

University of Rochester – PSCI/INTR 253/253W
Spring 2023
Harkness 112
Wednesdays 2-4:40pm

Comparative Political Parties

Professor Meguid
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Office Hours: Mondays 1-3pm (wear a mask please)

Course Description

The purpose of this seminar is to familiarize students with the political instrument at the heart of representative democracy – the political party. We begin with the premise that most observant participants in democratic political systems have some idea about the role and functioning of the political party. But beyond this working knowledge of parties as election-time competitors, how much does one know about this political actor? What differentiates a party from other social groups? What are the different motivations for party formation? Why do certain parties emerge “naturally”, whereas other preference groups find party formation and success difficult? From this starting point, we will explore the historical development of parties and their role in agenda-setting, policy making and institution building in democracies around the world. Our discussions will raise questions about the influence of sociological, economic and institutional factors in shaping party organization, the policy and issue positions they advocate and their interaction in the political arena. We will also examine the recent changes in party structures and party systems to decide whether these developments signify a transformation in party politics.

In this seminar, we will be reading the seminal texts and theories on parties and party systems. Through the readings and in-class discussions, we will be applying these theories to contemporary party examples in democracies around the world, including the United States and countries in Europe and Africa. By the end of the semester, students will have arrived at their own informed conclusions as to why, for instance, parties “flip flop,” how third parties, such as the US

Requirements

This advanced seminar is open to those students who have already taken other comparative or American political science courses, or by permission of the instructor. However, no prior coursework on party politics or political systems is required to take this course.

Informed participation in class: Students are expected to attend and participate in all class meetings. This seminar places an emphasis on discussion and debate, and thus, active participation is essential and expected. In order to facilitate group interaction and discussion, students are required to keep their cameras on during class time.

Many of the readings are challenging, and therefore, students should carefully read and take notes on the readings prior to attending class.

Please note that if you need to miss class due to illness, please notify me via email prior to the class. If you miss more than one class during the semester, a doctor's note will be required.

Two 5-7 Page Papers: Students will be asked to respond to a specific question about the various themes of the course. No outside research should be undertaken for these assignments. However, students are encouraged to think critically about the theories in light of the case studies presented in class.

**Barring extraordinary circumstances, late papers will be marked down a third of a grade (for ex. A to A-) for each 24 hour period after they are du

option are required to submit a detailed 1 page outline of their research projects on **March 1 by 5 pm** and meet with me during that week to discuss their proposed paper topics. The first draft of the paper is due **April 5 by 5pm**. Failure to satisfactorily meet either the outline or draft deadline will result in removal from the W section.

Rush Rhees. If you would prefer, you can purchase it wherever you get new or used books.

Mair, Peter, (ed) The West European Party System. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990.

We also are reading multiple chapters in the Meguid (2008) book. Rush Rhees has

Aldrich, John. Why Parties? Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Chapters 1-2.
[LINK](#)

Przeworski, Adam and John Sprague. Paper Stones. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. Prologue and Chapter 1. [LINK](#)

Week Four: “Natural” Parties? Center-Periphery Cleavage Examples from around the World (Feb 1)

Isaacs, Harold. “Basic Group Identity: The Idols of the Tribe,” in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds, Ethnicity: Theory and Experience, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975. 29-52. [LINK](#)

Bates, Robert H. “Modernization, Ethnic Competition and the Rationality of Politics in Contemporary Africa.” In State versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas. Eds.

Inglehart, Ronald and Pippa Norris. 2017. "Trump and the Populist Authoritarian Parties: The Silent Revolution in Reverse." [LINK](#)

Meguid, Bonnie. Party Competition between Unequals. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008. Chapter 6. * the book is available as an electronic copy from the library. [LINK](#)

No class, Feb 22: 1st Paper due

Part III. Parameters of Political Debate

Which issues get debated in the political arena? How does the ideological content of the political agenda change? Why do parties choose certain ideological positions over others? What drives their position-taking: vote-maximization, constituent representation, or personal ideologies and the values of party leaders? Is this an elite-driven or a mass-driven process?

Week Seven: Setting the Ideological Agenda (March 1)

For W students, one-page outline of the W paper due by 5pm

Carmines, Edward G. and James A. Stimson. "The Dynamics of Issue Evolution: the United States," in Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies. Eds. Russell

Cross, William and Lisa Young. 2008. "Factors Influencing the Decision of the Young Politically Engaged To Join a Political Party: An Investigation of the Canadian Case." . 14(3): <https://rochester.box.com/s/uovumstel4podljfo050r059wm0jkop3>

Scarrow, Susan E. 2019. "The Changing Nature of Political Party Membership." . 1-20.
<https://rochester.box.com/s/r2wy90j4l6kkf2od8erysohyau87g9i1>

Week Thirteen: Political Party Challenges for Democracy and Representation and Course Wrap-up (April 26)

Levitsky, Steven and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. How Democracies Die. New York: Crown. Chapters 1 and 2. <https://tinyurl.com/yxdj5sbo>

Taub, Amanda and Max Fisher. "Facebook fueled anti-refugee attacks in Germany, new research suggests." . 8/21/2018. [LINK](#)

******Research papers for the W students due April 28 by 5pm.***