Parties, Campaigns and Elections, 2012

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

Political Science 450
Parties, Campaigns and Elections
T, Th 10-11:50
Office hrs: W 10 - 12 & by appointment

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Course themes: Political systems are often characterized by highly stable, institutionalized competition between 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 have (or don't have) to parties. We also examine why nations have different types of party systems. This class focuses mostly (but not exclusively) on American elections.

In addition, we examine some important questions about parties, campaigns and elections in America. We will spend some time examining how American parties have changed in recent decades, and how this may affect income inequality. Why do people in Iowa have such a major role in picking our presidents? Is there a voter turnout problem? Do negative ads have corrosive effects on politics? Are voters really polarized, or is there really a moderate center to the electorate? Does bowling and joining social groups make people more active and trusting citizens?

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 2012 presidential contests and recent 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 available on-line (via the WWU library) at JSTOR, and some will also be emailed to you as pdf documents.

### Lecture Topics/Course Outline

#### Dates Subject to Change

**I. Elections**

A. Overview of the 2010 GOP nomination contest
   **Sept 27**
   Themes/questions: What are political parties? Who participates in selecting their candidates?

B. Nominations: Why Iowa and New Hampshire Matter
   **Sept 27**
   Themes/questions: What makes a frontrunner? Where do media expectations about candidates come from? Why was there so much volatility in early 2012 GOP nomination polls?

C. Reforming the Presidential Nomination Process.
   **Oct 2**
   Themes/questions: How do nomination rules affect who wins? What types of candidates are advantaged by different rules? Would we have different presidential candidates if we used different nomination rules?

D. Redistricting
   **Oct 4**
   Exercise: Compare Congressional redistricting in Washington State and California.

E. Women As Candidates and Electoral Politics
   **Oct 9**
   Read: To be announced.
II. Political Parties

A. Party Systems  
**Read:** Dalton Chapter 7: "Elections and Political Parties"  
**Themes/questions:** How does the American party system fit into the Lipset and Rokkan description of party systems? How does the American party system compare to other nations?

B. Partisanship  
**Read:** Dalton Chapter 8, "The Social Basis of Party Support"  
**Themes/questions:** What evidence does Dalton use to show that class voting is decreasing? If not class, what other cleavages structure differences between contemporary parties?

C. Political Parties and Inequality  
**Read:** Hacker and Pierson, 2010. Chapter 7: "A Tale of Two Parties."  
**Themes/questions:** What is the class basis of US parties? Can we explain why Republicans fare well in poor states (Kansas, Mississippi), while Democrats do well in rich states (Connecticut) Do less affluent voters support policies that promote inequality? Why might voters not connect inequality to public policy?

D. Why Only Two Major Parties in the US?  
**Themes/questions:** What is gained or lost by having just two major political parties? What sort of voters would possibly support a third party? What sort of party (or candidates) might attract support in a presidential election?
III. Political Participation

A. Who Votes, and Why
   Read: Dalton Chapter 3, "How We Participate."
   Read: Dalton, Chapter 4, "Who Participates?"

B. Participation Bias in American Politics
   Themes/questions: What are the most consequential forms of political participation? What differences are there in how the wealthy and the less wealthy participate in politics? How have differences in participation (campaign contributions) changed since the Schlozman article?

No Class Oct. 25th

C. Social Groups, Active Citizens and Trust
   Themes/questions: What is social capital, and why does it matter? What are some explanations for the demise of social capital in America? Can social media build social capital?

D. Minority Representation and Elections
   Midterm on about Nov. 6th
   November 8th TBA

IV. Campaigns

A. Campaign Finance Rules
   Themes/questions: Does money win votes? What are some major attempts at regulating campaign finance in the US.? What are the effects of such regulations? How does Citizens United change campaigns?

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


**Themes/questions:** What is a negative ad? How might such ads affect how voters respond to campaigns?

### V. Voting

A. Theories of Voter Choice  
   **Read:** Dalton Chapter 9, "Partisanship and Voting"  
   **Themes/questions:** What is the social-psychological model of voting? Where do group partisan identified come from? What are the causes and consequences of partisan dealignment?

B. Partisans vs. Independents  
   **Recommended:** Bowler et al, Independent's Day (email)

### VI. Congressional Elections

A. Patterns in Midterm Elections  
   **Question:** Why are there regular patterns where the president's party loses seats in midterm elections?

B. Voter Fraud or Voter Suppression  
   **Question:** what evidence is there of voter fraud? Which voters are affected by voter ID law?

### VII. Presidential Elections

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

B. The 2012 Contest in Perspective: Epic Change?  
   **Read:** TBA  
   **Recommended:**
VIII. Winner-Take-All Politics
Read: All chapters
Read: TBA

Paper Due: To be announced in class
Final Exam: As scheduled by the university