

POSC 320: Parties and Interest Groups

Tuesday/Thursday 11.00-12.15
Sharp Lab 123

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Office hours:
Tuesday/Thursday, 9.00-10.30

This course examines two vital – if often deeply disliked – types of political organizations that help representative democracy to function. Parties and interest groups differ in important ways, but they both help to bridge the gap between government and the public, providing voters with information about what their representatives have been doing and how to vote, and providing politicians with information about what their constituents want and how to govern.

In the first half of the course, we will examine the modern political parties from several different angles – the party as an organization, in the electorate, and in government. We will also investigate the coalitions that the Democratic and Republican parties have put together in order to win office, and the voices that get left out of this two-party system. In the second half of the course, we will follow a similar set of questions about the role of interest groups in democracy. We will be exploring particular groups in detail: for example, the women's rights movement to understand interest group organization, behind-the-scenes lobbying over Obamacare to understand how groups influence government, and the NRA to understand groups' presence in the electorate.

What you need for this course

- Marjorie R. Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, 15th Edition
- Jeffrey M. Berry and Clyde Wilcox, *The Interest Group Society*, 5th Edition
- Access to the course website on Sakai, where all additional readings (as well as grades, the schedule, announcements, etc) will be posted.

How your work will be assessed in this course

Your skills and knowledge will be assessed in various ways in this course. There will be two exams, each worth 22% of your final grade. You will complete four short research assignments outside of class, each worth 12%. The final 8% will be based on your participation in our class meetings and activities.

Final letter grades will be assigned according to the following standard cutoff points:

A	93	B+	87	C+	77	D+	67
A-	90	B	83	C	73	D	63
		B-	80	C-	70	D-	60

Expectations and etiquette

There are several things you can do to make sure that you get the most out of our class experience. You are expected to attend every class meeting, having carefully read the assignments and considered the arguments they make. You need to fully participate in class discussions, and will be graded based on the quality (not quantity) of your input.

I have a fundamental responsibility to ensure that all students are given a fair and equal chance to learn in this class. My expectations about your conduct in class thus focus less on how it affects your own learning (you are, after all, adults and can choose how much you want to get out of the courses you take) and more on how it affects everyone else's ability to learn.

Accordingly, you need to make sure you arrive on time to every class, so you don't disturb other students or deprive them of your contributions to class. Turn off your cell phones, for the same reason. Laptop use is an issue I am more conflicted about. On the one hand, I understand that having electronic notes is helpful for some students. On the other hand, I also understand that it can be hard to resist the lure of email/FB/blogs/etc, which distracts those around you who can also see your screen. So, a compromise: if you want to use a laptop, you must sit in the back row. I expect you to fully engage in the class no matter where you sit. But should you choose to ignore that expectation, this ensures that only your learning will suffer, not those sat behind you.

Absences from class and late assignments

UD has a clear policy on excused absences from class — see the Provost's statement at <http://facultyhandbook.udel.edu/handbook/3113-student-class-attendance-and-excused-absences>. If you are unable to attend an exam or submit an assignment for an excusable reason, you must:

- (1) Contact me before that class begins to let me know of your absence.
- (2) Contact the Dean's Office of your college to document the reason for your absence. They will then send a letter of verification to all your professors.

I expect you to complete all assignments on time and in full. If you fail to do so, I will still accept your work. However, it will be subject to a one letter grade deduction for each calendar day it is overdue (beginning on the day it is due). Missed assignments result in a score of zero.

Academic honesty

I have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty. You should familiarize yourself with UD's student Code of Conduct, available at: <http://www.udel.edu/stuguide/14-15/code.html>. Without exception, any academic dishonesty will automatically result in a failing grade for the entire course and an official referral to the Office of Student Conduct. Note that the Office of Student Conduct does not accept ignorance of the rules, nor "accidental" plagiarism/cheating as valid excuses. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, ask.

Students with disabilities

Any student who thinks they may need an accommodation based on a disability should contact the Disability Support Service (DSS) office as soon as possible. See: www.udel.edu/DSS

Course schedule

Note: You are responsible for all of the material listed here. Do not assume that non-textbook readings are less important! Several of the readings are taken from online sources. You can find direct links to them on the syllabus; PDF copies are on Sakai as well.

- Aug. 26 Introduction to the course
- Aug. 28 No class [Professor at APSA conference]

PART ONE: PARTIES

- Sep. 2 What are parties?
Hershey, Part 1, Ch 1 [Including "Parties and Party Systems" p1-3]
- Sep. 4 & 9 The two-party system
Hershey, Ch 2
Newport, 2012. "[Americans Split on Need for Third Party](#)", *Gallup.com*.
- Sep. 11 Parties as organizations I
Hershey, Ch 3 and 4 [Including "The Political Party as an Organization" p47-9]
- Sep. 16 Parties as organizations II
Hershey, Ch 5
- ◆ Research assignment #1 due Sep. 18 ◆
- Sep. 18 Parties and candidates for office I
Hershey, Ch 9
- Sep. 23 Parties and candidates for office II
Hershey, Ch 10
- Sep. 25 Parties in government I
Hershey, Ch 13
Jacobs and Skocpol, 2010. *Health Care Reform and American Politics*, p50-66,
and p82-88
- Sep. 30 Parties in government II
Hershey, Ch 14
- Oct. 2 Parties in the electorate I
Hershey, Ch 6
Egan, 2014. "[Declaration of Independents](#)", *New York Times*.
- Oct. 7 Parties in the electorate II
Hershey, Ch 7

◆ Research assignment #2 due Oct. 9 ◆

Oct. 9 Catch-up and review

Oct. 14 Exam #1

PART TWO: INTEREST GROUPS

Oct. 16 What are interest groups?
Berry and Wilcox, Ch1 and 4
Reynolds [UD Professor Emeritus], "[Pluralism](#)".

Oct. 21 & 23 The pluralist interest group system
Berry and Wilcox, Ch 2 and 10
Schlozman et al., 2012. *The Unheavenly Chorus*, p312-322 and p429-443

Oct. 28 & 30 Interest groups as organizations
Berry and Wilcox, Ch 3
Mansbridge, 1986. *Why we lost the ERA*, Ch1 and 10

Nov. 4 No class [Election Day]

◆ Research assignment #3 due Nov. 6 ◆

Nov. 6 & 11 Interest groups in government: inside lobbying
Berry and Wilcox, Ch 6 and 8
Levinthal, 2012. "[K Street: 'Let's meet'; Hill staffers: 'Text me'](#)", *Politico.com*
Jacobs and Skocpol, 2010. *Health Care Reform and American Politics*, p66-75

Nov. 13 & 18 Interest groups and candidates for office
Berry and Wilcox, Ch 5
Listen to: NPR, 2012. "[Take the Money and Run for Office](#)" [Prologue and Act 1]

Nov. 20 Interest groups in the electorate: outside lobbying
Berry and Wilcox, Ch 7
Higham and Horwitz, 2013. "[NRA tactics: Take no prisoners](#)", and DeLong, 2013. "[Anatomy of an NRA takedown](#)", *Washington Post*
Jacobs and Skocpol, 2010. *Health Care Reform and American Politics*, p75-82

◆ Research assignment #4 due Nov. 25 ◆

Nov. 25 Catch-up and review

Nov. 27 No class [Thanksgiving]

Dec. 2 Exam #2