

# PSCI 3031: Political Parties & Interest Groups

Fall 2018 • Tu/Th 3:30 – 4:45 pm • HLMS 211

Instructor: Nancy Billica

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## 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 with respect to current political developments.

## Course Readings

Readings are drawn from two books; supplemental materials are also available as listed, either on the internet or on Canvas. Students should also plan to regularly read the news for current developments in political parties and interest groups, which will be discussed in class on an ongoing basis.

Marjorie R. Hershey, *Party Politics in America* (15<sup>th</sup> ed., 16<sup>th</sup> ed. or other recent edition, Pearson)

Jeffrey M. Berry & Clyde Wilcox, *Interest Group Society* (5<sup>th</sup> ed. or other recent edition, Pearson Longman)

## Course Requirements

Date Due	Assignments	Grading
	Class attendance & active participation	10%
Tue, Oct 2	Writing assignment 1: Survey on group involvement and opinion; details on Canvas	15%
Tue, Oct 23	Midterm exam; review sheet posted to Canvas	20%
Tue, Nov 13	Writing assignment 2: Midterm election analysis; details on Canvas	15%
Thu, Dec 6	Writing assignment 3: Research paper on political parties or interest groups; details on Canvas	20%
Tue, 18 Dec 1:30 pm	Final exam; requirements posted on Canvas	20%

## **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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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 28 & 30: Introduction; what is the role of groups in American politics?

#### Reading:

- Hershey, Chap 1
- Berry & Wilcox, Chap 1

### Week 2, Sept 4 & 6: Effects of groups in American politics – good or bad?

#### 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/federal10.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.

### Week 3, Sept 11 & 13: Deciphering the nature of contemporary political party politics

#### Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps 2 & 6
- 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:

- 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/>.

### Week 4, Sept 18 & 20: Polarization: electoral and political divide

#### Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps 5 & 8
- Take a look at recent polling by the Pew Research Center on U.S. Political Parties at <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/u-s-political-parties/2018/>. Interesting findings?

#### Recommended:

- Podcast: The Ezra Klein Show, “The Surprising Story of How American Politics Polarized,” 30 July 2018, available at <https://art19.com/shows/the-ezra-klein-show/episodes/451c4c17-41bf-47b7-8eaf-bf8cfed6c45f>.

### Week 5, Sept 25 & 27: Decentralized party organization

#### Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps 3 & 4
- 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.

## **Week 6, Oct 2 & 4: Historic roots of the two-party system**

→ Tuesday, Oct 2: Assignment 1 due to Canvas before class

### Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps 9, 10 & 11

## **Week 7, Oct 9: Party organizational structure**

**Oct 11: No class**

### Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps 7 & 12
- 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.

## **Week 8, Oct 16 & 18: Why two parties?**

### Reading:

- 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?

## **Week 9**

**Oct 23: MIDTERM EXAM**

**Oct 25: Party in government**

### Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps 13 & 14

## **Week 10, Oct 30 & Nov 1: Party & voter choice**

### Reading:

- Hershey, Chap 15
- 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/>

### Recommended:

- Podcast: FiveThirtyEight “Gerrymandering Podcast” series available at <https://fivethirtyeight.com/tag/gerrymandering-podcast/>

## **Week 11, Nov 6 & 8: Midterm elections 2018 and the future of political parties**

### Reading:

- Hershey, Chap 16
- Pay attention to midterm election results and news

## **Week 12, Nov 13 & 15: Interest groups in American politics**

→ **Tuesday, Nov 13: Assignment 2 due to Canvas before class**

### 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.

**\*\*\* THANKSGIVING BREAK \*\*\***

## **Week 13, Nov 27 & 29: 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/>

## **Week 14, Dec 4 & 6: Lobbying**

→ **Thursday, Dec 6: Assignment 3 due to Canvas before class**

### 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 11 & 13: Evaluating the effects of group action on American politics**

### Reading:

- Berry & Wilcox, Chap. 10

**FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, Dec 19<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 1:30 pm**