Comparative Party politics and Party Systems

Course Description: Political parties have repeatedly been acknowledged as a critical link to democratic governance. An open, participant-oriented, viable and representative system of parties operating within free and fair electoral procedures performs duties that make democratic government possible. Without such parties, a democracy can hardly be said to exist. This course explores the many facets of political parties and party systems, and their link to democracy.

Our first concern is with the definitions of parties and party systems. What is a party? Where did parties come from? How do political parties fit into theories of democracy? How we can classify differing party types and differing types of party systems? The second broad topic regards what parties do. How are parties organized and how are party organizations are changing? How do political parties relate to the state and society? Finally, we will explore recent trends and the future of parties.

Learning Outcome: On successfully completing this course, students should be able to:

- think analytically and abstractly about political parties;
- understand the meaning and definition of parties and party systems;
- acquire knowledge of the form and operation of the political parties and the electoral system;
- analyze the primary roles and activities of the major political parties in the West and in Georgia;
- demonstrate competence in the following transferable skills: conducting a systematic search of academic sources in the field of study of political parties; navigating the websites of the major political parties and organizations.

Course Requirements: This course meets two times per week. Your attendance at lecture is mandatory, and your participation is expected during times of group discussion.

Grading will be broken down into the following components:
- Class Participation: 10%
- Midterm Exam: 20%
- Two short essays 20% each
- Final Exam 30%

The midterm and final exams will be given during class time on the dates listed below. The topics of the three short essays will be assigned during the semester. These essays will require you to respond to a question given by the professor. You will be asked to
state your opinion and an argument on the given topic, using the material presented in lecture and the readings.

Readings: The readings for this course come from a wide range of sources. There are two main textbooks for the course, though, from which many of the readings are drawn:


Supplementary Materials:

The following web sites are by way of illustration. Get surfing!

- http://janda.org/icpp/ [International Comparative Political Parties Project]
- PippaNorris.com [Pippa Norris’s website]
- http://ssdc.ucsd.edu/lij [The Lijphart Elections Archive]
- http://www.lgu.ac.uk/psa/epop.html [Elections, Public Opinion and Parties specialist group of the Political Studies Association]
- http://www.psci.unt.edu/es/ [Electoral Studies]
- http://hypatia.ss.uci.edu/democ/ [Center for the Study of Democracy]
- http://www.igc.apc.org/cvd/ [Center for Voting and Democracy]

Course Schedule

Week 1: Why Parties?
Key Questions: Why do political parties matter? Why should we study parties? What do parties do?

Marjorie Randon Hershey, “Political parties as mechanisms of social choice.” Handbook of Party Politics, Chapter 8, pg. 75-88.

Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, “Types and Functions of Parties.” Political Parties and Democracy, Chapter 1, pg. 3-39.

Week 2: What is party

Morse, Anson, “What is a party?” Political Science Quarterly pg. 68-81
Epstein, Leon, (1964) “Political parties in Western Democracies,” Ch.1
Schlesinger, Joseph (1994) “Political parties and winning the office,” Ch.1

Wire, Ch.1-3

Week 3: Parties and Democracy
Key Questions: Can parties help democracy? If so, how? If not, why not?


Richard Katz, “Party in democratic theory.” Handbook of Party Politics, Chapter 4, pg. 34-46

James Johnson, “Political parties and deliberative democracy?” Handbook of Party Politics, Chapter 5, pg. 47-50

Week 4: Defining Political Parties
Key Questions: What is a political party? What are the different ways we can classify parties?

Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, “Types and Functions of Parties.” Political Parties and Democracy, Chapter 1, pg. 3-39.


Week 5: The Emergence of Political Parties
Key Questions: Where do parties come from? Why do parties emerge?


Short Essay #1 Due

Week 6: Party Systems


Week 7: Party System Change


Midterm Exam

Week 8: Parties and their Publics, Part I
Key Issues: Campaigns, Elections, and Party Financing

Russel Dalton, Ian McAllister, and Martin Wattenberg, “Political Parties and their Publics,” in Political Parties in the New Europe, Chapter 2, pg. 19-42


David Farrell, “Campaign Modernization and the West European Party,” in Political Parties in the New Europe, Chapter 4, pg. 63-84.

Week 9: Parties and their Publics, Part II
Key Issues: Delivery of Public and Private Goods


**Week 10: Inside Parties**

Key Questions: How are parties run? The role of professional staffs and political consultants. What role do voters play? What role do professional staffs and political consultants play? How are party leaders chosen?


**Short Essay #2 Due**

**Week 11: Parties and Post-communism**


**Week 12: The Georgian Political Party System**

Key Questions: How well do the theories we discussed this semester help us to understand the Georgian party system? What can the study of the Georgian party system add to existing theories?

Week 13: The Future of Parties


**Final Exam: Date and location to be announced.**