

Political Science 4400
Political Parties & Voter Behavior
Bowling Green State University, Spring 2016
M / W / F 1:30 – 2:20
East Hall 114

Instructor: Dr. Melissa Miller
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Overview

There is no time like the present to study political parties and voter behavior. The Democratic and Republican Parties are currently providing the structure through which major-party candidates will be chosen to square off in the 2016 general election. They have already hosted presidential debates, planned their national conventions, and laid the groundwork for turning out the vote. They have also been derided, often by their own candidates, as the source of government ineffectiveness. Indeed, many voters seem *most* enamored of those candidates who are *least* tied to party politics.

How can political science scholarship illuminate our understanding of the 2016 presidential election? What does it tell us about the prospects for each of the candidates? What does it tell us about the prospects for the two-party system? What does it tell us about voters' willingness to identify with and be active in the Democratic and Republican parties? In this class you will find out.

We will be reading published political science scholarship on political parties and voter behavior, along with breaking news from the 2016 campaign trail. We will also “learn by doing” through a semester-long data collection project in which you will play the role of the political scientist who collects data, crafts hypotheses and subjects them to empirical testing using a topic of your choosing in a research paper. A set of reading quizzes and homework worksheets will check your progress throughout the semester, while three exams will round out the course.

The goal is to provide you with the skills needed to assess the 2016 presidential election – and future local, state, and national elections – with a critical eye. You will be challenged to evaluate multiple sides of complex issues and controversies and engage in evidence-based reasoning on political issues. You will gain lots of practice “thinking like a political scientist” – a skill you can use in your political and other social science courses, as well as in the world at large as an engaged and informed citizen.

Learning Outcomes

- LO-1 Critically evaluate evidence on each side of arguments made in the study and consideration of American political parties and voter behavior
- LO-2 Craft written and oral arguments related to issues and questions about American political

parties and voter behavior

- LO-3 Engage in evidence-based reasoning about significant trends, issues, and theories on American political parties and voter behavior
- LO-4 Conduct political science research through data collection, analysis and hypothesis testing
- LO-5 Demonstrate knowledge on the key trends, issues and theories in the analysis of American political parties and voter behavior

Texts

All texts are available for purchase at the bookstore in the Bowen-Thompson Student Union, including a 3-month subscription to *The New York Times*. Each is **required**.

Marjorie Randon Hershey, *Party Politics in America*, 16th edition. Routledge, 2015. ISBN 9780205992096

John C. Green, Daniel J. Coffey, and David B. Cohen, eds. *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties*, 7th edition, Rowman & Littlefield, 2014. ISBN 9781442225596

Stephen J. Wayne, *Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election*, 5th edition, CQ Press, 2014. ISBN 9781452205656

Three-month subscription to *The New York Times*; you are required to read **all election-related coverage (except for op-eds and editorials) in “today’s paper” Monday thru Friday.**

Students who choose to purchase the texts online or via a source other than the university bookstore should make sure that they purchase the **correct edition**. The ISBN number associated with each text is your assurance that you have the correct edition.

Requirements

Reading Quizzes	10%	Midterm #1	15%
Data collection forms	10%	Midterm #2	15%
Data analysis worksheets	10%	Final examination	15%
Research paper proposal	5%	Participation in exercises	5%
Research paper	15%	& discussions in class	

Reading Quizzes (LO-5)

10% of final course grade

There will be a reading quiz for each chapter assigned from the Hershey text. These quizzes will be posted on Canvas and must be completed **before** class on the date listed. The quiz will be removed 15 minutes before the class start time so it must be completed before class. Only during the first week

will you participate in an interactive lecture and discussion prior to taking the quiz. Be sure to read the appropriate chapter of the Hershey text **before taking each quiz.**

Each quiz will be multiple choice. Quizzes must be completed alone; collaborating with other students on quizzes in any way will result in full academic honesty penalties and a failing grade in the class.

You will have the opportunity to retake each quiz twice, but both attempts must be made before the deadline – 15 minutes before the start of class.

Readings from the Wayne text, chapters from the volume edited by Green et al., and articles pertaining to the 2016 campaign in *The New York Times* (M thru F) will be discussed in class and cold-calling will be employed. Be sure to complete **all** readings before class.

Data Collection Forms (LO-4)

10% of final course grade

A standard data collection form is posted on Canvas. You will use this data collection form to content code articles about the 2016 presidential campaign in *The New York Times*. You can print out copies of the form as needed. The data collected will be employed in each student's research paper, which is due on the last day of class.

By noon each Wednesday, a coding assignment sheet will be posted on Canvas. This will list all students enrolled in the course with the specific articles each should code by the weekly **2016 Presidential Primary Workshops**. Come to the workshop with a completed data collection form for each article you have been assigned. Also bring either a printed copy of the article **or** an electronic device on which you can display the article. You and your coding partner will compare coding forms for consistency and accuracy and hammer out coding differences during the workshop with our assistance. You will be assigned a rotating set of coding partners throughout the semester so that you have the opportunity to work with a number of different colleagues in the class.

Data Analysis Worksheets (LO-4)

10% of final course grade

Much of the political science literature – including texts covered in this course – employs quantitative data and accompanying statistical analyses. As well, your research paper will employ bivariate statistical tests of specific hypotheses using the data collected in the weekly **2016 Presidential Primary Workshops**. For this reason, a portion of the course will be devoted to learning the basic principles of hypothesis testing, several basic tests of statistical significance, and use of SPSS software to conduct them. Three separate data analysis worksheets will assess your understanding of these skills, which are covered in periodic **Conducting Political Science Workshops**.

SPSS is a statistical software package that uses drop-down menus to enable social scientists to engage in hypothesis testing. Detailed instructions for using SPSS will be provided during the **Conducting Political Science Workshops**. SPSS is available for use on campus in a number of university computer labs (e.g. Union Lab, basement of Hayes Hall, Library Lab). There is no

requirement that you purchase SPSS and, in fact, I advise against it. It is very expensive, and the “student version” will not accommodate the number of variables you will be using. In short, **do not buy SPSS**.

Please note that there are no prerequisites for this course and no requirement that you have prior statistical training. Instead, the course provides basic coverage of the principles and techniques used by political scientists to conduct quantitative research. You will be prepared to conduct basic political science research by the final weeks of the course and you will be ready to write up your findings in your research paper. Students who have done so in the past – even those with no prior methodological training – have reported feeling empowered and gratified with their newfound ability to conduct their own primary research. In addition, I am always available (and enthusiastic!) about helping students with their research papers. I look forward to working with you.

Research Paper Proposal (LO-4)

5% of final course grade

A research paper proposal form to be filled out is posted on Canvas. You will submit this during the early stages of your project specifying the three hypotheses you plan to test, the variables from the 2016 Presidential Primary dataset to be employed, and the statistical test(s) you will use. You will thus get feedback in the early stages of your project so that you can approach the data analysis portion of your research project with confidence.

Research Paper (LO-1 thru LO-5)

15% of final course grade

Because the data you will be using in the paper comes from a single source – *The New York Times* – your paper must address some facet of the *Times*’ coverage. However, there will be many topics to choose from. You may choose to compare the amount of coverage afforded the Democrats versus the Republicans, the tone of coverage afforded the Democrats versus the Republicans, the quantity of coverage devoted to different issues, the coverage afforded to a specific candidate or group of candidates, the traits associated with a specific candidate or group of candidates, etc.

Your research paper must include a literature review, three separate and distinct hypotheses, a description of the dataset, results from the statistical tests employed, and a discussion of your findings, including their implications. A detailed outline for your paper will be provided, as this sort of political science research follows a very specific and deliberate format. You will have many opportunities both in and outside of class to get assistance with your paper.

Examinations (LO-1 thru LO-3 and LO-5)

45% of final course grade (15% per exam)

Both the midterms and final examination will employ a combination of short answer and essay questions. These will assess your depth of knowledge on the substance covered in the class, your ability to critically evaluate issues, theories and controversies about U.S. political parties and voter behavior, and to craft evidence-based arguments. All of the readings – save for *The New York Times* – will be

covered on the exams. The content covered in the **Conducting Political Science Workshops** will also be covered on the exams.

Absolutely no cell phones or electronic devices are permitted during the exam. If you bring such a device, you will be required to place it at the instructor's desk during the duration of the exam. Students who disobey this rule will receive a zero for the exam.

Travel plans, airline flights, and vacations are **not acceptable excuses** for missing an examination. Plan accordingly.

Participation in Exercises and Discussions in Class (LO-1 thru LO-5)

5% of final course grade

Your participation grade will be based on (required) attendance, and the quantity and quality of your participation during exercises and discussions conducted in class. By keeping up with the assigned readings (including *The New York Times*) and the reading quizzes, you will feel well-prepared to participated in class.

When necessary, students will be cold-called to spark discussion. Students who have not read the assigned material will have difficulty participating and will risk failing the course.

Codes of Conduct and Academic Honesty Policy

The instructor and students in this course will adhere to the University's general Codes of Conduct defined in the *BGSU Student Handbook*. The Code of Academic Conduct (Academic Honesty Policy) requires that students do not engage in academic dishonesty in any aspect of this course (including data collection, entry, and analysis). For details, refer to:

- *BGSU Student Handbook* (<http://bgsu.edu/downloads/sa/file15768.pdf>)
- *The Academic Charter, B.II.H* (<http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/facsenate/page471.html>)
- Student Discipline Programs (<http://bgsu.edu/offices/sa/studentdiscipline/index.html>)

Classroom Etiquette

Please maintain a respectful demeanor at all times during class. Expect to hear multiple political viewpoints and opinions. Treat everyone with respect. **Smokeless cigarettes are not permitted in this classroom.**

Disability Policy

In accordance with the University policy, if the student has a documented disability and requires accommodations to obtain equal access in this course, he or she should contact me at the beginning of the semester and make this need known. Students with disabilities must verify their eligibility through the Office of Disability Services for Students, 413 South Hall, 419-372-8495. (<http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/sa/disability/>)

Religious Holidays

It is the policy of the University to make every reasonable effort to allow students to observe their religious holidays without academic penalty. In such cases, it is the obligation of the student to provide me with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which he or she will be absent. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve the student of responsibility for completing required work missed. Following the necessary notification, the student should consult with me to determine what appropriate alternative opportunity will be provided, allowing the student to fully complete his or her academic responsibilities. (As stated in *The Academic Charter*, B-II.G-4.b at: <http://www.bgsu.edu/downloads/bgsu/file919.pdf>).

Student veteran-friendly campus

BGSU educators recognize student veterans' rights when entering and exiting the university system. If you are a student veteran, please communicate with me so reasonable accommodations can be made for absence when drilling or being called to active duty (See <http://www.bgsu.edu/veteran/> for more information).

Schedule of Lectures, Readings and Assignments

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT READINGS

In addition to the readings listed in the schedule below, students are required to read all campaign-related coverage in *The New York Times* in "today's paper" Monday through Friday. Editorials and op-eds are **not required**.

Choosing the Party's Nominees

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|---------------|--|
| M 1/11 | "How Parties Choose Candidates" (Hershey, ch. 9) |
| T 1/12 | Reading Quiz on Hershey, ch. 9 due by 6 p.m. |
| W 1/13 | "Choosing the Presidential Nominees" (Hershey, ch. 10) |
| F 1/15 | 2016 Presidential Primary Workshop – Orientation
AND
Reading Quiz on Hershey, ch. 10 due by 6 p.m. |
| M 1/18 | CLASS WILL NOT MEET TODAY – Martin Luther King Jr. Day |
| W 1/20 | "The Nomination Process: Whose Is It Anyway?" (Wayne, ch. 7)

"Republicans and Reform: The 2012 Nomination Rules" (Green et al., ch. 16) |
| F 1/22 | 2016 Presidential Primary Workshop |

The General Election

- M 1/25 **Conducting Political Science Workshop**
- W 1/27 “The General Election” (Hershey, ch. 11)
- Reading Quiz on Hershey, ch. 11 due by 1:15 p.m.**
- F 1/29 **2016 Presidential Primary Workshop**
- M 2/1 “Campaign Communications: How Much Do They Matter?” (Wayne, ch. 8)
- “News Media: Watchdog or Pit Bull?” (Wayne, ch. 5)
- Data Analysis Worksheet due at start of class**

Financing the Campaigns

- W 2/3 “Financing the Campaigns” (Hershey, ch. 12)
- Reading Quiz on Hershey, ch. 12 due by 1:15 p.m.**
- F 2/5 **2016 Presidential Primary Workshop**
- M 2/8 “Has Money Corrupted Our Electoral Process?” (Wayne, ch. 4)
- W 2/10 **Conducting Political Science Workshop**
- F 2/12 **2016 Presidential Primary Workshop**
- M 2/15 **MIDTERM #1**
- W 2/17 “Political Party Activity in the 2012 Elections: Sophisticated Orchestration or Diminished Influence?” (Green et al., ch. 13)
- “Classifying Super PACs” (Green et al., ch. 14)
- Data Analysis Worksheet Due at start of class**
- F 2/19 **2016 Presidential Primary Workshop**

Political Parties and the Two-Party System

- M 2/22 “What are Political Parties?” (Hershey, ch. 1)
- “Are American Parties Still Representative?” (Wayne, ch. 6)
- Reading Quiz on Hershey, ch. 1 due by 1:15 p.m.**

W 2/24 “The American Two-Party System” (Hershey, ch. 2)

Reading Quiz on Hershey, ch. 2 due by 1:15 p.m.

F 2/26 **2016 Presidential Primary Workshop**

M 2/29 **In-class simulation**

J. Tobin Grant, “Game 10 – Campaigns,” *Playing Politics*, W.W. Norton (2004)

This reading is available on Canvas. Please print it out, read it, and bring the entire reading, including scorecards etc. to class with you to use during the simulation.

Party Organizations & Their Activists

W 3/2 **Conducting Political Science Workshop**

F 3/4 “State and Local Party Organizations” (Hershey, ch. 3)

“Federal Parties and Polarization” (Green et al., ch. 9)

Reading Quiz on Hershey, ch. 3 due by 1:15 p.m.

M 3/7 **CLASS WILL NOT MEET TODAY – Spring Break**

W 3/9 **CLASS WILL NOT MEET TODAY – Spring Break**

F 3/11 **CLASS WILL NOT MEET TODAY – Spring Break**

M 3/14 “Changes in Local Party Structure and Activity: 1980-2008” (Green et al., ch. 17)

“Separated We Stand? The Impact of Ideological Sorting on Local Party Dynamics” (Green et al., ch. 18)

Data Analysis Worksheet Due by 5 p.m. (mailbox in 122 Williams Hall)

W 3/16 “The Parties’ National Organizations” (Hershey, ch. 4)

Reading Quiz on Hershey, ch. 4 due by 1:15 p.m.

F 3/18 **2016 Presidential Primary Workshop**

Party Identification & Party Coalitions

M 3/21 “Party Activists” (Hershey, ch. 5)

Reading Quiz on Hershey, ch. 5 due by 1:15 p.m.

W 3/23 **Conducting Political Science Workshop**

F 3/25 **MIDTERM #2**

M 3/28 **2016 Presidential Primary Workshop**

W 3/30 “Party Identification” (Hershey, ch. 6)

Reading Quiz on Hershey, ch. 6 due by 1:15 p.m.

AND

Data Analysis Worksheet due by 5 p.m. (mailbox in 122 Williams Hall)

F 4/1 “Partisan Nation: The Rise of Affective Partisanship in the American Electorate” (Green et al., ch. 2)

“Political Identity and Party Polarization in the American Electorate” (Green et al., ch. 3)

Research Paper Proposal due by 5 p.m. (mailbox in Williams Hall)

M 4/4 **2016 Presidential Primary Workshop**

W 4/6 “Party Coalitions and Party Change” (Hershey, ch. 7)

Reading Quiz on Hershey, ch. 7 due by 1:15 p.m.

Parties and Voting

F 4/8 **2016 Presidential Primary Workshop**

M 4/11 “Parties and Voter Turnout” (Hershey, ch. 8)

Reading Quiz on Hershey, ch. 8 due by 1:15 p.m.

W 4/13 “Popular Base of American Electoral Politics” (Wayne, ch. 2)

“The Ground Game From the Voter’s Perspective: 2012 and Before” (Green et al., ch. 15)

F 4/15 **2016 Presidential Primary Workshop**

The Party in Government

M 4/18 “Parties in Congress and State Legislatures” (Hershey, ch. 13)

Reading Quiz on Hershey, ch. 13 due by 1:15 p.m.

W 4/20 “Partisan, Polarized, Yet Not Dysfunctional?” (Green et al., ch. 6)

“Are These Boots Made for Walking? Polarization and Ideological Change Among U.S. House Members” (Green et al., ch. 7)

F 4/22 **2016 Presidential Primary Workshop**

- M 4/25 “Party Polarization in America’s State Legislatures: An Update” (Green et al., ch. 8)
“The Party in the Executive and the Courts” (Hershey, ch. 14)
- W 4/27 “The Party in the Executive and the Courts” (Hershey, ch. 14)
- Reading Quiz on Hershey, ch. 14 due by 1:15 p.m.**
- F 4/29 **2016 Presidential Primary Research Papers due at start of class**
Final Exam Review
- F 5/6 **FINAL EXAM from 1:15 to 3:15 p.m.**