

F702 Party Development in the United States

Thursdays , 9:30–11:00 A.M. October 18

Instructor: Roger Brown

Class limit: 25

This discussion seminar examines the origin and development of political parties and party systems in the United States from 1787 to the present. It builds on an earlier course on the same subject presented at the Reston facility in spring 2012 and is offered so that persons who attended that course will have further opportunity to explore topics and issues from that previous course. Lectures and handout materials presented in the preceding course have been posted on the Olli Docstore. In addition, for each of the four meetings, new relevant readings have been selected and posted on the Docstore.

Participants are urged to prepare for each class by studying the posted readings, handouts and lectures designated below and focusing on the questions listed for each class.

I. Thursday October 18

Creation of the First American Party System

Questions for discussion:

- What factors brought about the creation of the first American party system?
- Why are political parties considered essential to a healthy democratic polity?
- Why did modern political parties develop and mature earlier in the U.S. than in Europe and Great Britain?

Readings (posted on Olli Docstore)

- “Modern American Party Systems: an Overview” (handout from previous class)
- “The First American Party System” and “The Legitimation and Maturing of American Political Parties”, (lectures 1 and 2 from previous class).
- Hans Daalder, “The Rise of Parties in Western Democracies,” in Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther, editors, Political Parties and Democracy, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, pp. 40-51.

Recommended Reading (not posted on Docstore)

Richard Hofstadter, The Idea of a Party System: the Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, esp. “Towards a Party System, pp. 212-71

II. Thursday October 25

Major American Parties and their Agendas

Questions for discussion

- Political scientists and historians have characterized American political parties since their first appearance as flexible, accommodating, and non-programmatic. Do you agree?
- Why have repeated attempts to build a workers socialist party in the U.S. failed?

Readings : (posted on Olli Docstore)

- “Modern American Party Systems: an Overview” (handout from previous class)
- “Parties in the Golden Age and Beyond” and appendix of “Third Parties in a Two- Party System esp. chart of selected minor presidential candidates (lectures 3 and 4 from previous class).
- Seymour Lipset and Gary Marks, “The End of Political Exceptionalism,” from Lipset and Marks, It Didn’t Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States, pp. 261-73.

III. Thursday November 1

Are there Recurring Patterns in American Politics?

Questions for Discussion

-Some historians (e.g. A.M. Schlesinger, Jr.) and political scientists (Walter Dean Burnham) hold there are recurrent patterns or cycles in American politics. Others (Morton Keller) hold American political history can be periodized into distinctive time-periods each with its own distinctive institutional and cultural characteristics. How persuasive is their case?

Readings: (posted on the Olli Docstore)

- “Are their Recurrent Patterns in American Politics” (handout from previous class)
- Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., “The Cycles of American Politics,” in A.M.Schlesinger, Jr., The Cycles of American History, (1986), pp. 23-48.

Recommended Reading (not posted on Olli Docstore)

Morton Keller, America’s Three Regimes: a New Political History (2007)

IV. Thursday November 8

Political Polarization and Its Consequences

Questions for discussion

-Because of the highly polarized condition of American parties, Congress has become badly dysfunctional. What accounts for the current polarized condition of American politics?

-Can American politics be made more constructive and productive and if so , how?

Readings (posted on Olli Docstore)

Larry Diamond, “Comment” on Pietro S. Nivola and William Galston’s essay “Toward Depolarization,” in Pietro S.Nivola and David Brady, editors, Red and Blue Nation: Consequences and Correction of America’s Polarized Politics, (2008), volume II, pp. 295-303.

Thomas E. Mann and Norman Ornstein, “What Won’t Fix Washington; What Will,” Washington Post Outlook, May 20, 2012. B1 and B4.

Recommended Reading (not posted on Olli Docstore)

Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, It’s Even Worse than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism (2012), esp. pp.131-201.

