Political Science 460
Political Parties and Elections

Texas A&M University-Texarkana
Fall 2014
Course Syllabus

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Office: 225 University Center
Office Hours: Sun & Mon, 3:00–5:00PM

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description
This course provides a comprehensive review of American political parties and elections. In the United States, political parties and elections are important and interrelated political institutions. Yet, the Constitution does not mention parties nor detail how states should administer elections. How did these institutions as we know them today come to be and why are they so stable? We begin with a focus on political parties, considering their historical development, possible functions, and the dominance of two parties. We then look at parties today, examining their organization, impact on voter identification and turnout, and role in governing. Next, we investigate the presidential election process, reviewing its development, the different phases of the process, the Electoral College, and the influence of money, the media, and third parties. Lastly, the scope of the course will consider the issue of reform. As we explore these areas, we will address political principles such as order and participation.

TIP: Understanding the class format and learning opportunities is essential for your success in the course. Read and rely on this syllabus throughout the term—it provides detailed information followed by the professor and students.

Course Format
This is a web course; there are no face-to-face meetings. Through Blackboard, students post topic responses and take examinations.

Required Textbooks

Recommended
Student Learning Outcomes

- Understand that parties have functions, including aggregation of different interests, provision of candidate resources, and defense of ideas and policies.
- Comprehend that elections have functions, such as citizen control of government.
- Learn about the historical development of political parties and election systems.
- Recognize that the Constitution does not establish political parties.
- Know that most states have adopted the “winner-take-all” method.
- Understand the reasons for the development of two major political parties.
- Learn the steps of the presidential election: primaries and caucuses, conventions, fall campaign, November election, December Electoral College meetings, and January congressional counting of electoral votes.
- Critically examine how campaign fundraising and the media influence elections.
- Understand the ways in which third parties contribute to American politics.
- Learn about attempts and difficulties relating to party and election reform.
- Understand that there are different ways to get involved in parties and elections.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES & MEANS OF ASSESSMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Opportunities at a Glance</th>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
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<tr>
<td>Unit Responses</td>
<td>A = 450–500 Points (90–100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>B = 400–449 Points (80–89%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Essay</td>
<td>C = 350–399 Points (70–79%)</td>
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<td>D = 300–349 Points (60–69%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total: 500 Points</td>
<td>F = 0–299 Points (0–59%)</td>
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Curves

Grades are curved upwards if no one in the class earns 100%. This is for each exam, the research essay, and the unit response total. Additionally, if no one earns all available points at the end of the term, then there is an overall course curve. Your professor will email the class about any curve. Often, someone earns 100% and there is no curve.

Unit Responses (10 at 10 Points Each) 100 Points

- Post a 1–3 paragraph response to each unit question.
- Your grade for this portion of the course will be based on your 10 highest-graded unit responses that you have made on time during the term. Grades for your responses will appear under “My Grades” by the end of the term.
- You may work at your own pace, posting a response to an available question before the end of the week that covers the corresponding unit. New unit questions will open after each exam.
- Your response for each question is due by the end of the week that covers the corresponding unit, no later than 5:00PM Sunday, according to the Course Schedule.
- Missed, attached, emailed, or incorrectly posted responses are not eligible for points. One purpose of posting your unit responses is to provide everyone in the class a
chance to read and reflect upon your thoughts on the course material. You may respond to other students’ postings, and even post follow-up comments to your own posting, but only your initial response to the unit question is graded.

- **Grading Criteria:**
  1. **Your responses need to be informed.** Answer unit questions with course content, especially from the readings. Convey comprehension and analysis of information from the textbook and other class material. Use logical reasoning. Avoid asserting opinions that are not supported by course material.
  2. **Your responses need to be well-written.** Use correct spelling, grammar, sentence structure, capitalization, and punctuation. Present new information based on the course material; avoid writing responses that are similar to another student’s posting. Use your own words; do not plagiarize. Clearly and correctly cite the source of any borrowed information. See the University’s “Academic Integrity” statement below.
  3. **Your responses need to be professional.** Avoid personal attacks, offensive remarks, stereotypes, grandstanding, ideological or partisan rhetoric, and hateful or prejudicial statements. See “Course Ethics” below.

**TIP:** Complete your learning opportunities as early as possible to avoid missing deadlines. This course uses the University’s clock, which may differ from your clock.

**Exams** (3 at 100 Points Each) **300 Points**
- There are four timed exams for the course that you will take on Blackboard.
- Your three highest-scoring exams will count toward your course grade.
- Each exam is located within its respective folder that will appear on our homepage during the exam availability period, as per the Course Schedule.
- Each exam has 50 multiple-choice and true-or-false questions on the material and is worth 100 points.
- Each exam is available for one week before it is due, from 5:00PM Sunday to 5:00PM on the following Sunday (availability dates are posted on the Course Schedule). You may take an exam anytime during its week-long availability period.
- Each exam is due before the end of its availability time (5:00PM Sunday).
- Each exam covers material from specific units as noted on the Course Schedule.
- You will need to thoroughly and effectively study the course material, such as notes, slides, and textbook readings to do well on the exams.
- For information about missed exams and computer, connection, power, or user problems, see “Missed Learning Opportunities, Enrollments, & Incompletes” below.

**Research Essay 100 Points**
- This course provides students the opportunity to gain greater insights into the subject matter with a research essay.
- Your final essay is due to Turnitin.com before 5:00PM, November 23.
- Click on the “Essay” link on our homepage for information about this learning opportunity, including grading criteria and our Turnitin class ID and password.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dates (Sun–Sun)</th>
<th>Topics &amp; Activities</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/24−8/31</td>
<td>Course Orientation</td>
<td>Syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Due by 5:00PM 8/31: Welcome Response</td>
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<td>Setup <a href="http://www.turnitin.com">www.turnitin.com</a> Account Essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/31−9/7</td>
<td>Unit 1: Introduction</td>
<td>White &amp; Shea, Ch. 1</td>
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<td>9/7−9/14</td>
<td>Unit 2: History of Parties &amp; the Electoral System, Part 1</td>
<td>White &amp; Shea, Ch. 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/14−9/21</td>
<td>Unit 2: History of Parties &amp; the Electoral System, Part 2</td>
<td>White &amp; Shea, Ch. 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/21−9/28</td>
<td>Due by 5:00PM 9/28: Exam 1 (Units 1−2) Essay Topic</td>
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<td>9/28−10/5</td>
<td>Unit 3: Party Organization</td>
<td>White &amp; Shea, Ch. 4 &amp; 7</td>
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<td>10/5−10/12</td>
<td>Unit 4: Parties in the Electorate</td>
<td>Wayne, Ch. 3; White &amp; Shea, Ch. 6</td>
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<td>10/12−10/19</td>
<td>Unit 5: Parties in Government</td>
<td>White &amp; Shea, Ch. 9</td>
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<td>10/19−10/26</td>
<td>Due by 5:00PM 10/26: Exam 2 (Units 3−5)</td>
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<td>10/26−11/2</td>
<td>Unit 6: Elections Overview &amp; History</td>
<td>Wayne Ch. 1</td>
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<td>Unit 7: Money</td>
<td>Wayne Ch. 2</td>
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<td>11/2−11/9</td>
<td>Unit 8: The Nomination System</td>
<td>Wayne Ch. 4</td>
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<td>Unit 9: Campaigning</td>
<td>Wayne Ch. 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/9−11/16</td>
<td>Due by 5:00PM 11/16: Exam 3 (Units 6−9)</td>
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<td>11/16−11/23</td>
<td>Unit 10: The Media</td>
<td>Wayne Ch. 8</td>
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<td>Unit 11: Understanding Elections</td>
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<td>Due by 5:00PM 11/23: Essay</td>
<td>Wayne Ch. 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/23−11/30</td>
<td>Unit 12: Third Parties</td>
<td>White &amp; Shea, Ch. 10</td>
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<td>Unit 13: Reforming the System</td>
<td>Wayne Ch. 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/30−12/7</td>
<td>Due by 5:00PM 12/7: Exam 4 (Units 12−13)</td>
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PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS & ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Course Ethics
- Be courteous and respectful to students, faculty, and staff. This etiquette is especially important in web courses since we cannot hear the tone of voice or see the facial expression of another person. Do not make personal attacks, offensive remarks, or emotional appeals. Keep in mind that you are a known individual in a learning environment, not an anonymous person on some blog.
- Back up your comments with substance related to the course material. Do not use the course as a platform for grandstanding, engaging in ideological or partisan rhetoric, or conveying hateful or prejudicial statements.
- Do not plagiarize (see “Academic Integrity” below). You can avoid presenting the words and ideas of others as your own by properly citing borrowed material, namely by using quotation marks and citing the source (author, work, page number).

Suggestions for Studying Course Units
The Course Schedule is organized on a unit-by-unit basis with “units” covering different topics and chapters. Each unit of study has required readings from the textbook, as identified on the Course Schedule. Within each unit folder on the home page, you will find “unit note.” These are equivalent to classroom lecture notes and emphasize valuable information. The books also provide valuable information, as well as detailed content. For each unit, you may find it useful to follow these steps:

1. Actively read and review the assigned readings and unit notes.
2. Reflect on the following questions throughout the term:
   - Why did parties, the two-party system, and the winner-take-all system develop?
   - Why are these features of U.S. politics so stable and enduring?
   - What functions do parties and elections provide?
   - How do these structures facilitate citizen participation and representation?
   - How do these structures facilitate legitimacy, order, and stability?
   - In what ways could parties and elections be improved?
3. Draft, proof, save, and then post your response to each unit question as early as possible, according to early deadlines that you have set for yourself, well before the due dates listed on the course schedule.

**Missed Learning Opportunities, Enrollments, & Incompletes**

- A missed, late, or incorrectly submitted learning opportunity is not eligible for credit.
- There is no early availability, due-date extension, or substitute, makeup, or extra-credit work for any learning opportunity.
- Making up a missed, late, or incorrectly submitted learning opportunity for credit requires a compelling, debilitating, and unavoidable conflict, legal documentation, and notification of the professor before the respective due date of the missed coursework. The conflict must occur during the entire availability time of the missed learning opportunity.
- Computer, internet connection, power, or user problems do not excuse a missed, late, or incorrectly submitted learning opportunity, including low-scored, unanswered, or unsaved exam questions or exams.
- In the rare event that a late or missed learning opportunity is accepted, it is not worth more than 80% of the original available points.
- This course follows A&M-Texarkana’s policies regarding enrollments and incompletes.

**University-Required Syllabus Statements**

*Disability Accommodations: Students with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations through the A&M-Texarkana Disability Services Office by calling 903-223-3062.*

*Academic Integrity: Academic honesty is expected of students enrolled in this course. Cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of research data, plagiarism, and undocumented use of materials from any source constitute academic dishonesty and may be grounds for a grade of ‘F’ in the course and/or disciplinary actions. For additional information, see the university catalog.*
A&M-Texarkana Email Address: Upon application to Texas A&M University-Texarkana an individual will be assigned an A&M-Texarkana email account. This email account will be used to deliver official university correspondence. Each individual is responsible for information sent and received via the university email account and is expected to check the official A&M-Texarkana email account on a frequent and consistent basis. Faculty and students are required to utilize the university email account when communicating about coursework.

Drop Policy: To drop this course after the census date (see semester calendar), a student must complete the Drop/Withdrawal Request Form, located on the University website (http://www.tamut.edu/Student-Support/Registrar/Dropping.html) or obtained in the Registrar’s Office. The student must submit the signed and completed form to the instructor of each course indicated on the form to be dropped for his/her signature. The signature is not an “approval” to drop, but rather confirmation that the student has discussed the drop/withdrawal with the faculty member. The form must be submitted to the Registrar’s office for processing in person, email Registrar@tamut.edu, mail (7101 University Ave., Texarkana, TX 75503) or fax (903-223-3140). Drop/withdraw forms missing any of the required information will not be accepted by the Registrar’s Office for processing. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that the form is completed properly before submission. If a student stops participating in class (attending and submitting assignments) but does not complete and submit the drop/withdrawal form, a final grade based on work completed as outlined in the syllabus will be assigned.

Student Technical Assistance: Solutions to common problems and FAQ’s for your web-enhanced and online courses are found at this link: http://www.tamut.edu/Administration/Information%20Technology/Blackboard.html
If you cannot find your resolution there, you can send in a support request detailing your specific problem here: http://www.tamu.edu/techde/support.htm
Blackboard Helpdesk contacts:
Office hours are: Monday - Friday, 8:00a to 5:00p
Julia Allen (main contact) 903-223-3154 julia.allen@tamut.edu
Nikki Thomson (alternate) 903-223-3083 nikki.thomson@tamut.edu
Jayson Ferguson (alternate) 903-223-3105 jayson.ferguson@tamut.edu

Technical Requirements: Minimum Windows PC Requirements: • Pentium IV 1.5GHz+ (preferred: Core Duo) • 1 GB RAM minimum (preferred: 2 GB) • 128MB Video Card minimum - Sound Card is required for some courses • 56K modem minimum (Cable or DSL required for some courses) • Windows 2000, XP, Vista or 7 • Web browser (Internet Explorer 7.0+; Firefox 3.0+) • Microsoft Word, minimum Office 97 Some courses will need plug-ins such as Flash player 10+, QuickTime player 7.0+, Adobe Reader 9.0+, Java Runtime Environment (Java 1.6.0_15), Windows Media Player 10+, RealPlayer, and Macromedia/Adobe Shockwave. Some online courses may also require a CD ROM (8x minimum, higher recommended) Blackboard has certified the following browsers for computers running Windows Operating Systems: • Internet Explorer 8 or 9 (IE is not supported on Windows XP) • Mozilla Firefox 3.6+ • Google Chrome Minimum Apple Macintosh Requirements: • Intel Core 2.0GHz+ • 1 GB RAM
(preferred: 2 GB) • 128MB Video Card minimum - Sound Card is required for some courses • 56K modem minimum (Cable or DSL required for some courses) • Web browser (Firefox 3.0+ ; Safari 3.0+) • Microsoft Word, minimum Office 97 Some courses will need plug-ins such as Flash player 10+, QuickTime player 7.0+, Adobe Reader 9.0+, Java Runtime Environment, RealPlayer, and Macromedia/Adobe Shockwave. Some online courses may also require a CD ROM (8x minimum, higher recommended) Blackboard has certified the following browsers for computers running Macintosh Operating Systems: • Mac OS 10.2 (Jaguar): (Safari 1 is compatible) • Mac OS 10.3 (Panther): Safari 1.2 (Firefox 1.5 is compatible) • Mac OS 10.4 (Tiger): Safari 2 and Firefox 1.5 • Mac OS 10.5 (Leopard): (Firefox 2.0 is compatible) I-OS and Android Devices: These devices are currently supported using the Blackboard Mobile App, available for free from your App Store or scan the code below: To access Texas A&M University - Texarkana, there is an individual license fee of $1.99 per year or $5.99 lifetime. This fee gives you access to the university from all your (same platform) devices; it is not necessary to pay the fee for each device you own.