Comparative Political Parties  
Political Science 948  
Spring 2014  
T 3:30pm – 5:30pm

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Office hours: By appointment

Description: Political parties are endogenous to democracy. This is true despite great misgivings of political theorists about the effects of parties, and despite the fact that parties are rarely the product of formal arrangements. Constitutions, for example, are generally silent on the topic of political parties. Parties also form the basis of dominance of many authoritarian regimes. Because of their pervasiveness and influence, parties are among the most widely studied phenomena in politics. Theorists have reflected on them, and analysts studied them, since their origins in the 17th century.

Given the long history of writings on parties, it is surprising that, four centuries later, many controversies remain unsettled. Why do parties arise? Why do some political systems have many parties and others just two, and what difference does this make for the quality of governance and representation? What factors shape the ideological character of parties? What is the relative weight of social cleavages versus strategic action in shaping party systems? Are parties good for citizens in democracy? Are they good for the populations of authoritarian states? Why do some parties appeal to voters by promising particular programs, whereas others use clientelist methods to mobilize electoral support? These are the kinds of questions we will address.

Assignments: You will be asked to complete three sets of assignments for this course:

1. Attendance and participation (15% of final grade): Come prepared and actively take part in discussions.

2. Two review papers (25% of final grade): You will write reviews of two readings from a particular week, due at the beginning of the session in which those readings are assigned. These reviews should critically assess the readings and the overlaps or tensions between them. Your review should be no longer than 5 pages, double-spaced. You will also be expected to lead the discussion of those readings.

3. Term paper (60% of final grade): Write a term paper due at the end of the semester (e.g., a critical analysis of literature, an application and extension of a theoretical approach to a case drawing from secondary literature, etc.). Your paper should be no longer than 25 pages, double spaced.

Readings: Assigned readings are available on the course website on Learn@UW.
Course outline

Week 1 (January 21): Introduction

Week 2 (January 28): Social Cleavages and Ideology


Week 3 (February 4): Parties within Institutions


Week 4 (February 11): Electoral Rules and Parties


**Week 5 (February 18): Party Organizations**


**Week 6 (February 25): Party Competition**


**Week 7 (March 4): Party System Institutionalization**


**Week 8 (March 11): Ideology**


**Week 9 (March 25): Partisanship**


Week 10 (April 1): Parties in New Democracies


Week 11 (April 8): Clientelism


Week 12 (April 15): Ethnicity and Valence


Week 13 (April 22): Party Change


Week 14 (April 29): Party System Change


Week 15 (May 6): Parties in Non-Democracies

