

PSCI 3031: Political Parties & Interest Groups

Fall 2019 • Tu/Th 9:30 – 10:45 am • HLMS 267

Instructor: Nancy Billica

Office: Ketchum 214 • Office Hours: Tu 2-3 pm; Th 11-noon; and by appointment

E-mail: billica@colorado.edu • Phone: 303-735-4973

Course Description

Both acclaimed and reviled, groups are seen as vital to the functioning of democracy. In American politics, political parties and interest groups act as intermediaries between citizens and government. They can give voice to the concerns and ideas of large numbers of people who might otherwise remain unheard. Parties can simplify our choices in elections by providing us with a slate of candidates, and can bring together elected officials who have similar policy preferences and help them get those preferences passed into law. By supporting and endorsing candidates, organized interests can tell their sympathizers which candidates are most likely to do what the group wants, and groups can put pressure on office-holders to get certain proposals passed. Ultimately, it is citizens acting through groups that have the power to keep government accountable.

How well are groups living up to these vital political roles? What are these political intermediaries capable of doing in a democracy, what do they actually do in American politics, and what would a variety of reformers have them do differently? The goal of this course is to critically examine the theories and evidence regarding the role and effects of political parties and interest groups in the American political system – including the nature and impact of contemporary political polarization.

Course Requirements

Date Due	Assignments	Grading
	Class attendance & active participation	10%
Thu, Sept 12	Assignment 1, comparison & analysis, due by 9:30 am	7.5%
Thu, Sept 19	Assignment 2, individual polling and assessment, due by 9:30 am	7.5%
Thu, Sept 26	Assignment 3, literature summary, due by 9:30 am	7.5%
Thu, Oct 10	Take-home midterm exam #1, due by 11:00 am (no class this day)	15%
Thu, Oct 24	Assignment 4, literature summary, due by 9:30 am	7.5%
Thu, Oct 31	Assignment 5, literature summary, due by 9:30 am	7.5%
Thu, Nov 7	Take-home midterm exam #2, due by 11:00 am (no class this day)	15%
Thu, Nov 21	Assignment 6, researching political reform options, due by 9:30 am	7.5%
Sat, Dec 14	Take-home final exam, due by 10:00 pm	15%

Course Readings: Drawn from three books and other items as listed in the class schedule. Plan to regularly read the news as well for current developments in political parties and interest groups. The books:

- James A. Thurber & Antoine Yoshinaka, editors, *American Gridlock: the Source, Character, and Impact of Political Polarization*, 2015, Cambridge University Press)
- Marjorie R. Hershey, *Party Politics in America* (15th ed., 16th ed. or other recent edition, Pearson)
- Jeffrey M. Berry & Clyde Wilcox, *Interest Group Society* (5th ed. edition, Pearson Longman)

Class & University Policies & Expectations

- **Classroom etiquette:** The basic rule is one of respect. The goal is to create a community where all feel free to participate in classroom discussion and are open to the ideas and contributions of others. We should expect to disagree with each other on at least some issues of debate, but discussion and disagreement must be expressed in a manner that recognizes the dignity of all and is open to learning from other perspectives. Disrespectful language and/or behavior will not be tolerated.
- **Use of technology in the classroom:** Laptop computers and other electronic devices distract from the classroom learning environment and thus are not to be routinely used in class without the prior consent of the instructor.
- **Attendance & participation:** It is assumed that all students are enrolled with the goal of gaining maximum value from the course and will thus be in regular attendance and actively engaging with the material. Regular attendance means arriving on time, remaining for the entire class session, and avoiding unnecessary absences (more than 2 unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade). Active engagement means being attentive, asking and answering questions in the classroom and regularly participating in group discussions.
- **Assignments:** Students are responsible for ensuring that assignments are successfully submitted to Canvas on time and accessible for grading purposes (submitted in .doc, .docx or .pdf formats). If you're having trouble with Canvas, you may submit a back-up copy of assignments via email as well. Assignments are due on the due dates. Students with legitimate, documented reasons for missing an exam or assignment deadline should consult with the professor prior to the due date for alternative arrangements and exemption from late penalties. In the absence of a pre-approved exception or documented emergency, late penalties apply, with deductions, as follows: Same day, after class begins: -10%; next day: -20%; each day thereafter, an additional 10% deduction, with papers 4 or more days overdue given 50% credit.
- **Accommodation for Disabilities:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.
- **Classroom Behavior:** Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).
- **Honor Code:** All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic

integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

- **Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation:** The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, exploitation, harassment, dating or domestic violence, and stalking), discrimination, and harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

- **Religious Holidays:** Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please let me know as soon as possible of any schedule conflicts – before missing class or assignments. See [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

PSCI 3031, Political Parties & Interest Groups CLASS SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS

*** *subject to change* ***

Week 1, Aug 27 & 29: Introduction; what is the role of groups in American politics?

Reading:

- Thurber & Yoshinaka, Foreword & Introduction
- Berry & Wilcox, Chap 1

Week 2, Sept 3 & 5: Effects of groups in politics, theoretical & historic assumptions

Reading:

- James Madison (1787), Federalist 10, “The Utility of the Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection (continued),” available at <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm>
- George Washington’s Farewell Address (1796), on Canvas.
- Alexis de Tocqueville (1840), “Of the Use Which the Americans Make of Public Associations in Civil Life,” Chapter 5 in Volume 2, Part 2 of *Democracy in America*; on Canvas.
- Kathleen Bawn et.al, “A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics,” *Perspectives on Politics* Vol 10, No. 3 (September 2012); on Canvas.

Week 3, Sept 10 & 12: US Political Party System: Why only two options?

Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps 1 & 2
- Take a look at the Republican National Committee (<https://www.gop.com/>) and the Democratic National Committee (<https://www.democrats.org/>) websites. Compare visuals, stated values/principles, highlighted issues, etc.

Recommended:

- Podcast: Aspen Ideas Festival, “The Future of the Republican Party,” 1 August 2018, available at <https://www.aspenideas.org/blog/podcast-future-republican-party>.
- Podcast series: Crooked Media and Two-Up, The Wilderness series on the history and future of the Democratic Party, available at <https://crooked.com/podcast-series/thewilderness/>.
- Podcast: Heather Cox Richardson on Ben Franklin’s World, episode 042, “A History of the Republican Party,” available at <https://www.benfranklinworld.com/episode-042-heather-cox-richardson-a-history-of-the-republican-party/>.

➔ **Assignment 1 due to Canvas Thursday, Sept 12, 9:30 am:** Comparing US political party options (assignment details on Canvas)

Week 4, Sept 17 & 19: Parties & party systems, cont’d

Reading:

- Thurber & Yoshinaka:
 - Chap 1, Abramowitz, “The New American Electorate: Partisan, Sorted, and Polarized”
 - Chap 2, Altman & McDonald, “Redistricting and Polarization”
- Lee Drutman, “Political Divisions in 2016 and Beyond: Tensions Between and Within the Two Parties,” a research report from the Democracy Fund Voter Study Group, June 2017; on Canvas.
- Doug Sosnik, “Why Congress Rolls Over for Trump,” *Politico Magazine*, 2 August 2018; on Canvas.

Recommended:

- Amanda Skuldt, “Could a third-party candidate win the U.S. presidency? That’s very unlikely,” Monkey Cage Blog, *Washington Post*, 2 August 2016; on Canvas.
- Take a look at the funding records of the two major party organizations, compiled and made available by the Center for Responsive Politics, available at <https://www.opensecrets.org/parties/>. How do they compare? Any surprises?

➔ **Assignment 2 due to Canvas Thursday, Sept 19, 9:30 am:** Results of polling on party opinions and position (assignment details on Canvas)

Week 5, Sept 24 & 26: Party in the electorate

Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps 6, 7 & 8
- Thurber & Yoshinaka:
 - Chap 3, Karol, “Party Activists, Interest Groups, and Polarization in American Politics”
 - Chap 4, Hetherington & Weiler, “Authoritarianism and Polarization in American Politics, Still?”
 - Chap 5, Abrams & Fiorina, “Party Sorting: The Foundations of Polarized Politics”

Recommended:

- Podcast: “More Divided Than Ever?” from Hidden Brain, hosted by Shankar Vedantam (May 2019, available here: [Podcast](#))

➔ **Assignment 3 due to Canvas Thursday, Sept 26, 9:30 am:** Literature summary (assignment details on Canvas)

Week 6, Oct 1 & 3: Party organizational structure

Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps 3, 4 & 5

Week 7, Party organization, cont'd; and take-home midterm

Oct 8: The decentralized nature of the US party system

Oct 10: NO CLASS

➔ Take-home Midterm #1 due to Canvas on Thursday, Oct 10, no later than 11:00 am

Week 8, Oct 15 & 17: Parties & elections

Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps 9, 10, 11 & 12

Recommended:

- Sean Trende, Introduction & Chapter 12, “Beyond Realignment,” in *The Lost Majority: Why the Future of Government is Up for Grabs – and Who Will Take It* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012); on Canvas.
- David Wasserman, “Hating Gerrymandering is Easy. Fixing It is Harder,” The Gerrymandering Project, FiveThirtyEight, Jan 25, 2018; available at <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/hating-gerrymandering-is-easy-fixing-it-is-harder/>
- Podcast: FiveThirtyEight “Gerrymandering Podcast” series available at <https://fivethirtyeight.com/tag/gerrymandering-podcast/>

Week 9, Oct 22 & 24: Party in government – Congress, the executive branch and the courts

Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps 13 & 14
- Thurber & Yoshinaka:
 - Chap 6, Bond, Fleisher & Cohen, “Presidential-Congressional Relations in an Era of Polarized Parties and a 60-Vote Senate”
 - Chap 7, Theriault, “Party Warriors: The Ugly Side of Party Polarization in Congress”
 - Chap 8, Bartels, “The Sources and Consequences of Polarization in the U.S. Supreme Court”

➔ Assignment 4 due to Canvas Thursday, Oct 24, 9:30 am: Literature summary (assignment details on Canvas)

Week 10, Oct 29 & 31: Parties in state and local politics

Reading:

- Thurber & Yoshinaka:
 - Chap 9, Shor, “Polarization in American State Legislatures”
 - Chap 10, Masket, “The Costs of Party Reform: Two States’ Experiences”
 - Chap 11, Rigby & Wright, “The Policy Consequences of Party Polarization: Evidence from the American States”

➔ Assignment 5 due to Canvas Thursday, Oct 31, 9:30 am: Literature summary (assignment details on Canvas)

Week 11, Assessing party polarization; and take-home midterm

Nov 5: Polarized party politics

Nov 7: NO CLASS

➔ Take-home Midterm #2 due to Canvas on Thursday, Nov 7, no later than 11:00 am

Week 12, Nov 12 & 14: Interest groups in American politics

Reading:

- Berry & Wilcox, Chaps 2 & 3
- Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page, “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Sept. 2014): 564-581; on Canvas.

Week 13, Nov 19 & 21: Collective action and building group support

Reading:

- Berry & Wilcox, Chaps 4, 5 & 7
- Mancur Olson, “A Theory of Groups and Organizations,” Introduction and Chapter 1 in *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Good and the Theory of Groups*, 1965 (pp. 1-52); on Canvas.
- “The Free Rider Problem,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, May 21, 2003, available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/free-rider/>

➔ **Assignment 6 due to Canvas Thursday, Nov 21, 9:30 am:** Researching and assessing current political reform proposals (assignment details on Canvas)

*** THANKSGIVING BREAK ***

Week 14, Dec 3 & 5: Lobbying

Reading:

- Berry & Wilcox, Chaps. 6, 8 & 9
- Podcast: Stacey Vanek Smith and Cardiff Garcia, “The Case for Earmarks,” *Planet Money*, National Public Radio, January 16, 2018, available at <https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2018/01/16/578414864/the-case-for-earmarks>.

Week 15, Dec 10 & 12: Evaluating the effects of group action on American politics

Reading:

- Berry & Wilcox, Chap. 10

Sat, Dec 14: TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM due to Canvas no later than 10:00 pm