

PSCI 414  
Spring 2021  
Online

3 credit hours

William D. Adler  
Office: LWH 2068  
Hours: By appointment  
Email: [w-adler@neiu.edu](mailto:w-adler@neiu.edu)  
phone: (773) 442-5657

## **Political Parties and Elections in the U.S.** **College of Arts and Sciences Syllabus**

This graduate course examines both the historical development of political parties in the United States as well as contemporary issues in the study of parties and elections. We will analyze how political parties are created and the functions they perform in our political system. Topics will include race and American political parties, presidential nominations, partisan polarization, and issues of race and gender in recent elections.

### **Texts**

Required books include:

- John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? A Second Look* (University of Chicago Press, 2011)
- Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (University of Chicago Press, 2008)
- Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances: Race and Party Competition in America* (Princeton University Press, 2010)
- Matt Grossman and David A. Hopkins, *Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats* (Oxford University Press, 2016)
- Liliana Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity* (University of Chicago Press, 2018)
- John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck, *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America* (Princeton University Press, 2019)

### **Course Learning Objectives**

This course is intended to give students deep insight into political parties and elections and the relationship between them. Substantial reading and writing is required, as well as informed class discussions. Students are expected not only to learn the substantive material, but also to apply the theories they learn across multiple areas. By the end of the semester students should have an understanding of critical historical and contemporary perspectives on parties and elections, as well as the development of the scholarly literature on these subjects. Students are also expected to write a paper that demonstrates both their grasp of the material and their ability to generate informed opinions based on empirical research.

## Academic Integrity Policy

By enrolling in this course, you are bound by the NEIU Student Code of Conduct: <http://www.neiu.edu/university-life/student-rights-and-responsibilities/student-code-conduct>. You will be informed by your instructor of any additional policy specific to your course regarding plagiarism, class disruptions, etc.

## ADA Statement

Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To request accommodations, students with special needs should make arrangements with the Student Disability Services (SDS) office, located on the main campus in room D104. Contact SDS via (773) 442-4595 or <http://www.neiu.edu/university-life/student-disability-services>.

## Campus Safety

Web links to Campus Safety: Emergency Procedures and Safety Information can be found on NEIUport on the MyNEIU tab or as follows: [http://homepages.neiu.edu/~neiutemp/Emergency\\_Procedures/MainCampus/](http://homepages.neiu.edu/~neiutemp/Emergency_Procedures/MainCampus/).

## Course Requirements

- 1) Complete all readings on schedule. Since this is an online course, all assignments will be submitted through the Desire2Learn platform, and you will earn participation points through discussion on the D2L discussion board. Be aware that online does not mean easier!
- 2) Actively participate in class discussions. As this is an online course, our work will occur online, and discussions will happen on the D2L discussion board. You are expected to regularly contribute to the discussions. **At minimum**, you must make one original post per unit, and comment three times per unit on your classmates' posts. Your participation grade will be determined by the **quality** of the posts you make, not simply meeting the minimum posting requirement. In a graduate seminar full participation by all students is central to creating productive discussions, so this makes up a large percentage of your grade. The base participation grade is a B which can rise or fall based on your contributions.
- 3) Take the final exam. It will consist of essay questions that I will provide to you in advance.
- 4) Complete all required writing assignments. **Late papers will be penalized one-third of a letter grade for each day they are late** (barring serious emergencies, which must be documented). **For the purposes of this course, "late" is defined as submitted to D2L after the deadline specified. I will not accept submissions via email or in hard copy.** Do not wait to the last moment to submit assignments.

All written assignments must be typed in a 12 point font, double spaced, with one-inch margins, and have page numbers. Papers not meeting these criteria will be penalized.

*Writing Assignment #1:* You will write 3 essays in response to the assigned class readings. Papers are due at the end of the unit where those readings are assigned. You may not write more than one per unit and you may not submit more than 3 in total. Each essay must first briefly summarize the readings assigned for that day's class, and then also answer the questions listed below the readings on the syllabus. (Be sure to cite all your sources appropriately.)

Once you have received a grade on your paper, I will give you the option of revising it, if you wish. All revisions are due within one week of when I return the paper to you.

*Writing Assignment #2:* You will write a research paper. No later than **February 24<sup>th</sup>** you will submit a topic proposal for my approval. This proposal must include your research question, suggested sources for research (not necessarily ones you have already read), as well as potential findings. This assignment is graded Approved/Not Approved. Once your proposal is approved you may proceed with your paper. You may not submit a completed research paper until your proposal has been approved. I am open-minded as to potential topics but will be happy to make suggestions, if you wish.

Your paper must be at least 15 pages and include appropriate references (either footnotes or parenthetical style is acceptable) as well as a bibliography. Your paper must be submitted no later than **April 14<sup>th</sup>**. You will also have the opportunity, if you wish, to revise your paper after it is returned to you. If you choose to submit a revision you must do so no later than **May 3<sup>rd</sup>**.

### **Grading**

Work conducted towards the end of the semester will be more heavily weighted in my mind when dispensing final grades; in other words, *improvement counts*.

Participation: 25%  
Short essays: 25%  
Research paper: 25%  
Final: 25%

90-100 A  
80-89 B  
70-79 C  
60-69 D  
Below 60 F

Incompletes will only be given for valid, documented emergencies.

**NOTE ON PLAGIARISM:** Any student found plagiarizing work will receive a grade of **zero** for that assignment and an **F** for the course. You will also be reported to the University for violating the academic integrity policy. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to: direct copying of material that is not your own, copying the material even while providing a citation, or copying ideas without proper attribution. **It is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism; if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask!**

## **Schedule of Classes and Exams**

### **Unit 1: Political Parties - What They Are, What They Do**

#### **READ:**

- APSA Report, “Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System,” *American Political Science Review* 44:3 (September 1950)
- John Aldrich, *Why Parties? A Second Look*, chapters 1-4 and 6

#### **DO (deadline January 27<sup>th</sup>):**

- Discussion post: Why do we have political parties? What do they do, what should they do?
- Essay (see questions below)

#### **Response questions:**

1. What was the purpose of the APSA report and why did it argue for a “responsible” two-party system?
2. According to Aldrich, why do political parties form, and what purposes do they serve? Do you agree with his assessment or not (and why)?

### **Unit 2: How to Think about Parties and Elections**

#### **READ:**

- Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform*, chapters 1-7 and 9
- Nolan McCarty and Eric Schickler, “On the Theory of Parties,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (2018): 175-193.

#### **DO (deadline February 10<sup>th</sup>):**

- Discussion post: Are parties coalitions of “intense policy demanders” or something else altogether?
- Essay (see questions below)

#### **Response questions:**

1. What is the fundamental argument of *The Party Decides*? Do you think that argument still holds true today? What has changed, if anything, since the book was written?

### Unit 3: Political Parties and Race in U.S. History

#### READ:

- Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances: Race and Party Competition in America*, chapters 1-4
- Paul Frymer and John David Skrentny, “Coalition-Building and the Politics of Electoral Capture During the Nixon Administration: African Americans, Labor, Latinos,” *Studies in American Political Development* 12:1 (Spring 1998): 131-161.

#### DO (deadline February 24<sup>th</sup>):

- Discussion post: Explain the racial dimensions of America’s political party system
- Submit topic proposal
- Essay (see questions below)

#### **Response questions:**

1. Do you agree with Frymer’s description of African-Americans as electorally captured by the Democratic Party? What evidence does he bring to bear on that assertion? What are the implications of that capture?

### Unit 4: Contemporary Parties and Polarization – Part 1

#### READ:

- Matt Grossman and David A. Hopkins, *Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats*
- Julia Azari, “Weak parties and strong partisanship are a bad combination,” *Mischief of Faction*, November 3, 2016
- Alan I. Abramowitz and Steven Webster, “The Rise of Negative Partisanship and the Nationalization of U.S. Elections in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Electoral Studies* 41 (March 2016): 12-22.

#### DO (deadline March 11<sup>th</sup>):

- Discussion post: What does party asymmetry mean for our politics?
- Essay (see questions below)

#### **Response questions:**

1. Do you think the argument Grossman and Hopkins make about party asymmetry is correct? What evidence did they bring to bear on this issue?

2. How do the perspectives of Azari and Abramowitz & Webster modify our understanding of contemporary polarization, compared to Grossman & Hopkins?

## Unit 5: Contemporary Parties and Polarization – Part 2

### READ:

- Liliana Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*
- Liliana Mason and Julie Wronski, “One Tribe to Bind Them All: How Our Social Group Attachments Strengthen Partisanship,” *Advances in Political Psychology* 39:1 (2018): 257-277.

### DO (deadline March 29<sup>th</sup>):

- Discussion post: What does social group polarization mean for our politics?
- Essay (see questions below)

### Response questions:

1. How do we understand the links between political identity and social identity in light of the evidence Mason provides?
2. Do Mason’s findings reinforce the argument from Grossman and Hopkins about party asymmetry or not? Explain why or why not.

## Unit 6: The 2016 Election – Part 1

### READ:

- John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck, *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America*

### DO (deadline April 14<sup>th</sup>):

- Discussion post: What happened?
- Submit research paper
- Essay (see questions below)

### Response questions:

1. According to the authors of *Identity Crisis*, what reasons explain how Donald Trump won the 2016 election?
2. In light of the 2020 election results, what of those reasons (if any) changed since 2016? Explain in detail.

## Unit 7: The 2016 Election – Part 2

### READ:

- Marc Hooghe and Ruth Dassonneville, “Explaining the Trump Vote: The Effect of Racist Resentment and Anti-Immigrant Sentiments,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 51:3 (July 2018): 528-534.
- Mark Setzler and Alixandra B. Yanus, “Why Did Women Vote for Donald Trump?” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 51:3 (July 2018): 523-527.
- Aaron C. Weinschenk, “That’s Why the Lady Lost to the Trump: Demographics and the 2016 Presidential Election,” *Journal of Political Marketing* 18:1-2 (2019): 69-91.
- Martin P. Wattenberg, “From the Obama Youthquake of ’08 to the Trumpquake of ’16: How Young People’s Dislike of Hillary Clinton Cost Her the Election,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 49:1 (March 2019): 168-184.
- Erin C. Cassese and Tiffany D. Barnes, “Reconciling Sexism and Women’s Support for Republican Candidates: A Look at Gender, Class, and Whiteness in the 2012 and 2016 Presidential Races,” *Political Behavior* 41:3 (September 2019): 677-700.
- Nazita Lajevardi and Marisa Abrajano, “How Negative Sentiment toward Muslim Americans Predicts Support for Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election,” *The Journal of Politics* 81:1 (January 2019): 296-302.
- Michele F. Margolis, “Who Wants to Make America Great Again? Understanding Evangelical Support for Donald Trump,” *Politics and Religion* 13:1 (March 2020): 89-118.

### DO (deadline May 3<sup>rd</sup>):

- Discussion post: Did Trump win in 2016 because of identity politics?
- Submit revised research paper (if needed)
- Essay (see questions below)

### Response questions:

1. According to these various authors, what reasons account for Donald Trump’s victory in 2016?
2. How do these arguments compare to those made by the authors of *Identity Crisis*?

### Final Exam: Due May 6<sup>th</sup>