

Political Science 199
American Political Parties and Elections
Fall 2008
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Class meetings: T, Th 2:20 to 3:30

Office Hours: M, W, F 9:30 to 10:30; T, Th 10:30 to 11:30

Introduction and Course Objectives:

This course is an introduction to the American system of political parties and elections. The intent here is to enhance the student's capability to observe and understand the 2008 national election. Towards this end, the course has four objectives:

1. To examine the role political parties and elections play in the American political system and evaluate their performance as effective mechanisms for democratic control of the government.
2. To develop an understanding of the organizational structures of the parties with a particular focus on the changes in organization and operation of the parties in the conduct of elections
3. To introduce students to the technologies and techniques of electioneering that have come to dominate the modern electoral process.
4. To enhance the student's understanding of the economic, social and cultural conditions that set the context for the 2008 national election.

Required Books

E.J. Dionne, Souled Out: Reclaiming Faith and Politics after the Religious Right, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008)

Kevin Phillips, Bad Money: Reckless Finance, Failed Politics, and the Global Crisis of American Capitalism, (New York: Penguin Group USA, 2008)

Richard L. Semiatin, editor, Campaigns on the Cutting Edge, (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2008)

Stephen J. Wayne, Is this Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?, (Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2007)

Attendance

Students are required to attend all classes. Attendance will be part of the instructor evaluation grade. Students missing class for legitimate reasons can be excused but the instructor reserves the right to judge the legitimacy of the excuse. Common courtesy also requires that students inform the instructor as soon as when absences will be unavoidable.

Cell Phones

Cell phones should be turned off and stored away during class. Students whose cell phones are visible will be asked to put them away. Students who answer them or use them **in any way** during class time **will be asked to leave.**

Evaluation of Student's Performance

The student's final grade will be based on a 300 point system.

What did I learn this week	100 points
Reaction to Dionne	50 points
Reaction to Phillips	50 points
Final Exam	50 points
Congressional election report	25 points
Instructor Evaluation	25 points

What Did I Learn this Week

On selected weeks, students will submit a one to two page typewritten statement discussing what he or she feels is the most important thing learned from the preceding week's reading or class meetings. There is no correct choice or emphasis for this assignment. Students should use their judgment about what to select as important. Evaluation of this assignment will be based on:

- The clarity with which the student expresses his or her understanding of the elements of the course about which he or she chooses to write.
- An explanation of why the element chosen is worthy of attention
- The technical quality of the writing (e.g. proper citation, organization, sentence structure, grammar, surface errors, etc.)

This assignment will apply for each of the following nine "weeks":

9/2 - 9/4
9/9 - 9/11
9/16 - 9/18
9/30 - 10/2
10/9 - 10/16 (treated as one week)
10/28 - 10/30
11/13 - 11/18
11/20 - 11/25
12/2 - 12/4

Each submission will be worth 10 points and be due at the first class meeting after the second date listed above. E.G. The first submission will be due on 9/9. Upon completion of these nine

submissions, each student will write one additional submission due at the final exam indicating the most important thing he or she learned in the course.

Book Reactions

Students will write a response to submit a response to both **Souled Out** and **Bad Money**.

This papers should be three to four pages typewritten and should engage the questions such as those listed below. Some of the questions overlap or are otherwise related to each other. As such, students might answer them simultaneously and should not treat them as a series of take home essay questions. Rather, students should write an integrated essay reflecting on what they have read.

- What is the principal thesis of the book?
- What evidence (concepts, data, and events) reported in the book best supports the author's thesis?
- What elements of the book did you find most interesting? What elements would you most like others to understand?

Due dates:

<u>Souled Out</u>	9/30
<u>Bad Money</u>	10/28

Final Exam

The final exam will consist of 50 multiple choice questions. Students will be provided with a list of 75 terms to know for the exam. Each question will focus on one of the terms.

Congressional Election Assignment

Each student will write a report on the 2008 congressional campaign race for his or her home district. This will be **due on November 6**. The reports should include the following information:

1. Congressional district (state, number)
2. Outcome of the past three elections: candidates, % vote Democrats, % vote Republican, % vote third party for 2002, 2004, 2006
3. Biographies of candidates in 2008 race (current position and previous political experience, career, education, age, family, notable life experiences)
4. Key issues or events that may impact outcome of election
5. Comments (e.g. who will win?)

Instructor Evaluation

Each student will be evaluated by the instructor for his or her participation, involvement in and contributions to the course. This portion of the grade will reflect all activities in the course that

are not otherwise specified in the syllabus including attendance and participation in class discussion.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments

8/26 Introduction

8/28 Normative questions

Read: Wayne, Is this Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?, Ch. 1 and Semiatin, Campaigns on the Cutting Edge, Ch. 12

9/2 Party functions

Read: Wayne, Ch. 6 and Semiatin, Ch. 7

9/4 Election models

9/9 – 9/11 Party history and critical elections

Read: L. Sandy Maisel and Mark D. Brewer, Parties and Elections in America, Ch. 4: “American Political Parties and Party Organization,” **ON RESERVE**, (42 pages)

9/16 - 9/18 Party organization

9/23 and 9/25 The culture wars, religion and politics

Read: E.J. Dionne, Souled Out: Reclaiming Faith and Politics after the Religious Right, Ch. 1-4 and 7 (Ch. 5 and 6 optional)

9/30 Party reform and the “new politics”

Read: Semiatin, Ch. 1 and Wayne, Ch. 8

10/2 Polling

Read: Semiatin, Ch. 5

10/9 – 10/16 Media

1. Media, culture and politics (10/9)

Read: Sharon Jarvis, The Talk of the Party, Ch. 1, “Political Branding,” **ON RESERVE** (28 pages) and Semiatin, Ch. 9

2. Traditional and new media (10/14)

Read: Semiatin, Ch. 3, 4 and Wayne, Ch. 5

3. Media in the 2008 election (10/16)
10/21 and 10/23 The economy and the election

Read: Kevin Phillips, Bad Money: Reckless Finance, Failed Politics, and the Global Crisis of American Capitalism, **entire**

10/28 -10/30 Campaign finance

Read: Wayne, Ch. 4 and Semiatin, Ch. 2 and 10

11/4 Voter mobilization

Read: Semiatin, Ch. 6 and 8

11/6 Election day

11/11 Election results

11/13 – 11/18 Voting and representation

Read: Wayne, Ch. 2 and 3

11/20 The nomination process

Read: Wayne, Ch. 7

11/25 Election administration

Read: Semiatin, Ch. 11

12/2 Parties and governing

Read: Wayne, Ch. 9

12/4 Parties, elections and democracy

12/9 Conclusion