, Chapters 8 (pages 142-156), 9, and 11

Schneider, William. 2002. "Let the Invisible Primary Begin." *National Journal*. 34(21 December): 3762. **Note:** Available through electronic reserve.

The American Experience: 1968 in Chicago (PBS documentary, in class)

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, Indecision 2004 (satirical look at the 2004 election, in class)

Paper on Issues and Party Support, Due in Class: 16 November

How do the latest campaign finance rules affect political parties and PACs? Are PAC contributions used to buy policy outcomes? Why else would PACs make campaign contributions? How are parties, PACs, and interest groups interpreting the new rules to benefit their organizations and interests? (14-21 November)

Hershey, Chapter 12

Lowery & Brasher, Chapter 4 (pp. 122-125; 129-141) and Chapter 8 (pp. 268-274)

Greenhouse, Linda. 2003. "Justices, in a 5 to 4 Decision, Back Campaign Finance Law That Curbs Contributions." *The New York Times*, 11 December. **Note:** Available through electronic reserve.

The New York Times. 2003. "Excerpts from Supreme Court Ruling on McCain-Feingold Campaign Finance Law." 11 December. **Note:** Available through electronic reserve.

Edsall, Thomas B. 2003. "Fundraising Specialists, Independent Groups Gain." *The Washington Post*, 11 December. **Note:** Available through electronic reserve.

Carney, Eliza Newlin, Peter H. Stone, and James A. Barnes. 2003. "New Rules of The Game." *National Journal*. 36(19 December). **Note:** Available through electronic reserve.

What are the implications of changes in party control of government? How much do parties

structure and control government in the U.S.? (28 November-5 December)

Burden, Barry C. and David C. Kimball. 2002. *Why Americans Split Their Tickets: Campaigns, Competition, and Divided Government*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Chapter 2. **Note:** Available through electronic reserve.

Binder, Sarah. 2001. "Can the Parties Govern?" In *American Political Parties: Decline or Resurgence*, eds. Jeffrey E. Cohen, Richard Fleisher, and Paul Kantor. Washington, DC: CQ Press. **Note:** Available through electronic reserve.

Hershey, Chapters 13 and 15 (pages 281-291; 294-296)

First Paper Assignment: Organized Interests & Judicial Nominations

One of the themes that has been important for our discussion of interest groups is that the strategies groups pursue as part of a particular advocacy effort vary depending on their *goals*, their *characteristics*, and the nature of the *context* in which they are active. For this project you will analyze and compare the advocacy strategies of two interest groups that have been active on a recent judicial nomination, focusing on how groups' goals, the characteristics of groups, and the context of the nomination shape their strategies.

Your first task will be to select two interest groups that have been active on a recent judicial nomination, one in support of the nominee and one opposed to the nominee. Once you have selected your groups, you should locate their websites to determine some information about the groups (e.g., what interests they pursue, who comprises their membership). In addition, you will also need to use each group's website as well as other sources to learn whatever you can about their efforts on the nomination you are studying. For example, what kinds of activities is each group engaged in? Are the groups working in coalition with other groups? Why are these groups interested in the nomination and what are they hoping to accomplish?

The paper you prepare should present the findings of your analysis. In particular, based upon the information you have gathered and analyzed, what strategies and tactics are being used by these groups? How, if at all, do the strategies of these groups differ? What appears to explain any differences or similarities you observe? Do the groups have different objectives for getting involved in the nomination process? Do the groups differ in terms of their important characteristics? Is the context in which each operates – for instance, their set of allies or opponents – similar or different? Your analysis should conclude with a brief assessment of how and why these groups were or were not successful in achieving their goals.

In order to complete this exercise effectively, you need to draw upon both the readings for this class and other academic journal articles, books, websites of groups, and news stories about judicial nominations and organizational activity on the nominations. Any arguments you make in your paper must be supported by evidence you gather from these and other sources. *It is not appropriate for this assignment to present only your thoughts on this topic.* Rather, I am asking you to do research and present an argument rooted in evidence to support your claims.

Be sure to include proper citations for all sources used. If you are uncertain about the proper way to give attribution to your sources, please ask. The paper should not exceed six double-spaced pages in length (please no margins less than one inch and no font smaller than 11 point). **Papers are due in class on 10 October.** If you turn in the paper after the due date, your grade will be reduced by five points for each day the paper is late.

Second Paper Assignment: Analyzing Issues and Party Support in the 2006 Midterm Elections to the U.S. Senate

We have read and discussed how certain issues (and the parties' stands on those issues) have the potential to alter the support a party receives from the groups that traditionally comprise their coalitions. For example, there is evidence that the composition of the two major parties that existed from the time of the New Deal was altered in the 1950s and 1960s by issues related to race and civil rights. Specifically, white southerners, who were once a core element of the Democratic coalition, left the Party in response to its support for civil rights for African-Americans, realigning the groups that defined each major party coalition. More recently, some have argued that the parties' stands on cultural issues have benefited the Republican Party by broadening its base of support. In addition to these more enduring effects on the party coalitions, particular public policy issues also are thought to have a more immediate impact on particular electoral contests. For instance, just as economic issues were seen as essential to Bill Clinton's victory over George H. W. Bush in 1992, so too were issues of national security important to George W. Bush's victory over John Kerry in 2004. Not surprisingly then, although the 2006 midterm elections are still more than a year away, political observers have already begun to predict how issues such as the war in Iraq, the troop presence in Afghanistan, social security reform, tax cuts, and policies relating to stem cell research will help or hurt Democratic and Republican office seekers.

Your task in this paper is to analyze how one current policy issue is likely to affect a particular Senate race in 2006. As part of your investigation, you must provide evidence for and an argument about why you expect the issue to be relevant to the particular race you are studying (e.g., how and why do you expect this national issue to become meaningful in a particular state-level contest; why do you anticipate that this issue will play a decisive role in voters' choices in this contest). In addition, you need to provide evidence for and an argument about how this issue will have an impact on the partisan outcome of the contest (e.g., will it produce a shift in or reinforce the groups that traditionally comprise the bases of the Democratic and Republican Parties, will it raise an issue on which one party has an existing advantage, what is the nature of a partisan issue advantage). Be as precise as you can be about the rationale underlying your expectations, and about the voter groups who are likely (or not) to be responsive to party positions on the issues.

In order to complete this exercise effectively, you need to draw upon both the readings for this class and other academic journal articles, books, and news stories about how issues may affect partisan support, political campaigns, and/or the sociodemographic groups that tend to support the two major parties. Any arguments you make in your paper must be supported by evidence you gather from these and other sources. *It is not appropriate for this assignment to present only your thoughts on this topic.* Rather, I am asking you to do research and present an argument rooted in evidence to support your claims.

Be sure to include proper citations for all sources used. If you are uncertain about the proper way to give attribution to your sources, please ask. The paper should not exceed five double-spaced pages in length (please no margins less than one inch and no font smaller than 11 point). **Papers are due in class on 16 November.** If you turn in the paper after the due date, your grade will be reduced by five points for each day the paper is late.

Academic Integrity and Academic Dishonesty¹

Along with the Department of Political Science, the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, I take violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. For an exam or quiz, violations of academic integrity consist of any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not.

Other violations include, but are not limited to, any attempt to gain an unfair advantage in regard to an assignment, exam, or quiz, such as tampering with a grade or claiming another's work to be one's own. Violations shall also consist of obtaining or attempting to obtain, previous to any exam or quiz, copies of the exam/quiz or the questions to appear thereon, or to obtain any illegal knowledge of these questions. Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity.

In cases of a violation of academic integrity it is my policy to impose appropriate penalties that are consistent with College and University guidelines. The College of Liberal Arts academic integrity website <http://www.la.psu.edu/undergrad/integrity/integrity.htm> provides additional information about the procedures that are followed in cases of academic dishonesty.

Disabilities

The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell me as soon as possible. Reasonable accommodations will be made for all students with disabilities, but it is your responsibility to inform me early in the semester so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged.

Department of Political Science web site

You will find a wealth of information on the Political Science Department web site including course schedules, faculty office hours, faculty home pages describing their areas of teaching and research activities, answers to questions about advising, internship opportunities, announcements, and much, much, more. Check back often: we will continuously update our information about internships and career opportunities: <http://polisci.la.psu.edu/>

¹Much of this text has been directly obtained from the sections of the Princeton University website <http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/rrr/05/01.htm> concerning academic integrity (Rights, Rules, Responsibilities introductory text as well as pages 49-62) as well as from the undergraduate portion of the website of the Department of Economics at The Pennsylvania State University.