Parties, Campaigns and Elections, 2018

http://faculty.wwu.edu/donovat/PS450.html

Political Science 450
Parties, Campaigns and Elections
MWF 1:20, FI 238
Office hrs: M 2:30-3:30; Th 11:30-1:30 & by appointment

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Course themes: A conventional understanding of elections is that voters decide things, those decisions affect who governs, and thus alter policy. Changes wrought by elections are expected to reflect some sort sensible outcome of a deliberative process. But this process is complex and messy: parties are expected to act to narrow the range of choices that voters might distinguish between. Voters, in response to campaigns, are expected to deliberate over those choices parties provide. Elections are expected to produce results that reflect all this. But parties might be in flux, voters might not deliberate, and rules governing elections might skew outcomes.

This complexity about parties, campaigns, and elections is what we examine in this course. 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. Other questions include: 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 2016 presidential contests and the 2018 congressional elections. We will also give particular emphasis to 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 (or parts of 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 and is posted online.

Learning Objectives include, but are not limited to: 1) Assessing how parties structure electoral democracy; 2) Identifying unique aspects of the American party system, and comparing those to other nations; 3) Understanding how election rules affect outcomes; 4) Analyzing how/when women and minorities are disadvantaged as candidates in US elections; and 5) Critically applying academic literature to answer questions about electoral democracy.
**Grading:**

mid-term examination 30%
final examination 30%
paper 25%
participation 15%

**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 posted online as pdfs.

**Lecture Topics/Course Outline**

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<th>Dates Subject to Change</th>
<th>Sep 26. Introduction</th>
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<td><strong>Questions:</strong> Why do so many Americans think elections are not fair? Are they wrong? What partisan differences do we see in these perceptions?</td>
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|                         | **Questions:** What works, and doesn’t work, about campaigns, parties, and elections in America? If anything needs fixing, what is it? What is the Achen / Bartels ‘realist’ perspective on elections? |


**Questions:** What are political parties? Who participates in selecting their candidates? Who should participate? Which candidates (Clinton or Sanders, Trump or Bush et al) closest to their party in 2016? How did the Republican party select Trump as its nominee?


**Questions:** How did Democratic and Republican party nomination rules differ in 2016? Would Sanders won or Trump lost under different nomination rules? How does Nate Silver’s assessment compare to Byers / Carson’s perspective?

Oct 5 TBA

Oct. 8 Out-of-Class-Project: Dave's Redistricting: Make your own district map (details provided in class Oct 3)

- **Read:** Tolbert, Caroline and Gracey, Kellen. 2018. “Changing How America Votes for President.” Chapter 6 in Donovan.

**Questions:** What are the merits of a “national primary?” What are the dangers of such a plan? In a national primary, or in a “National Popular Vote” general election, how should votes be cast and counted? What role would political party organizations, and ‘party elites’ play in such a primary?


**Questions:** What are some of the benefits of Ranked Choice Voting? What are some potential problems with it? What difference would it make if elections were conducted with Ranked Choice Voting?
Oct 15. Women As Candidates


**Questions:** Why are fewer women elected than men? Why do some nations have more women in office than others (or more in office than in the US)? Why do Republicans elect so few women?

Oct 17. Party Systems

**Read:** Dalton Chapter 7: "Elections and Political Parties"


**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?

Oct 19. Partisanship

**Read:** Dalton Chapter 8, "The Social Basis of Party Support"

**Questions:** What evidence does Dalton use to show that class voting is decreasing? If not class, what other cleavages structure differences between contemporary parties?

Oct 22. Political Parties and Inequality


**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?
Oct 24. Why Only Two Major Parties in the US?


**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? What reforms do ‘third parties’ seek? Can a third party candidate win in the US?

Oct. 26. Immigrants and Voting


**Questions:** What is the history of immigrants voting in the US? What is Hayduk’s case for immigrant voting? Why (and when) was there a decline in immigrant voting? What would need to change for immigrants to vote? What are some arguments against immigrants voting?

Oct 29. Midterm exam

Oct 31 Who Votes, and Why

**Read:** Dalton Chapter 3, "How We Participate,” and Dalton, Chapter 4, "Who Participates?"

**Questions:** Why is midterm congressional turnout so much lower than in presidential election years? What difference does it make?

Nov 2. Participation Bias in American Politics

**Read:** Singh, Shane. 2018. “Compulsory Voting in the United States.” Chapter 2 in Donovan.


**Questions:** What are the most consequential forms of political participation? What differences are there in how the wealthy and the less wealth participate in politics? Would compulsory voting reduce bias in political participation?
Nov 5. Social Groups, Active Citizens and Trust

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?

Nov 7. Redistricting

Questions: What are “core concepts of fairness” in redistricting? What is the efficiency gap? What was the *Gill v. Whitford* case?

Nov 9. TBA

Nov 12. Elections and Minority Representation

Questions: Which electoral rules facilitate minority representation? Which hinder it? Is racism still a factor that affects voting in American elections? If so, what can be done?

Congressional Elections, Reforms, and the 2018 Midterm

Question: Why are there regular patterns where the president's party loses seats in midterm elections? Would the Ritchie / Penrose reforms make congressional elections more competitive?
Nov 14. Negative Campaigns

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


Questions: What is a negative ad? How might such ads affect how voters respond to campaigns?

Nov 16. Polarization


Questions: Why are American parties polarized? How have things changed from 40 years ago? Are voters as polarized as their representatives? What are the sources of polarization? What about independents and moderates?

Nov 19. Theories of Voter Choice

Read: Dalton Chapter 9, "Partisanship and Voting" and Dalton Chpt 10

Questions: What is the social-psychological model of voting? Where does partisan identification come from? What are the causes and consequences of partisan dealignment?

Nov 21-23. Thanksgiving Break

Hint: A good time to read *Democracy for Realists*.

Nov 26. Partisans vs. Independents

Read: Dalton, Chapter 5 "Values in Change."

Questions: Just how independent are independent voters? Do independents reflect the decline of political parties?
Nov 28. Vote fraud / suppression


Questions: What evidence is there of voter fraud? Which voters are affected by voter ID law? What are the partisan differences in perceptions of fraud and need for voter ID? How do we explain these differences? Why are voter purges on the rise, and what are the effects of such purges?

Nov 30. Campaign Finance Rules


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? Other than repealing Citizens United, what are other avenues for campaign finance reform?

Paper Due: Nov 30th, in class

Dec. 3-5. Democracy for Realists
Read: All chapters

Questions: Will be handed out a week prior to discussion

Dec. 7. TBA

Final Exam: As scheduled by the university, (or take home)