

Political Science 199  
American Political Parties and Elections  
Spring 2010  
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**Office Hours:** M, W 1:00 – 2:00, Th 1:00 – 2:00 and by appointment

## **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 2010 congressional elections.

## **Required Books**

L. Sandy Maisel, American Political Parties and Elections (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)

Rick Shenkman, Just How Stupid Are We? (New York: Basic Books, 2008)

David Sirota, The Uprising, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2008)

Morely Winograd and Michael D. Hais, Millennial Makeover (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008)

## **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.

## Evaluation of Student's Performance

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

Course Journal	50 points
Course Reflection Paper	50 points
Book responses (2)	100 points (50 points each)
Final Exam	75 points
Instructor Evaluation	25 points

### Course Journal

Beginning in week 2 and continuing through week 11, students will submit a two to four paragraph typewritten statement focusing on some element of the course readings, class materials or relevant external sources (e.g. the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Politico, NPR, etc.) from the preceding week. The dates for which an entry is required and the due date for that entry are listed below.

The focus of the submission will be a matter of the judgment of the student as to what was the most important or interesting thing that the student learned during the week. Each submission should include:

- a clear explanation of the concept, event or data point selected by the student for discussion
- an explanation of why the element chosen is worthy of attention
- a specific reference to or citation for the reading, class discussion or external source on which the submission is based

Each of the ten weekly entries will be worth 5 points. The technical quality of the writing (e.g. proper citation, organization, sentence structure, grammar, surface errors, etc.) will be included in the evaluation of the entries.

### Dates for entries:

<u>Week covered by the entry</u>	<u>Due date</u>
1/26-1/28	2/2
2/2-2/4	2/9
2/9- 2/11	2/16
2/16-2/18	2/23
2/23-2/25	3/2
3/2-3/4	3/16
3/16-3/18	3/23
3/23-3/25	3/30
3/30-4/1	4/13
4/13-4/15	4/20

## **Course Reflection Paper**

Upon completion of the weekly journal entries, each student will write one additional entry indicating the three things learned in the course that he or she would want students outside of the class to know about American political parties and elections. These entries should be three to five typewritten pages in length and are subject to the same criteria for evaluation as the weekly entries. This final entry will be worth 50 points. **The due date for this assignment is April 22.**

## **Book Reactions**

Students will write a two response papers for assigned books for the course. Each response paper will be worth 50 points. Student may choose to write on any two of the following course texts:

### **DUE DATES**

Rick Shenkman, **Just How Stupid Are We?**

Morely Winograd and Michael D. Hais, **Millennial Makeover**

David Sirota, **The Uprising**

**February 25**

**March 18**

**April 13**

These papers should be three to six pages typewritten and include a clear statement of the principal thesis of the book and some discussion of specific examples of the evidence or arguments that the authors use to support the thesis of their book. Students should also assess the degree to which they find the book persuasive or subject to substantive criticism (i.e. criticisms that can be supported by empirical evidence or logical analysis). Stylistic criticisms are also permissible but will be weighted less heavily in assigning grades for the work.

## **Final Exam**

The final exam will consist of 75 multiple choice questions. Students will be provided with a list of terms to know for the exam. Each question will focus on one of the terms. Partial lists will be distributed periodically during the semester.

## **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

1/19 Introduction

1/21 Parties, Elections and American Democracy

**Reading:** Stephan J. Wayne, “Democratic Elections: What’s the Problem,” Ch. 1 in **Is this Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?**, *distributed in class*

1/26 The Functions of Political Parties

1/28 Election Models

2/2 The Constitutional and Legal Structure of the American Party System

**Reading:** L. Sandy Maisel, **American Political Parties and Elections**, pp. 1-16

2/4 The Two Party System

**Reading:** L. Sandy Maisel, **American Political Parties and Elections**, pp. 16-27

2/9 Party History and Critical Elections

**Reading:** L. Sandy Maisel, **American Political Parties and Elections**, pp. 28-55

2/11 Was 2008 a Realigning Election: the Millennial Generation?

**Reading:** Morely Winograd and Michael D. Hais, **Millennial Makeover**, pp. 1-123, 191-246

2/16 Voting Behavior

**Reading:** Stephan J. Wayne, “Popular Base of American Electoral Politics: Suffrage and Turnout,” Ch. 2 in **Is this Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?**, *distributed in class*

2/18 The Quality of the American Electorate

**Reading:** Rick Shenkman, **Just How Stupid Are We?**, entire

2/23 Contemporary Party Organization

**Reading:** L. Sandy Maisel, **American Political Parties and Elections**, pp. 56-90

2/25 The Old Politics

3/2 The New Politics: Party Reform, Primaries and Candidate Centered Campaigns

**Reading:** L. Sandy Maisel, **American Political Parties and Elections**, pp. 91-116

3/4 Campaign Technology

**Reading:** Morely Winograd and Michael D. Hais, **Millennial Makeover**, pp. 124-188

3/16 Traditional Media

3/18 New Media and Voter Mobilization

3/23 Polling

3/25 The National Mood and 2010 Election

**Reading:** David Sirota, **The Uprising**, entire and Morely Winograd and Michael D. Hais, **Millennial Makeover**, pp. 247-267

3/30 The National Mood and the 2010 Election

**Reading:** David Sirota, **The Uprising**, entire

4/1 Elections as Social Control

4/13 Campaign Finance

**Reading:** Thomas Billetteri, "Campaign Finance Reform," **CQ Researcher**, June 13, 2008, Volume 18, Issue 22, available at <http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/document.php?id=cqresrr2008061300&type=hitlist&num=2>

4/15 Representation and the Contemporary Parties

**Reading:** L. Sandy Maisel, **American Political Parties and Elections**, pp. 77-90

4/20 Subnational Elections

**Reading:** L. Sandy Maisel, **American Political Parties and Elections**, pp. 117-134

4/22 Parties in Government

4/27 Assessing Elections and American Democracy

**Reading:** L. Sandy Maisel, **American Political Parties and Elections**, pp. 135-147

4/29 Closing