

Political Science 401
SEMINAR IN AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES
Spring 2026

Steven Greene
Caldwell 209C
email: shgreene@ncsu.edu
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 2-3; and by appointment

Course Description: This course examines the nature, function, and evolution of political parties in the American political system. We analyze parties through a tri-partite approach: parties in the electorate, party organizations, and parties in government. The course emphasizes growing partisan polarization and its impact across all elements and roles of contemporary American political parties. We will explore ideas for reform and the future of the party system in America.

Readings: The following books are required for this course:

- Marjorie Hershey and Barry Burden. *Party Politics in America, 19th Edition*
- Daniel Schlozman and Sam Rosenfeld. *The Hollow Parties*
- NCSU Libraries On-line reserve (* indicates required readings; ^ indicates recommended)

You are also expected to read the *New York Times* or *Washington Post* daily in order to discuss how contemporary political issues are related to political parties.

Requirements and Grading:

- Midterm 20%
- Final Exam 25%
- Paper #1 15%
- Paper #2 25%
- Participation 15%

Class Participation

Class participation is an *integral* part of the class. At minimum, this means good attendance. Students are also expected to be attentive during lectures and to ask questions and contribute comments to class discussions. *You should come to each class having read the required assignment and prepared to discuss and/or write about the issues raised by the readings.* It is also your responsibility to remain abreast of current events in American politics, especially as they apply to political parties. If you want to receive an A for participation, you need to 1) have excellent attendance; 2) contribute regularly to class discussions, and; 3) demonstrate knowledge of assigned readings and current events, especially during in-class writing assignments.

Paper Assignments

Assignment #1: Party Identification Genogram and Autobiography

Create a genogram of your party identification. That is, make a diagram which indicates your partisanship as well as the party identification of as many of your relatives as you can find out. Write a short paper discussing your genogram and *critically assessing* your own party identification. Some questions you may address include: What patterns are evident? Why do you think you have your particular partisanship? How has your family influenced your party identification? What other factors have influenced your partisanship? What role do demographic factors related to partisanship seem to play for you and your family? You are responsible for the complete details of the paper assignment at:

<http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS401/paper1.htm> 5 pages maximum. **Due on February 26.**

Assignment #2: Seminar paper: Parties and Public Policy

Choose a policy area or policy proposal that has been a matter of political debate since 2010. Discuss the role of Parties in shaping the nature of the policy/proposal and its success or failure in becoming law. *Briefly* describe the policy, key issues at stake, and, if appropriate, how the parties have evolved on the matter. How have the attitudes, intensity, and actions of the party in the electorate influenced this matter? *In sum, how has the nature and process of this policy been shaped by the contemporary context of American political parties.* The paper should be analytical and should rely extensively on outside research. You are responsible for the complete details of the paper assignment at: <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS401/paper2.htm>. 15 pages maximum. **Due on April 16** (outline due March 31).

General Information: Policies regarding all paper assignments can be found at <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS401/PaperGuidelines.htm>. *You are expected to read these guidelines before submitting your paper.*

Late Policy

It is expected that exams will be taken and assignments turned in when they are scheduled on the syllabus. There will be a 20-point penalty for failure to take an exam at the required time and a 1/3 letter grade per day penalty for written assignments. If you miss an exam, the re-scheduling must take place at the convenience of the instructor. Written assignments are due at the *beginning* of class. To avoid penalties, you need to let the instructor know of valid, exigent circumstances *before* the assigned time.

Recorded Lectures

Class sessions are automatically recorded in PanOpto. Especially as a seminar, your in-person attendance in this class is essential. Therefore, the recordings are not available by default. Nonetheless, any time you need to miss class for a legitimate reason, please let me know and I can make that class session recording available to you.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to complete their assignments with due regard to academic integrity. In order to do so they should familiarize themselves with the relevant sections of the student code of conduct (Sections 7-13). By signing all work submitted on paper, or by identifying themselves in work submitted electronically, students affirm that they neither gave nor received unauthorized aid. Collaboration on assignments among students may only occur when explicitly authorized by an instructor.

Disability

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653. NCSU policy at: http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic_affairs/courses_undergrad/REG02.20.1.php

Schedule of Topics and Assigned Readings

January 13	Class Introduction
January 15	Thinking about Political Parties like a Political Scientist <i>No in-person class meeting—written reflection assignment due</i> Klein, “How politics makes us stupid”* Matthews, “The book that changed how I think about thinking”* Muir, “The Three Types of Binary Thinking”* Noel, “Ten Things Political Scientists Know that You Don’t”*
January 20 – 22	Political Parties: An Introduction Hershey, chapter 1 Drutman, “America Is Now the Divided Republic the Framers Feared”* Mudge, “The Parties Failed Us; Long Live Parties!”* Dresden, “Electoral reform must strengthen parties, not sideline them”* Sides, “Party People”*
January 27 – 29	The Structure of Party Systems/Third Parties Hershey, chapter 2 Grossman, “When Third Parties Matter”* Drutman, “If America Had Six Parties, Which Would You Belong To?”* Drutman, “The Case for More Parties”* Mouk, “Proportional Representation Is Not the Answer...”*
February 3 – 10	Parties in the Electoral Arena Hershey, intro to part IV, chapters 9-10 Grossman, “Changing how we elect presidents”* La Raja and Rauch, “Voters Need Help...”* Troiano, “Party Primaries Must Go”* Noel, “There Is a Better Way to Pick a Presidential Nominee”* Kamarck, “What we know about the 2024 Democratic and Republican parties”* Masket, “Did the parties decide in 2024?”*
February 12, 19 No Class Feb 17	Party Identification of the American Electorate Hershey, chapters 6 & 7 Chinoy, “Quiz: Let Us Predict Whether You’re a Democrat or a Republican”* Vox, “How the Republican Party went from Lincoln to Trump”* Vox, “From white supremacy to Barack Obama...”* Doherty, “10 facts about Democrats in the U.S.”* Oliphant, “10 facts about Republicans in the U.S.”* Sides, “How to think about the “racial realignment” in U.S. politics”*
February 24	Political Party Polarization Levitz, “How the Diploma Divide Is Remaking American Politics”* Edsall, “‘Gut-Level Hatred’ Is Consuming Our Political Life”* Grossman, “How racial realignment ignited the culture war”* Kabaservice, “Understanding the diploma divide”^
February 26	The Changing Face of Party Organizations Hershey, Part II Crampton, “Democrats find hope in state legislative races”* Farrell, “Not popularism. Not deliverism. Partyism”^ <i>Paper #1 due</i>

March 3 – 5	The Tangled Web of Campaign Finance Hershey, chapter 12 Matthews, “The great money-in-politics myth” [*] Leatherman, “Five myths about campaign finance” [*] Beckwith, “The Big Problem With Small-Dollar Donations” [*] Hasen, “The Ultrarich Have Reshaped Presidential Elections.” [*] Massoglia, “Dark Money Hit a Record High of \$1.9 Billion in 2024” [*]
March 10	Guest Speaker: Party Organizations This American Life, “It Wouldn’t Be Make-Believe If You’d Believe In Me” [^]
March 12	MIDTERM EXAM
March 17 – 19	Spring Break
March 24 – 26	Political Parties in the Legislature Hershey, Intro to part V, chapters 13 and 15 Sides, “Don’t blame our polarized politics on voters...” [*] Kilgore, “Republicans Have Finally Broken the Senate” [*] La Raja, “What former lawmakers reveal about the strain...” [*] Godfrey, “House Republicans Aren’t Having Any Fun” [*] Levin, “The Missing Branch” [*]
March 31	Guest speaker: Parties in Government <i>Paper #2 Outline due March 31</i>
April 2	Parties in Executive/Judicial Hershey, chapter 14 Liptak, “The Supreme Court Has Finally Found a President It Likes” [*] Azari, “Politics is about power. Our conversations about political parties...” [*]
April 7 – 9	Book Club Part I The Hollow Parties
April 14	Book Club Part II The Hollow Parties
April 16	Political Parties & Interest Groups (Guest speaker: Dan Crawford) Chait, “The Coming Democratic Civil War” [*] <i>Paper #2 Due</i>
April 21, 28	The Future of Political Parties in America Hershey, chapter 16 Klein, “The Book That Predicted the 2024 Election” [*] Drutman, “The next era could come sooner than you think” [*] Balton, “Ezra Klein’s Big-Tent Vision of the Democratic Party” [*] Teixeira and Levin, “Another Stalemate Election?” [*] Klein, “The ‘Groyperfication’ of the G.O.P.” [*]
April 23	DASA Assessment
May 5	Final Exam Section 001 1:00-2:15. Section 002 3:30-4:45