Course Overview:

Americans have long been skeptical of political parties, raising concerns about corruption among party leaders and excessive party loyalties among citizens that seem to limit responsiveness and accountability in American politics. Though these concerns are often legitimate, political parties are, to paraphrase a leading political scientist, necessary for democracy. In this course we will examine the functions that political parties perform in American politics. We will also examine the weaknesses that limit parties’ effectiveness in fulfilling these functions.

The course will focus on political parties in three of the central roles they play in American politics. In the first part of the course, we will examine parties as organizations. In this part of the course, we will examine the structures that parties create to mobilize support among voters. Next, we will examine parties in elections. Here we will examine how citizens’ party loyalties are formed, how these loyalties shape voting behavior, and whether these loyalties are on the decline. In the final part of the course, we will examine political parties in government. Here, we will look at how parties enact policies in a separated powers system that was explicitly designed to limit their effectiveness. By the end of the semester, students should be able to identify both how these roles have developed over the course of American political development and how they interact with each other as parties compete for citizens’ support and seek to enact public policies.

Textbooks:

There are two required textbooks that are available at the campus bookstores:


There are also two recommended textbooks, also available at the campus bookstores:


Course Grades and Grading:

Course grades will be determined by student performance on three non-cumulative exams during the semester. There will be two non-cumulative midterm exams and one non-cumulative final exam (dates of each exam are noted on the syllabus). The two midterm exams will each count for 30% of the student’s grade in the course, while the final exam will count for 40%. Makeup exams will only be offered in extreme circumstances (e.g., a documented death in the family or medical emergency). Verifiable proof of the emergency is required.

There will be one extra credit assignment allowed during the course. The extra credit assignment will consist of comparing and contrasting party platforms offered by American political parties. More information will be provided about the extra credit assignment during the semester. The maximum number of points awarded for the extra credit assignment will be two percentage points on the student’s overall course grade.

Course grades will be based on the following grading scale:

- A = 90 – 100
- B+ = 87 – 89
- B = 80 – 86
- C+ = 77 – 79
- C = 70 – 76
- D+ = 67 – 69
- D = 60 – 66
- F = 59 and below

Course grades at the end of the semester will be rounded up a half point if they are at .5 or higher. Thus, an 89.5 will become a 90. There will be no other adjusting of grades or curving of grades. If you cannot accept this, you should not take this course.

Academic Honesty and Integrity:

Students’ work in this course is expected to be their own. The University’s commitment to academic integrity is enshrined in the Carolinian Creed and is detailed in the Rule of Academic Responsibility. Information on violations of academic honesty and integrity and the University’s punishments for these violations can be found in the Carolina Community Student Handbook (Student Affairs Policy STAF 6.25). It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of and adhere to the Rule of Academic Responsibility, which can be found online at http://www.sa.sc.edu/carolinacommunity/housing.htm.

Disabilities Issues:

Students with disabilities should contact me during the first week of the semester about their needs and any assistance or arrangements that may be necessary. Students with disabilities should also contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 777-6742 to learn about the many programs and services that the University provides.
COURSE SCHEDULE:

In order to get the most out of the course, students should read the assigned material prior to the classes for which it is assigned.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND PARTY ORGANIZATIONS

Week 1 (Week of January 15): Course Introduction and Party Systems
January 15th – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – No Class
Hershey, Chapter 1
Reichley, Chapter 2

Week 2 (Week of January 22nd): The American Two-Party System
Hershey, Ch. 2
Reichley, Ch. 1

Week 3 (Week of January 29th): State and Local Party Organizations
Hershey, Ch. 3
Reichley, Ch. 15, 19-20

Week 4 (Week of February 5th): The Parties’ National Organizations
Hershey, Ch. 4
Reichley, Ch. 18

Week 5 (Week of February 12th): Party Activists
Hershey, Ch. 5
Reichley, Ch. 16-17

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH: EXAM 1

PART 2: PARTIES IN ELECTIONS

Week 6 (Week of February 19th): Party Identification
Hershey, Ch. 6

Week 7 (Week of February 26th): Party Coalitions and Voter Turnout
Hershey, Ch. 7-8
Reichley, Ch. 14

Week 8 (Week of March 5th): Choosing Candidates
Hershey, Ch. 9-10

WEEK OF MARCH 12: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES
Week 9 (Week of March 19th): The General Election
Hershey, Ch. 11

Week 10 (Week of March 26th): Financing the Campaigns
Hershey, Ch. 12

FRIDAY, MARCH 30TH: EXAM 2

PART 3: PARTIES IN GOVERNMENT

Week 11 (Week of April 2nd): Parties in Congress and State Legislatures
Hershey, Ch. 13

Week 12 (Week of April 9th): The Party in the Executive and the Courts
Hershey, Ch. 14
Reichley, Ch. 11

Week 13 (Week of April 16th): Semi-Responsible Parties
Hershey, Ch. 15

Week 14 (Week of April 23rd): The Place of Parties in American Politics
Hershey, Ch. 16
Reichley, Ch. 21

Week 15 (Week of April 30th): Course Wrap-Up
Monday (April 30th)

Final Examination
Friday, May 4
2:00-5:00 p.m.
151 Gambrell Hall