Parties, Campaigns and Elections

http://www.ac.wwu.edu/~donovan/ps450.html

Political Science 450  Todd Donovan
Parties, Campaigns and Elections  AH 418/ x3018
MWF  10:00-11:20
Office hrs: T & Th 11 – 12 & by arrangement

**Course themes:** Political systems are often characterized by highly stable, institutionalized competition between private organizations known as political parties. Campaigns and elections typically take place within a framework of this long-term stability. To understand electoral competition and electoral change, we must examine the long-term, institutional and structural aspects of the party system. Thus, we focus here on party systems, partisan coalitions, and attachments that voters (or don't have) to parties. We also examine why nations have different types of party systems, and how American parties select their nominees for the ballot. This class focuses mostly (but not exclusively) on American elections.

In addition, we examine some important and some odd questions about politics in America. Do people in Iowa get to pick our presidents? Is there a voter turnout problem? Do negative ads have corrosive effects on politics? Are voters really polarized, or does Joe Lieberman represent a silent majority? Is something wrong with Kansas, or with Connecticut? Do Republicans screw the poor, or do both parties? Does bowling make people trust government?

We also examine the prospects for longer-term changes in the present political order. We will spend some time applying the course material to the 2008 presidential contest and the 2010 congressional elections. We will also study proposals for new electoral rules and political reforms for the U.S.

**Course tasks:** This course is structured in a lecture/discussion format. Some meetings will be set aside as discussions, with topics (and relevant readings) announced in advance. Students will be graded based upon a research paper and comprehension of reading and lecture materials. Students are expected to have the assigned readings completed prior to class. Examinations will be written in essay and/or short answer formats. The paper assignment will be discussed in class.

**Grading:**
- mid-term examination 30%
- final examination 30%
- paper 30%
- participation 10%
Course Texts: You will need the following texts:


A number of required readings are on reserve in Wilson Library, and others are available on-line (via the WWU library) at JSTOR.

Lecture Topics/Course Outline Dates Subject to Change

I. Nominations:

A. Overview of the 2008 Nomination Contests Jan 6-8
   Read: Medvic, Chapter 5, "The Nomination Process" p. 137-145
   Read: Medvic, Chapter 10, "The Uniqueness of Presidential Elections" p. 280 - 292

B. Why Iowa and New Hampshire Matter Jan 8

C. Reforming the Presidential Nomination Process. Jan 11

D. Did Rush Limbaugh Elect Barack Obama? Jan 11

E. Washington’s Primary Election Saga Jan 11
   Read: Judge Burgess’ decision, on WA primary (USDC of Western Washington.)
II. Political Parties

A. Party Systems in the US and Europe  
   Jan 13
   Read: Dalton, “Elections and Political Parties” (Chapter 7).

B. Party Identification: Have you no free will?  
   Jan 13
   Read: Dalton: "The Social Basis of Party Support" (Chapter 8)
   Read: Medvic, “Voters” p. 225-240

No class Jan 15, Jan 18 (MLK Day)

C. Why only Two Major Parties in the US?  
   Jan 20
   Review: Dalton, Elections and Political Parties (Chapter 7)
   Read: Medvic, “Political Parties” p. 120 - 137
   Read: D. Amy, “Types of Voting Systems” On-line at:
   http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/polit/damy/BeginnningReading/types.htm

D. Minor Parties  
   Jan 22
   Recommended: Read: “Far Right Politics in Europe” On-line at:
   http://www.guardian.co.uk/gall/0,8542,711990,00.html

III. Political Participation

A. Who Votes, and Why  
   Jan. 25
   Read: Medvic, “Voter Turnout ” p, 217 - 229; 241-244
   Read: Dalton, “How we Participate” (Chapter 3).

B. Social Groups, Active Citizens and Trust  
   Jan 27
   Read: Putnam, “Bowling Alone” in Journal of Democracy. At:
   http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/DETOC/assoc/bowling.html
   Recommended: Donovan et al. 2008. Trust in Government, The United States in Comparative Perspective (email)

III. Political Participation (continued)
C. Participation Bias in American Politics  
   Read: Dalton, "Who Participates?" Chapter 4  
   Read: Bartels “Class Politics and Partisan Change” and Partisan Biases in Economic Accountability”  
   Recommended: K. Schlozman, et al “The Big Tilt” in The American Prospect at:  
   http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=the_big_tilt On JSTOR

IV. Campaigns

A. Campaign Finance Rules and Reforms  
   Read: Medvic, “Rules and Regulations” p. 62 - 85  
   Read: Donovan and Bowler. 2004. "Campaign Finance" Chapter 8 from Reforming the Republic. (email)  

B. What Effects of Negative Campaigns?  
   Read: Excerpt from Ansolabehere and Iynegar, Going Negative  
   http://pcl.stanford.edu/common/docs/research/iyengar/1996/goingneg.html

C. Polarized America? Or do we need more Liebermans?  

MIDTERM on or ABOUT FEB 5th

V. Voting

A. Theories of Voter Choice  
   Read: Dalton, "Attitudes and Electoral Behavior” (Chapter 10).  
   Review: Medvic, “Voters” p. 230-244

B. Partisans vs. Independents  
   Read: Dalton “Partisanship and Electoral Behavior” (Chapter 9).  
   Recommended: Bowler et al, Independent's Day (email)

No Class Feb 12, Feb 15 (President’s Day)
VI. Congressional Elections

A. Patterns in Midterm Elections
   Read: Medvic, “Candidates and Campaigns” p. 92 - 116
   Read: Donovan and Bowler, “Pathologies of Congressional Elections” (Chpt. 3) (email)

B. Incumbent Advantages and Representation
   Read: Medvic, “Interest Groups” p. 155-184
   Read: Donovan and Bowler, “E lecting the Congress” (Chapter 4) (email)

VII. Presidential Elections

A. The Electoral College
   Read: TBA
   Read: Donovan and Bowler “E lecting the President” (Chapter 5).
   Recommended: National Popular Vote web site

B. Forecasting Presidential Elections
   Read: Summary of PS Symposium, TBA

C. The 2008 Contest in Perspective: Epic Change?
   Read: Medvic, “Elections” p. 284 - 305
   Recommended: Obama and the White Vote

VIII. Public Opinion

A. Value Change
   Read: Dalton "Protest Politics" (Chapter 4)
   Read: Dalton, "Values in Change" (Chapter 5)

B. Trust
   Read: Dalton, Citizens and the Democratic Process (Chapter 12)

C. Media: information, bias, and campaigns
   Read: Medvic, “Media” p. 190-230

IX. Redistricting
   Read: TBA

Mar 3

X. Elections and Representation

A. Minority Representation and Election Systems
   Read: TBA (On-line)

B. Representation of women
   Mar 5
XI. Unequal Democracy
   Read: Bartels, all

   Review for Final
   Mar. 10

   Paper Due: To be announced in class

   Final Exam: As scheduled by the university