

# POLS 3055-01: Parties and Elections, Fall 2016

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CRN 87943: Wednesdays, 2:00-4:30 p.m., Walker 205, Cochran Campus

Office Hours: Mondays 2:30–5:30 p.m., Jones 314 (Macon).

Tuesdays 3:15–5:30 p.m., Academic Services Building 124 (WRC2).

Wednesdays 4:30–5:30 p.m., Wiggs Hall 15 (Cochran).

Also available by appointment.

Welcome to the class! This course comprises an overview of the role of political parties and elections in the U.S. political system. We will also consider parties and elections in a *comparative* perspective, bringing in examples from and contrasts with other democratic societies. A particular focus of this class is a consideration of the rise of political polarization in the United States in recent decades; we will consider the origins of polarization, the seriousness of its effects, and what can be done to reduce polarization itself and/or its effects.

► **Prerequisites:** You should have successfully completed POLS 1101 or POLS 1101H (American Government) before enrolling in this class. Additional political science coursework is desirable, but not essential.

**Required Materials:** There are two books required for this course:

Marjorie Randon Hershey. 2015. *Party Politics in America*, 16th ed. New York: Pearson. ISBN 978-0-205-99209-6.

Daniel J. Hopkins and John Sides, eds. 2015. *Political Polarization in American Politics*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic. ISBN 978-1-5913-0627-3.

They should be available, new and used, at the Middle Georgia State University bookstore location in Cochran; you may also be able to order them on-line at a discount.

Additional readings may be assigned at my discretion; I will provide them for you at the library reserve desk, on the course's Brightspace site, or as handouts in class.

**Grades:** Your final grade in this course will be based on the following elements, weighted as follows:

Midterm Exam	25%	Participation and Reading Quizzes	10%
Final Exam	35%	Papers and Presentations	30%

The overall average posted in Brightspace throughout the semester will also be weighted as above. *Your grade is not simply based on “adding up points” as it may be in some of your other courses.* You can review your current grades at any time in Brightspace.

The final grade in the course reported to the registrar will be converted based on this scale:

Final Weighted Average	Grade	Grade Points	Catalog Description
90.0 or above	A	4.0	Excellent work
80.0–89.9	B	3.0	Good work
70.0–79.9	C	2.0	Satisfactory work
60.0–69.9	D	1.0	Passing work
59.9 or below	F	0.0	Failing work

I reserve the right to assign the grade of “FA” to students with excessive unexcused absences; see below for details.

► **Grading Philosophy:** Your grades will be earned based my judgment of your performance in meeting the learning objectives of the course, and not on the basis of good intentions, whether or not you agree with my political or ideological views (you probably don't), or how much effort you put in to the course. To judge your performance comprehensively, my grading may include both objective and subjective assessments; sometimes there is a clear "right" answer, sometimes there is no one "right" answer, and sometimes there are a number of potential responses that vary in completeness and correctness, and so my approach to grading may differ based on that reality.

My commitment to you is that I will assign fair and appropriate grades, in a reasonably timely manner,<sup>1</sup> according to this philosophy, based on the work that is presented for grading. If at any time you believe I have not met that standard, see the section on "Grade Appeals" below.

► **Exams:** There will be two closed-book, in-class examinations, including the final examination, on the dates that are indicated on the syllabus, covering the assigned materials. The midterm exam will count as 25% of your final grade. The final examination, which will count as 35% of your final grade, is *comprehensive* and will cover all of the course materials. **No examination grades will be dropped** under any circumstances. Exams may include multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions.

During exams, no discussion among students is permitted of any kind, and all electronic devices (cell phones, calculators, pagers, computers, etc.) must be **switched off and stored away**.

► **Response Papers and Presentations:** There will be two papers, in which you will respond to a prompt I provide and write an out-of-class essay based on readings from the assigned texts or otherwise provided to you. Each paper will be worth 10% of your final course grade. In addition, you will give an individual, in-class presentation based on both papers; each presentation will be worth 5% of the final course grade. Further details on the papers and presentations will be provided in-class in early September, along with guidance on proper documentation and style.

► **Participation and Quizzes:** The remaining 10% of your final grade will be based on your level of participation and attendance in class. If I determine there has been insufficient attention to the readings, I may also administer quizzes with or without advance warning, which will also count toward this grade.

► **Exam and Quiz Content:** Questions on examinations and quizzes may be drawn from the textbook, materials presented in lecture, and/or additional materials provided by the instructor as announced in class. Just reading the books, or just attending class, will likely be insufficient to earn a good grade in the course.

**Contacting the Professor:** My regularly-scheduled office hours are listed at the beginning of the syllabus. During those times, I generally do not schedule appointments; rather, meetings are "first come, first serve." When I am not busy with a student in-person, I will also be available "virtually" at these times by phone or web chat. If you wish to make a confirmed appointment to see me *outside* my scheduled hours, please do so at least two business days in advance.

If you do contact me outside my office hours, please bear in mind that my other work and personal obligations may be on a different schedule than what is convenient for you; for example, I may be in class, in the midst of research, or at a meeting. Except under extraordinary circumstances, if your email includes a question or otherwise requires a response, I will always get back to you within one business day, and frequently sooner; messages that merely inform me of a class absence may not be acknowledged.

If you call my office outside my office hours, please avoid leaving voice mail or messages with university staff; it is an incredibly unproductive and inefficient means of communication. You will usually receive a much quicker response by email.

To protect the privacy of your educational records, all discussion regarding grades or other confidential

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<sup>1</sup>You should expect the grading of written work to generally take between 5 and 10 business days.

information must be conducted in person, via Brightspace, or via your official *mga.edu* email address; I will not discuss confidential information over the phone or via any non-school email address. If you have not yet activated your official university email address, please see <http://www.mga.edu/technology/email.aspx>.

**When contacting me outside of class, please be sure to specify both the course and section you are in, as it will allow me to respond more quickly to you.**

**Class Policies:** I believe that for our class to be successful, we must establish a supportive and respectful environment in the classroom and related settings (such as the class website on Brightspace). Accordingly, disruptive behaviors such as repeated tardiness, side conversations, reading materials unrelated to the course (such as the student newspaper), or use of communication technologies (e.g., web browsing/IMing/texting during class) will adversely affect your grade; repeated or egregious disruptive behavior may result in you being asked to leave class for the day, which will be counted as an unexcused absence.

► **Electronic devices:** In the past I have found that while a few students are able to use laptops and tablets effectively as note-taking aids in the classroom, the vast majority find it difficult to avoid distractions from email, Facebook, and other sources online. Ordinarily this wouldn't cause much of a problem, but in the classroom setting this creates what social scientists refer to as "negative externalities"; specifically, when you're watching that funny YouTube video of the monkey washing a cat, everyone around you is also going to see it and be distracted too. Accordingly, I ask that you mute or switch off your cell phones and any alarms during class, and refrain from using laptops, tablets, e-readers, "smart" or "dumb" phones, and other portable electronic devices during class.

There may be times in class when I *specifically* ask you to use your cell phone or a laptop or tablet (for example, to participate in a web-based activity); on these occasions, of course, it would be OK to do so.

► **Extra credit:** To be fair to all students, I do not offer individualized extra-credit opportunities. If you believe you might benefit from extra credit, I strongly advise you take advantage of those opportunities as they are announced over the term.

► **Notes:** I do not provide lecture notes for students under any circumstances. You will have to rely on the generosity of a classmate or make use of any materials provided on the textbook website or the textbook's study guide, if applicable.<sup>2</sup>

► **Revisions to the syllabus:** While I will make every effort to follow the syllabus as-written, if unforeseen circumstances arise during the semester I reserve the right to amend any policy in this syllabus.

► **Makeups:** Make-up examinations must be scheduled in advance in the case of an unavoidable planned or reasonably-foreseeable absence; otherwise, make-ups will be given only in the case of an illness or other emergency that is properly documented, after the fact.

Make-up quizzes will not be arranged under any circumstances. There are no make-ups for missed classes; however, students with an excused absence will receive credit for attending any classes missed with a valid excuse (such as student illness or participation in class-related or sponsored activities), and any missed in-class quiz will be dropped from the grade.

► **Late Work:** To be fair to all students, I usually grade everyone's assignments at the same time. Accordingly, when work is turned in late, it means that other students' work is returned late, which isn't fair to anyone. Hence to encourage timely submission of assignments, a late penalty of 25 percentage points per calendar day will apply, beginning at the date and time the assignment was originally specified to be due; effectively, this means that work presented for grading more than four days late will automatically receive a zero and will not be assessed. In addition, all work not presented for grading by the time of the final examination will automatically receive a zero, except under the circumstances justifying an incomplete grade specified in the college catalog.

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<sup>2</sup>Students with disabilities who require notes or other learning environment accommodations should consult with the MGSC Counseling Center for assistance.

Late extra credit assignments will not be graded, except in the event of a documented illness or other excused, extenuating circumstances that would have made you *incapable* of completing the assignment in time.

► **Grade Appeals:** Like everyone else, I am fallible and sometimes make mistakes. If I simply misrecorded a grade (for example, if I enter “70” in the gradebook when you earned an “80”) or made an arithmetic error, please bring me the returned assignment, and I will immediately correct the error.

If you believe you received an *unjust* grade, I am happy to discuss the grading of the assignment with you, in-person during regular office hours or at a scheduled appointment; please bring the graded assignment with you so we can have a productive conversation. If you remain unsatisfied with my explanation of the grade, to give us both ample time to consider the dispute, you will need to type a brief (one-page) explanation of your position and turn it in, along with the original graded assignment, *at least one week after* the assignment was originally returned to you. I will then consider your appeal and make a determination. Appeals must be submitted in hard copy format; no appeals submitted via email will be considered. Please refer to the Student Handbook and Catalog for policies regarding appeals of *final letter grades*.

► **Academic Misconduct:** You are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the Student Code of Conduct; this is included in the current edition of the Student Handbook, which is available online at [http://www.mga.edu/student-affairs/docs/MGA\\_Student\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.mga.edu/student-affairs/docs/MGA_Student_Handbook.pdf).

I take academic misconduct (including, but not limited to, cheating on exams and plagiarism of written work) very seriously. So does Middle Georgia State University. In this course the *minimum* penalty for academic misconduct is a grade of zero (0) on the assignment in question, with no opportunity to repeat the assignment, along with referral to the testing center to complete an examination on plagiarism, cheating, and the Student Code of Conduct. Second or subsequent violations, or egregious misconduct (for example, an organized effort to cheat involving multiple students, or academic misconduct that causes harm to other students), will automatically be referred to the Office of Student Affairs for a university-level resolution which may include a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, and/or academic suspension.

I offer some free advice, drawn from past experience as both a student and a professor: do not turn in plagiarized work because you have run out of time and feel as if you need to turn in *something*—taking the late penalty is better than the sanctions for academic misconduct. Similarly, if you forgot to study, it’s better to get a low grade on the exam than the zero you’ll get if you cheat.

One of the early computer programmers, Admiral Grace Hopper, is reported to have said that “[i]t’s easier to ask forgiveness than it is to get permission.” That advice *does not* apply in this situation. If you have the slightest doubt about whether something is academic misconduct, *ask me before handing in the assignment for grading*.

A plagiarism prevention service is used in evaluation of written work submitted for this course. As directed, you are expected to submit or have their assignments submitted through the service in order to meet requirements for this course. The papers may be retained by the service for the sole purpose of checking for plagiarized content in future student submissions.

► **Tutoring:** Middle Georgia State University provides free tutoring services for political science courses at each campus’ Student Success Center. Hours when political science tutors are available are posted at the SSC website, <http://www.mga.edu/ssc>. Tutoring services are not a substitute for regular class attendance. All students are encouraged to take advantage of these *free* services.

► **Disability Accommodations:** While you are welcome to discuss any special needs with me in private, to be fair to all students, accommodations are only provided when supported by appropriate documentation from MGA Disability Services (478-471-2985 or 478-934-3023; Student Life Building, Room 266 (Macon) or Sanford Hall (Cochran); <http://www.mga.edu/ds>).

► **Campus Emergencies:** In the event of a closure or delayed opening of the university due to inclement

weather or other emergency, you should monitor the Knight Alert system for updates; sign up for these alerts at <http://www.mga.edu/police/alert.aspx>. You should expect communication via email and/or Brightspace regarding any assignments to be completed or revisions to the schedule while we are unable to meet.

► **End of Course Evaluations:** Student evaluations of faculty are administered online at the end of each term for all courses with five or more students. Students will receive an email containing a unique link to a survey for each course in which they are enrolled. All responses are anonymous and completion of evaluations are voluntary.

**Withdrawal Deadlines:** The last day to drop the course without it appearing on your transcript is Thursday, August 18. Students may withdraw from the course and earn a grade of “W” up to and including the midterm date, on Wednesday, October 12. After this point, students who withdraw will receive a grade of “WF,” which is calculated in the GPA as an “F.” The MGA Withdrawal Form is available online or from the Office of the Registrar.

**“No-Shows” and Informal Withdrawals:** Students who have not attended any classes as of the reporting period (generally, during the second week of classes) may be reported as a “no-show” and may lose financial aid as a result. In addition, if you stop coming to class without withdrawing, it may jeopardize your eligibility for financial aid in future terms.

**Attendance Policy:** As this is a seminar, your regular attendance is expected throughout the semester. Per university policy, a grade penalty will be applied for excessive absences as follows:

0–1 absences	No grade penalty.
2 absences	Reduction of final grade by a half letter grade (5 percent).
3 absences	Reduction of final grade by a letter grade (10 percent).
4 or more absences	Final grade of “F” regardless of final average.

Absences will be excused at my sole discretion. Supporting, written evidence may be required to justify an excuse.

**Course Outline:** Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class and will be posted to the course calendar and in Brightspace. We will not necessarily read books in the order they appear on the syllabus; please be sure you read the correct chapters *in advance of* the designated class dates.

While I may periodically remind students of upcoming scheduled events, it is **your responsibility** to be familiar with this schedule and any changes to it.

In the schedule below, the textbooks are referred to by the authors’ names (Hershey or Hopkins and Sides).

**Aug 17: Introduction to the course; Defining Political Parties** General overview of the course requirements and assigned materials. What are political parties? What do they do in the American system?  
Reading: Hershey, ch. 1.

**Aug 24: The Two-Party System** Why *two* parties? Why do minor parties not do well in America?  
Reading: Hershey, ch. 2.

**Aug 31 No Class: APSA Conference**

**Sep 7: Party Organizations** Local, state, and national party organizations; the federal structure of party organizations.  
Readings: Hershey, ch. 3–4.

**Sep 14: Party Activists** How are party activists different from political candidates and voters?  
Reading: Hershey, ch. 5.

**Sep 21: Parties in the Electorate (I)** Party identification; party change and realignments.  
Readings: Hershey, ch. 6–7.

**Sep 28 Midterm Exam**

**Oct 5: Parties in the Electorate (II)** Voter participation and political parties.

Reading: Hershey, ch. 8.

**Oct 12: Candidate Recruitment and Nominations** How do parties recruit candidates? Nominations (primaries, conventions, and caucuses).

Readings: Hershey, ch. 9–10.

**Oct 19: General Election Campaigns** How do nominees get elected? What is the role of campaign finance?

Readings: Hershey, ch. 11–12.

**Oct 26: Legislative Parties** How do parties organize themselves in Congress and state legislatures? How powerful are party leaders in Congress? How influential is partisanship in legislative behavior?

Reading: Hershey, ch. 13.

**Nov 2 No Class: Open Education Conference**

**Nov 9: Parties in the Executive and Courts** How influential are parties in the other branches of government?

Readings: Hershey, ch. 14.

**Nov 16: “Responsible Parties”** Do the parties deliver on their promises? Whither parties?

Readings: Hershey, ch. 15–16.

**Nov 23 No Class: Thanksgiving Break**

**Nov 30** Presentations and final exam review.

**Tuesday, December 7, 3:30–5:30 p.m. Final Examination**