Political parties are the building blocks of democratic politics. Why do politicians and voters create, change, and destroy them? What do citizens and political scientists want from them, and what affects how well parties meet these demands? Does it matter which party or parties control the government? With such questions in mind, this seminar explores comparative theories of political parties in both established and new democracies.

Assignments: All students taking the seminar for credit must do the assigned readings, write three papers, and participate in discussions. Two of the papers are short critical analyses of the readings (approximately 750-1000 words); students will sign up for their choice of topics during the first seminar meeting. If seminar enrollment requires students to prepare more than two critical analyses, only two of the papers will be graded (the student will decide which two). The critical reviews should focus your thoughts, prompt possible research paper topics, and guide our discussions. The papers should raise general questions about the readings as well as specific questions about the readings under review. They should be thought-provoking. They can take on any aspect of the readings to be discussed that week, so long as they analyze rather than summarize. The papers might critique or extend theories, consider applications to different cases, reexamine empirical evidence, etc. Students writing critical reviews will present their analysis (approximately 15 minutes) in seminar. To accommodate discussion, critical review papers are due 24 hours in advance of seminar, via email, to everyone enrolled.

The 3rd paper is a research design of approximately 20 pages. A research design is a project you would complete if you had the time and resources. I will not expect you to complete the research for the project. However, a research design is a good way to begin thinking about potential paper or dissertation projects. I will distribute a “How to Prepare a Research Design” handout to guide your preparation. All students must meet with me individually by week seven to discuss their research design topic. A draft of the research design is due via email May 3rd to everyone in seminar. Students will present their research design, and provide comments on everyone else’s research design, in seminar the following day (plan to stay late!). A final version, responding to comments received, is due on May 11th.

Grades: grading will be based on the following: critical analyses 20% each, research design 50%, and seminar participation 10%. I will discuss your progress in the course during our one-on-one meetings to discuss research designs.

Reading Material: you should purchase the following books at the bookstore:

• Richard Gunther, Jose Ramon Montero, and Linz (eds.), *Political Parties: Old Concepts and New Challenges* (Oxford University Press, 2002)
• Wolfgang Muller and Kaare Strom (eds.), *Policy, Office, or Votes: How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions* (Cambridge University Press, 1999) *(buy if you are at all interested in European politics, otherwise copy chapters 1 and 12.)*
• Alan Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems* (Oxford University Press, 1996)

All other readings will be available on-line.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1 (January 19) Introduction: Why Do We Care (1)?**

Reading questions: What do we want (as citizens) from political parties? Possibilities: a sense of belonging; articulation, aggregation and representation of political interests; accountability…

• Juan Linz, “Parties in Contemporary Democracies: Problems and Paradoxes,” in Gunther, Montero, and Linz, pp. 291-317
• Philippe Schmitter, “Parties Are Not What They Once Were,” in Diamond and Gunther (eds.), *Political Parties and Democracy* (JHU Press, 2001), pp. 67-89
• Soren Holmberg, “Are Political Parties Necessary?” *Electoral Studies* 22 (2003), 287-299

**Week 2 (January 26): Why Do We Care (2)?**

Reading question: How do we, as political scientists, study political parties?

• Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems*, pp. 1-13
• Leon Epstein, *Political Parties in the American Mold*, chapter 2.
• Susan C. Stokes, “Political Parties and Democracy,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 2
Week 3 (February 2): What do Parties Want, and How do We Know? Assessments of Party Goals and Strategies

Reading questions:

1) How can we theorize about party “goals?” Do parties seek votes, office, or policy? What shapes the tradeoff among those three goals?
2) How does the basic spatial model of competition work? What are its moving parts? What are its assumptions about parties, about intra-party politics, and about voters?
3) How do expectations change if we alter a) the number of competing parties; b) the number of salient dimensions of competition; c) the sequence of party entry; d) voters’ decision functions; or e) the institutional context?

- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Chs. 2, 7 (through Section I only), and 8 (through Section II).
- Kaare Strom and Wolfgang C. Muller (eds.), *Policy, Office, or Votes*, pp. 1-35 and ch. 12.

Week 4 (February 9): What Kinds of Parties Are There? Organization

Reading questions: How and why do party organizations differ? What elements of party organization most determine parties’ ability to realize their goals (whatever those may be)? That is, how can we link party organization to party strategy? Are there “natural” tendencies in party organizational evolution? Why? Roberto Michels thought the answer was obvious. To what
extent do US parties confound Michels’ famous dictum? Is there a link between parties’ “founding ideologies” and their subsequent evolution?

- Seymour M. Lipset, 1961. “Introduction.” In Robert Michels, Political Parties. (Skip the parts about unions.)
- Ware, Political Parties and Party Systems, Chs. 1 and 3.
- Leon Epstein, Political Parties in the American Mold, pages 79-89 and 200-208.
- Diamond and Gunther, chapters 1 and 2.
- Steven Wolinetz, “Beyond the Catch-all Party.” In Gunther, et al., pp. 136-165


Reading questions: what is a “cleavage?” How do we know when one becomes politically salient “enough” to foster the formation of a political party? To what extent does the sociological approach to party systems under- or over-predict party formation?

- Ware, Political Parties and Party Systems, Ch 6.
- Leon Epstein, 1980. Political Parties in Western Democracies, Ch. 2.
  http://repositories.cdlib.org/uclalsoc/trcsa/8/


What assumptions do scholars bring to the table in this literature? To what extent can the concepts employed in this week’s readings “travel” to other countries? Why or why not?


Why should we care about the number of parties, much less the “effective” number of parties? What answers have political scientists provided to this question? What factors shape the effective number of parties, how, and why?


Week 8 (March 9): The Politics of Cleavages

- Chhibber, *Democracy without Associations*. Intro and chapter on Spain and Algeria.

Week 9 (March 23): Party System Dynamics: How Do Parties Interact?
What is a party “system?” What difference do different types of systems make, and why? To what extent can one talk about a party “system” without talking about the parties within that system? What explains patterns of stable partisan competition? If party systems are “stable,” what explains the evolution of party support and/or the entrance of new competitors - how and why do new parties emerge?

- Ware, Political Parties and Party Systems, Chapter 5 (contrast to Mair chapter)

Week 10 (March 30): Party and Party System Evolution

- Ware, Political Parties and Party Systems, Chapter 7.
- Gary Cox, Making Votes Count, pp. 251-265.


How and why do party systems evolve, but the parties in the system stay the same? Contrast arguments about party adaptation to arguments from last week about new party entry. Consider the assumptions in the “realignment” literature on US party politics and explore the extent to which these arguments might apply outside the US.

- Merle Black, “The Transformation of the Southern Democratic Party,” The Journal of
Politics 66:4 (November 2004), 1001-1017


**Week 12 (April 13): Party System Evolution: Focus on New(ish) Democracies**

What’s the relationship between *party* change/institutionalization and *party-system* change/institutionalization? Are these concepts separable? Is a party’s ability to pursue its goals a function of party-system “institutionalization” or determined by factors internal to parties themselves and independent of party-system effects? How do we know an “institutionalized” system when we see one? What causes institutionalization? What causes de-institutionalization?


**Week 13 (April 20): Party Governance: Theorizing Coalitions**

How do our theories of party “goals” relate to the theories of coalition formation? What is the relative importance of spatial and reputational considerations for coalition formation? How do different constitutional formats alter the “game” of coalition formation?

- Wolfgang Muller and Kaare Strom, “Conclusion.” in Muller and Strom (eds.), 559-592
- Octavio Amorim Neto and David Samuels, “Democratic Regimes and Cabinet Politics: A
Global Perspective.” Unpublished.


- Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems*, pp. 349-358 and 367-376
- Geoffrey Garrett, *Partisan Politics in the Global Economy*, Ch1
- Anna Grzymala-Busse, “Political Competition and the Politicization of the State in East Central Europe,” *Comparative Political Studies* 36:10 (2003), 1123-1147.

Week 15 (May 4): Research design presentations.

Final research design due 5/11