Comparative Political Parties
Political Science 401
Spring 2015
TR 1:00pm – 2:15pm

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Office hours: R 2:30pm – 4:00pm

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 four sets of assignments for this course:

1. Attendance, preparation, and participation (25% of final grade): Come prepared and actively take part in class discussions. This means that you have done the reading assigned for the class as well as read any review papers and reactions posted by your classmates (see below). It means participating in and contributing to class discussion. And it also means actively taking part in online discussions outside of class.

2. Two review papers (25% of final grade): Twice during the semester, you will write a review of one assigned reading, due by 11:59pm two days before the session in which it is assigned (i.e., either Sunday or Tuesday night). These reviews should critically evaluate the reading: Does the argument make logical sense? Is the evidence being marshaled to support the argument compelling? Does the argument apply to other cases you’re familiar with, or does it fail to explain those cases? Are there important alternatives you think the author is overlooking? Your review should be 2-3 pages long, double-spaced, and should be distributed to the entire class as a Piazza post. Your post should also include 3 questions for discussion about the reading. Discussion questions should not be yes or no questions; they should make us think.
3. **Two reaction posts** (10% of final grade): You will also be expected to respond to at least two review papers posted by your fellow students over the course of the semester. Your responses should be at least 2-3 paragraphs long and should engage with the arguments in the review (agreeing and offering additional support or disagreeing and explaining why), or respond to the discussion questions being posed. Reaction posts are due by 11:00am on the day of the class in which the reading is assigned. I encourage you to respond to each other’s review papers throughout the semester.

4. **Two comparative research papers** (40% of final grade): You will write two short research papers over the course of the semester (due dates below). Each paper will examine two cases (two parties from two different countries or two party systems) and explain a difference between them. We will discuss the logic behind this “comparative method” in class on January 22. For instance, you could ask why there are ethnic parties in Nigeria but not in South Africa, why the party system is more institutionalized in Chile than in Argentina, why parties are more disciplined in Germany than in the US. Each paper should be no longer than 8 pages, not including bibliography. You will also give a 10-minute presentation about one of your papers to the class.

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

**Communication**: I will post announcements regarding the course to our Piazza class page at [https://piazza.com/wisc/spring2015/polisci401_002_sp15/home](https://piazza.com/wisc/spring2015/polisci401_002_sp15/home). I am available to discuss the course and answer questions during office hours or by making individual appointments to see me. If you have specific questions regarding the course (readings, assignments, changes), please post your question to Piazza; I or your fellow students will respond to them there.

**Writing Fellows**: We are fortunate to be working with two Writing Fellows this semester, Molly Coleman ([mmcoleman@wisc.edu](mailto:mmcoleman@wisc.edu)) and Eva Jacobs ([erjacobs@wisc.edu](mailto:erjacobs@wisc.edu)). The WFs are skilled undergraduate writers selected through a competitive application process. They take a course in the pedagogy of writing and are matched with a particular course to work with the enrolled students, helping students improve their writing skills by working with them on a particular essay assignment. Our WFs will respond to a draft of each of the two comparative research papers you are asked to write for this course. Their feedback will be aimed at helping you present your ideas more effectively and express them more clearly.

Two weeks before each research paper is due, you will turn a complete draft of the paper in to the WF to read. This draft should not be rough or unfinished; it should be a completed paper in which you present your ideas as fully, clearly, and persuasively as you can. This puts you in the best position to benefit from feedback. After you receive the WF’s feedback on your paper, you will meet in conference with the WF to discuss possible revisions. Every student is required to work with the WF on both research papers. When you submit your final paper to me, you must also include the WF’s written comments and a brief statement about the revisions you made. I will expect to see substantial revisions between the first and final drafts based on your careful consideration of the WF’s feedback.
Course outline

Introduction

January 22
- No reading: Discussion of comparative method

Social Cleavages

January 27

January 29

Parties within Institutions

February 3

February 5

Parties outside Institutions

February 10
- Topic/cases for first comparative research paper due

February 12
Electoral Rules and Parties

February 17

February 19
- **First draft of first comparative research paper due**

Party Competition

February 24

February 26

Party Organization

March 3

March 5
- **Final draft of first comparative research paper due**

March 10
- No reading: student presentations

March 12
- No reading: student presentations

Party System Institutionalization

March 17
March 19

**Partisanship**

March 24
- **Topic/cases for second comparative research paper due**

March 26

**Clientelism**

April 7

April 9
- **First draft of second comparative research paper due**

**Ethnic Parties**

April 14

April 16
Change

April 21

April 23
- **Final draft of second comparative research paper due**

April 28
- No reading: student presentations

April 30
- No reading: Student presentations

Parties and Democracy

May 5

May 7