

# PSCI 3031

## Political Parties & Interest Groups

### Contact Information

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### Course Information

Jan 13 – May 1  
Classroom: GUGG 205  
Class-time: 11:15am – 12:05pm

**Course Description:** Often maligned, parties and interest groups play a critical role as linkage structures between the governed and the government. They organize citizens, represents interests, champion specific causes, influence policy, and in the case of political parties, directly compete for political office. Simply put, American democracy would grind to a halt without parties and interest groups. And yet, the two parties are deeply unpopular, and Americans are skeptical of organized groups having influence over the political process. In this class, our goal is to understand this tension between what American democracy needs versus what Americans think it needs. We will start with political parties and discuss the origin of parties, their critical role as a conduit for democracy, and where they may go wrong. We will then focus on the key functions of the two parties and their roles in structuring government and society. Then, we will shift gears and ask if interest groups play similar roles as parties, how they can resolve collective action problems, and influence the policy-making process without direct influence.

### Course Requirements and Grading:

Participation	10%
Weekly Quizzes	10%
Exams (3)	55%
Research Paper	25%

Letter grades will be assigned at the end of the semester based on the following scale. I will **not** round your grade and grades will not be curved.

	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%	
A	94-100%	B	84-86%	C	74-76%	D	64-66%
A-	90-93%	B-	80-83%	C-	70-73%	D-	60-63%

### **Participation & Attendance (10%)**

Active participation in this course is critical! Coming to class well prepared and offering comments and questions in discussions will result in a superior participation grade. Attendance is mandatory. In lieu of tracking excused and un-excused absences, each student gets **three** “freebie” absences which cover both excused and un-excused absences. You do not need to e-mail me for each absence. Each subsequent absence will result in a decrease in the participation and attendance grade. If you have eight total absences, you will receive a 0% for this category. Ten or more absences will result in an “F” in the course. Attendance alone is not sufficient to receive full credit. Students with perfect attendance but no participation in class should expect to receive a 60% on the participation and attendance grade.

### ***Weekly Quizzes (10%)***

Each week, there will be a weekly quiz on that week's readings and lecture which make up 10% of the overall course grade. There will be **twelve** quizzes (1/week minus exam weeks), and the two lowest scores will be dropped. Quizzes are open-note and students get two attempts, and the highest score is kept. Quizzes will be published on Canvas at the end of class on Friday and students will have until before class on Monday to complete each quiz.

### ***Exams (55% Total)***

There will be three exams during this course: two midterms and one final. Exams will consist of some combination of multiple choice, short answer, long answer, or essay questions. Each exam is worth at least 15% of your course grade, with the highest score being weighted at 25%. Exams are not cumulative.

Exam Dates:

- Exam 1: February 14<sup>th</sup>
- Exam 2: March 19<sup>th</sup>
- Final: May 4<sup>th</sup> (7:30-10pm)

### ***Research Paper (25%)***

There is one essay in this class, worth 25% of your final grade. Students are expected to write 2000-2500 words on a research question of their choice related to course themes. Students will be expected to identify a research question of interest related to course topics and consult relevant research and data to develop an argument that answers their question. More specifics will be available on a separate assignment sheet on Canvas. Final essays will be due on **April 25<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm**.

### ***Late/Makeup Assignment Policy***

All assignments must be submitted by their specified due date as designated in the syllabus. Late assignments will suffer a 10 percent penalty for each day that they are late and will not be accepted after three days. In general, there will be no make-up exams or extensions without a university approved excused absence. However, if you find yourself in a situation where you cannot complete the work on time, please communicate with me as soon as possible before the deadline or day of the exam.

### ***Canvas & Email Policy***

I will primarily communicate with the class via Canvas Announcements. Please ensure Canvas notifications are enabled, and announcements go to your inbox. Please do not use Canvas to send me a message.

E-mail is the best way to get in touch with me. When communicating with me, emails must have 3031, Political Parties & Interest Groups, P&I, or a logical alternative indicating the email pertains to this course. Emails to me must be sent from your official University of Colorado email address. It is class policy that grades will not be discussed over email. I will generally reply to e-mails within 24 hours.

## Artificial Intelligence

Generative artificial intelligence tools—software that creates new text, images, computer code, audio, video, and other content—have become widely available and pose new threats to academic integrity. **You may not use generative AI tools on assignments in this course.** Generative AI tools are typically trained on limited and pre-existing datasets that may be out of date and are designed to produce content that *appears* to be written by a human. As a result, work produced using generative AI is considered plagiarism and will often produce potentially outdated and inaccurate work that is not your own. If you use generative AI tools to complete assignments in this course, in ways that I have not explicitly authorized, this will be considered a violation of the Honor Code and there will be consequences appropriate to your specific case. These include getting a zero on the assignment, and possibly failing the class. Please act with integrity, for the sake of both your personal character and your academic record.

## Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this course. All readings will be made available on Canvas. Assigned readings and deadlines are subject to change, but you will be notified in advance.

## Schedule

### **Week 1: Course Introduction & Preliminaries**

***Monday, January 13:*** Course Overview, Introductions

- No Readings

***Wednesday, January 15:*** *Factions in America*

- Federalist #10 and #51

***Friday, January 17:*** *Parties & Interest Groups*

- Heaney, Michael T. 2010. “Linking Political Parties and Interest Groups.” Pp. 568–88 in *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Groups*, edited by L. S. Maisel, J. M. Berry, and G. C. Edwards. Oxford University Press.

### **Week 2: Why Do Parties Exist**

***Monday, January 20:*** No Class (MLK Day)

***Wednesday, January 22:*** *Social Cleavage & Downs*

- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper. Chapter 8

***Friday, January 24:*** *Elite Coordination*

- Aldrich, John H. 2011. *Why Parties? A Second Look*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1

### **Week 3: Why Two Parties**

***Monday, January 27:*** *Duverger’s Law*

- Lachat, Romain, André Blais, and Ignacio Lago. 2015. “Assessing the Mechanical and Psychological Effects of District Magnitude.” *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 25(3):284–99.

**Wednesday, January 29:** Preferring Majoritarianism

- Bowler, Shaun, Justin Freebourn, Paul Teten, Todd Donovan, and Jack Vowles. 2023. “Preferences for Single-Party versus Multi-Party Governments.” *Party Politics* 29(4):755–65.

**Friday, January 31:** The Fate of Third Parties

- Jolly, David, Christine Todd Whitman and Andrew Yang. 2022. “Most Third Parties Have Failed. Here’s Why Ours Won’t.” *Washington Post*.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/07/27/forward-party-new-centrist-third/>
- Bouie, Jamelle. 2022. “Why Andrew Yang’s New Third Party is Bound to Fail.” *New York Times*.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/29/opinion/why-andrew-yangs-new-third-party-is-bound-to-fail.html>

**Week 4: Party System Change in the US**

**Monday, February 3:** Durability or Change

- Brewer, Mark D. 2010. “The Evolution and Alteration of American Party Coalitions.” Pp. 121–42 in *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Groups*, edited by L. S. Maisel, J. M. Berry, and G. C. Edwards. Oxford University Press.

**Wednesday, February 5:** Theories of Realignment: Party Strategy

- Miller, Gary, and Norman Schofield. 2003. “Activists and Partisan Realignment in the United States.” *American Political Science Review* 97(02).

**Friday, February 7:** Theories of Realignment: Voter Preferences

- Kitschelt, Herbert P., and Philipp Rehm. 2019. “Secular Partisan Realignment in the United States: The Socioeconomic Reconfiguration of White Partisan Support since the New Deal Era.” *Politics & Society* 47(3):425–79.

**Week 5: Exam 1**

**Monday, February 10:** A New Realignment?

- Sides, John. 2024. “How to think about the “racial realignment” in U.S. politics.” *Good Authority*. <https://goodauthority.org/news/election-2024-racial-realignment-us-politics/>

**Wednesday, February 12:** Review

**Friday, February 14:** Exam 1

**Week 6: Parties in Government**

**Monday, February 17:** Legislative Leviathan

- Cox, Gary W., and Matthew D. McCubbins. 2007. *Legislative Leviathan*. 2nd ed. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5

**Wednesday, February 19:** Legislative Unity

- Howard, Nicholas O., and Tessa Provins. 2024. “What Explains Party Unity? Evidence from U.S. State Legislatures.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*.

**Friday, February 21:** Legislating without Parties?

- Masket, Seth, and Boris Shor. 2015. "Polarization without Parties: Term Limits and Legislative Partisanship in Nebraska's Unicameral Legislature." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 15(1):67–90.

**Week 7: Parties in the Electorate**

**Monday, February 24:** Mobilizing Effect

- Niebler, Sarah, Jacob Neiheisel, and Matthew Holleque. 2018. "By Ground or by Air? Voter Mobilization during the United States' 2008 Presidential Campaign." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 28(1):78–104.

**Wednesday, February 26:** Heuristic Effect

- Bonneau, Chris W., and Damon M. Cann. 2015. "Party Identification and Vote Choice in Partisan and Nonpartisan Elections." *Political Behavior* 37(1):43–66.

**Friday, February 28:** Signal Effect

- Nicholson, Stephen P. 2012. "Polarizing Cues." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(1):52–66.

**Week 8: Partisanship & Polarization**

**Monday, March 3:** Partisanship

- West, Emily A., and Shanto Iyengar. 2022. "Partisanship as a Social Identity: Implications for Polarization." *Political Behavior* 44(2):807–38.

**Wednesday, March 5:** Affective Polarization

- Iyengar, Shanto, Yphtach Lelkes, Matthew Levendusky, Neil Malhotra, and Sean J. Westwood. 2019. "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States." *Annual Review of Political Science* 22(1):129–46.

**Friday, March 7:** Misperceptions Across Party Lines

- Ahler, Douglas J., and Gaurav Sood. 2018. "The Parties in Our Heads: Misperceptions about Party Composition and Their Consequences." *The Journal of Politics* 80(3):964–81.

**Week 9: Parties as Organizations**

**Monday, March 10:** Who Decides?

- Blum, Rachel M., Mike Cowburn, and Seth Masket. 2024. "Who Decides? Media, MAGA, Money, and Mentions in the 2022 Republican Primaries." *Political Research Quarterly* 77(4):1314–32.

**Wednesday, March 12:** Do Voters Listen?

- Manento, Cory, and Paul F. Testa. 2022. "In Party We Trust? Voter Support for Party-Backed Candidates in Primary Elections." *Political Behavior* 44(4):1633–56.

**Friday, March 14:** Internal Party Factions

- Clarke, Andrew J. 2020. "Party Sub-Brands and American Party Factions." *American Journal of Political Science* 64(3):452–70.

## **Week 10: Exam 2**

***Monday, March 17:*** Review

***Wednesday, March 19:*** Exam #2

***Friday, March 21:*** No Class (Enjoy!)

## **SPRING BREAK (March 24-30)**

## **Week 11: Theories of Interest Groups**

### ***Monday, March 31: Logic of Collective Action***

- Olson, Mancur. 1965. *Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 1

### ***Wednesday, April 2: Logic of Collective Action***

- Olson, Mancur. 1965. *Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 2

***Friday, April 4:*** No Class

## **Week 12: Interest Groups in Government**

### ***Monday, April 7: Legislative Signal***

- Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M., Dino P. Christenson, and Alison W. Craig. 2019. "Cue-Taking in Congress: Interest Group Signals from Dear Colleague Letters." *American Journal of Political Science* 63(1):163–80.

### ***Wednesday, April 9: Lobbying***

- Fagan, E. J., and Alexander C. Furnas. 2024. "Lobbying Responsiveness to Congressional Policy Agendas." *Policy Studies Journal* 52(1):11–29.

### ***Friday, April 11: Buying Influence?***

- Kalla, Joshua L., and David E. Broockman. 2016. "Campaign Contributions Facilitate Access to Congressional Officials: A Randomized Field Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(3):545–58.

## **Week 13: Interest Groups and the Electorate**

### ***Monday, April 14: Interest Group Endorsements***

- Baker, Anne E. 2016. "Do Interest Group Endorsements Cue Individual Contributions to House Candidates?" *American Politics Research* 44(2):197–221.

### ***Wednesday, April 16: Shaping Public Opinion***

- Jungherr, Andreas, Alexander Wuttke, Matthias Mader, and Harald Schoen. 2021. "A Source Like Any Other? Field and Survey Experiment Evidence on How Interest Groups Shape Public Opinion." *Journal of Communication* 71(2):276–304.

***Friday, April 18: Interest Groups & Campaigns***

- Damore, David F., and Stephen P. Nicholson. 2014. "Mobilizing Interests: Group Participation and Competition in Direct Democracy Elections." *Political Behavior* 36(3):535–52.

**Week 14: Interest Groups & Democracy**

***Monday, April 21: Social Capital***

- Putnam, Robert D. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy*

***Wednesday, April 23: Representation & Responsiveness***

- Bevan, Shaun, and Anne Rasmussen. 2020. "When Does Government Listen to the Public? Voluntary Associations and Dynamic Agenda Representation in the United States." *Policy Studies Journal* 48(1):111–32.

***Friday, April 25: Polarization***

- Garlick, Alex. 2022. "Interest Group Lobbying and Partisan Polarization in the United States: 1999–2016." *Political Science Research and Methods* 10(3):488–506.

**DUE: Research Paper at 11:59pm**

**Week 15: Parties & Democracy**

***Monday, April 28: Democratic Deconsolidation***

- Graham, Matthew H., and Milan W. Svobik. 2020. "Democracy in America? Partisanship, Polarization, and the Robustness of Support for Democracy in the United States." *American Political Science Review* 114(2):392–409.

***Wednesday, April 30:*** Review

***Friday, May 2:*** No Class (Reading Day)

**FINAL EXAM: May 4<sup>th</sup>, 7:30-10pm**

**Classroom Behavior:** Students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote, or online. Failure to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, marital status, political affiliation, or political philosophy. For more information, see the [classroom behavior policy](#), the [Student Code of Conduct](#), and the [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](#).

**Accommodation for Disabilities:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or [DSinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:DSinfo@colorado.edu) for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

**If you have a temporary illness, injury or required medical isolation for which you require adjustment, please let me know as soon as possible via e-mail.**

**Preferred Student Names and Pronouns:** CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

**Honor Code:** All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the [Honor Code](#). Violations of the Honor Code may include but are not limited to: plagiarism (including use of paper writing services or technology [such as essay bots]), cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. Understanding the course's syllabus is a vital part in adhering to the Honor Code. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution: [StudentConduct@colorado.edu](mailto:StudentConduct@colorado.edu). Students found responsible for violating the [Honor Code](#) will be assigned resolution outcomes from the Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution as well as be subject to academic sanctions from the faculty member. Visit [Honor Code](#) for more information on the academic integrity policy.

**Note: Use of AI in your written answers is considered plagiarism in this course and is not permitted.**

**Discrimination and Harassment:** CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. University policy prohibits [protected-class](#) discrimination and harassment, sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking, and related retaliation by or against members of our community on- and off-campus. The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) addresses these concerns, and individuals who have been subjected to misconduct can contact



OIEC at 303-492-2127 or email [CUreport@colorado.edu](mailto:CUreport@colorado.edu). Information about university policies, [reporting options](#), and [support resources](#) including confidential services can be found on the [OIEC website](#). Please know that faculty and graduate instructors must inform OIEC when they are made aware of incidents related to these policies regardless of when or where something occurred. This is to ensure that individuals impacted receive outreach from OIEC about resolution options and support resources. To learn more about reporting and support for a variety of concerns, visit the [Don't Ignore It page](#).

**Religious Holidays:** Campus policy requires faculty to provide reasonable accommodations for students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please communicate the need for a religious accommodation in a timely manner. In this class, **please let me know by the end of week 3 of any religious accommodations you may require.** See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

**Mental Health and Wellness:** The University of Colorado Boulder is committed to the well-being of all students. If you are struggling with personal stressors, mental health or substance use concerns that are impacting academic or daily life, please contact [Counseling and Psychiatric Services \(CAPS\)](#) located in C4C or call (303) 492-2277, 24/7. Free and unlimited telehealth is also available through [Academic Live Care](#). The Academic Live Care site also provides information about additional wellness services on campus that are available to students.