IV. Parties, Elections and Policy-making
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Course nature. This is a lecture course. It offers 50-minute lectures twice a week, reading assignments, a TA section once a week where readings will be discussed, a bluebook midterm exam, and a bluebook final exam.

Optional term paper. Any student who wishes to do so may write an optional ten-page (approximately) term paper on any topic addressed in the course and approved by the professor. Please pay a visit for advice on topic and sources.

One writing-intensive section. In it, each student will be asked to write multiple drafts of two 8-to-12-page papers instead of taking exams. Limited to 15 students.

Who can take the course? Any freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior is eligible. There are no formal prerequisites. However, a basic grasp of US political history and the contemporary US political scene would help.

The readings. The course doesn’t have any “text” in the conventional sense. The readings are interpretive, historical, and theoretical, not text-like.

Course materials. Required books:

John Gerring, Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996
Andrew Gelman, Red State Blue State, Rich State Poor State
Alan Abramowitz, The Disappearing Center (paperback edition 1/24/11)
David R. Mayhew, Divided We Govern (2005 paperback edition)
Keith Krehbiel, Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking
David R. Mayhew, Partisan Balance (officially published 2/2/11)

Grading. The grading system will be: 30% for the midterm, 20% for participation in section, 50% for the final exam. For optional-paper-writers: 20% for the midterm, 20% for participation in section, 20% for the term paper, 40% for the final exam. For the writing-intensive section: 20% for participation; 80% for the papers.
Course Schedule

Week 1 – Organization meeting
   Party dualism

No required reading

Week 2 – Party ideologies I

Required:

Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957), chs. 7 & 8


Suggested:


Week 3 – Party ideologies II

Required:


Suggested:


Ronald D. Rotunda, The Politics of Language: Liberalism as Word and Symbol (1986). Where did the current usage of “liberal” and “conservative” come from?


Robert Freedman, “The Religious Right and the Carter Administration,” The Historical Journal 48:1 (2005), 231-60. When and why did the Republicans come to accommodate the modern religious right?


Week 4 – Presidential elections: longitudinal patterns

Required:

Larry M. Bartels & John Zaller, “Presidential Vote Models: A Recount,” PS: Political Science and Politics 34 (March 2001), 9-20

Suggested:


**Week 5 – Presidential elections: demographic patterns**

**Required:**

Andrew Gelman et al., *Red State Blue State, Rich State Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do*, chs. 1-7
Suggested:


**Week 6 – Polarization**

**Required:**

Alan I. Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center*, chs. 1-6

**Suggested:**


Stefano Della Vigna & Ethan Kaplan, “The Fox New Effect: Media Bias and Voting,” March 30, 2006 manuscript. Available online. Introducing Fox helped the GOP?


**Week 7 – Congressional elections**

**Required:**


**Suggested:**


**Week 8 – Midterm week**

**Required:**


**Suggested:**

David A. Hopkins, “The 2008 Election and the Political Geography of the New Democratic Majority,” Polity 41:3 (July 2009), 368-87


**Week 9 – Unified vs. divided party control and lawmaking I**

**Required:**

Suggested:


Week 10 – Unified vs. divided party control and lawmaking II

Required:

Mayhew, Divided We Govern, chs. 5-7 and Epilogue


Suggested:


Week 11 – Partisan balance I

Required:

David R. Mayhew, Partisan Balance: Why Political Parties Don’t Kill the U.S. Constitutional System, Introduction & chs. 1, 2

Suggested:


Sanford Levinson, Our Undemocratic Constitution: Where the Constitution Goes Wrong (And How We the People Can Correct It) (2006)


David Samuels, “The Value of a Vote: Malapportionment in Comparative Perspective,” British Journal of Political Science 31 (2001), 651-71. Among the worlds’ legislative bodies, the U.S. Senate ranks very high in population inequality across its geographic units.


21-38. Why did the Democrats hold the U.S. House for 40 consecutive years through 1994?

**Week 12 – Partisan balance II**

**Required:**

Mayhew, *Partisan Balance*, chs. 3-5

**Suggested:**


Week 13 – The current vortex of polarization, legislative obstruction, homeostatic kickback in elections, and “leapfrog representation”

Required:

Abramowitz, The Disappearing Center, ch. 8


Suggested:


Gregory Koger, Filibustering: A Political History of Obstruction in the House and Senate (2010). A general treatment. What came earlier, and how did the Senate evolve into its tough 60-vote pivot of today?


HeeMin Kim, G. Bingham Powell, Jr. & Richard C. Fording, “Electoral Systems, Party Systems, and Ideological Representation,” Comparative Politics 42:1 (January 2010), 167-85. In general, single-member-district systems, of which the U.S.A. is an instance (although it doesn’t figure in this 20-country study) exhibit a particularly large ideological gap between the median voter and the stance of a newly-elected government. That is, election victories tend bring, in an ideological sense, exaggeration.