

# Course Syllabus

## American Political Parties: P SC 3413

Spring 2022  
Tu/Th 12:00 - 1:15pm  
Gaylord Hall, 2030  
University of Oklahoma

Instructor: Dr. Rachel Blum  
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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

It has been said that democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties. Today more than ever, it is difficult to even discuss politics without reference to the parties. Since political parties permeate every aspect of American government, any real understanding of civics requires an understanding of the roles that parties play.

In this course, students will learn two frameworks with which to understand parties. First, they will learn the positive framework; what is the role of the political party. The second framework is normative; what should be the role of the political party. We will discuss these two frameworks in parallel, as understanding why parties are the way they can inform our beliefs about how they should be, and different arguments about how parties should be may influence what they are. Through various reading, writing, and debate assignments students will learn to apply these concepts to historical, theoretical, and contemporary issues surrounding parties.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

Many of the readings will be available electronically (on Canvas), but you are required to purchase the following books from your favorite retailer:

- Maskett, Seth and Hans Noel. 2021. *Political Parties*. WWNorton.
- Blum, Rachel M. 2020. *How the Tea Party Captured the GOP: Insurgent Factions in American Politics*. Chicago Press.

### **GRADED COURSE COMPONENTS**

#### Class Participation (5%)

Regular attendance (to the degree possible during a pandemic) and participation in class discussion is important, and students should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading. All classes will include either open questions to the class or small group conversation, and the participation grade will be based on demonstrated engagement throughout the term.

#### Voting Simulation (5%)

We will hold one to two in-class voting simulations. More instructions will be given in class. Additional opportunities may exist for extra credit.

#### In Class Activities (10%)

Various in class activities will be announced throughout the semester.

#### Debates (10%)

Each student will take part in a miniature debate in class on one of the bigger themes. There will be two debates: one earlier in the semester, and one later in the semester. Topics and instructions will be provided. Each student's performance will be graded individually.

#### Current Events Paper (10%)

Early in the semester, students will write an op-ed style paper on a contemporary political event. They will use one of the theories we discuss about political parties to approach this paper. Papers should be 2-4 pages long. More instructions will be provided.

#### Party Activist Paper (10%)

Midway through the semester, students will write a strategy memo from the point of view of a party activist that is devoted to a particular interest or issue. Students will tap into the party activist literature and their chosen issue to present a realistic strategy. Papers should be 2-4 pages long. More instructions will be provided.

#### Midterm and Final exams (15% and 15%)

There will be a midterm during our regular class period, and a final exam during exam week. Both will be open notes, open book exams administered on Canvas.

#### Final Project (20%)

Students will prepare a final project and present it to the class during the final week of the term. More instructions will be provided on Canvas.

### **GRADING POLICY AND METRICS**

- **Grading turnaround:** The TA and I will endeavor to return graded work to you as quickly as possible, but never more than two weeks after the assignment due date.
- **Grading rubrics:** I will typically post rubrics along with the assignment instructions/submission pages on Canvas. Our grades and comments will appear in these rubrics.
- **Canvas's grading metrics:** Canvas has a variety of grade-calculation features, most of which only reflect the work you've turned in up to that point without considering the relative weight of assignments or the weight of the remaining assignments. I strongly advise you to avoid relying on Canvas's grade-calculation metrics for a sense of how you are doing in the class. The only grading features you should pay attention to on Canvas are the posted grades for individual assignments.
- **How to get info on your class grade:** I will calculate and post your class grade at two points: at the midterm, and before the final.
- **Grading scale:** Your final grades will be posted in the common A-F format required by the University. Your individual assignment grades will be based on the points each assignment is worth.
- **Grading disputes:** If you believe a mistake was made in a grade you received, please follow these steps to dispute the grade:
  - If the mistake is simple and obvious (e.g., a miscalculation, a typo, or a deviation from the answer key), please copy the TA and me on an email explaining the mistake. Attach photos or screenshots to show the mistake. We will promptly correct any mistakes made on our end.

- If the dispute involves a matter of interpretation, please write a 2-4 paragraph memo explaining why you think you should receive a different grade, and email it to both the TA and the instructor. Provide any supporting documents or information that you think will help us understand your dispute. We will re-grade the disputed item de novo (as if never graded before) within 2 weeks. Please note that this re-grade may result in a higher *or* lower final grade.
- Timeline for disputes: all disputes to grades must be made within 48 hours of the grades being posted. Please allow up to 2 days for us to correct mistakes, and up to 2 weeks for us to re-grade disputed assignments.

## COURSE POLICIES

### Attendance and absences

I expect all students to attend online class whenever possible. If you can't make it to class, please follow the steps outlined below to notify me of your absence.

- **Excused absences:** I am happy to grant excused absences for a variety of reasons (e.g., religious holidays, sporting events, health events, family events and emergencies, etc) *if you notify me before the class in question.*
  - **How to get your absence excused:** Email me (rblum@ou.edu) and copy the TA (peter.t.mclaughlin@ou.edu). Put "Requesting excused absence for MM/DD" in the subject line. In the body of the email, provide a brief explanation of your reason for the absence. Please email us before class meets. If for any reason you cannot do this, email us as soon as you can. – You are welcome to submit paperwork to support your explanation (e.g., a health note), but I do not require it.
- **Unexcused absences:** If you don't show up to class and don't email the TA and me to notify us of your absence, we cannot excuse it.
- **If you must miss class:** You can follow along with the readings and can review the lecture (which will be posted on Canvas). We may also make participation available via zoom, either synchronously or by recording a lecture and posting it on Canvas.

### Deadlines and turning in assignments

I expect all students to meet posted (here or on Canvas) course deadlines for assignments and other submissions.

- **Late work:** Credit for late work will be at my discretion. Factors taken into consideration include how late it is, how much you've communicated with me about the work, and whether an extenuating circumstance was involved. If you think you will be submitting your work late, please notify me (see below).
- **Requesting extensions:** If you think you are going to be late in submitting your work for any reason (e.g., technical difficulties, illness, too many deadlines) please email me ASAP and we will agree on a reasonable extension.
- **Making up assignments:** To be fair to all students, I am unable to allow students to make up missed assignments that require in-class work, group work, or discussion.

- **Canvas submissions:** Unless otherwise specified, all assignments will be submitted on Canvas. It is your responsibility to make sure your files and discussion comments post correctly. If your file does not post (you are timed out, for example), becomes corrupted, contains a virus, or if your response is blank/partial, you should re-post prior to the deadline so that you may receive a grade. Always check to see that your response or file has correctly posted before you exit Canvas. If you cannot post your files to Canvas, please email them to the TA and the instructor prior to the deadline to make sure we have received them.

### Academic Dishonesty

- **Cheating** is strictly prohibited at the University of Oklahoma, because it devalues the degree you are working hard to get. As a member of the OU community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the rules. For specific definitions on what constitutes cheating, review the Student's Guide to Academic Integrity [here](#).
- **Working with others** will sometimes be allowed/encouraged in this class. I will clearly note on each assignment whether you are encouraged to work with others, or whether the work needs to be yours alone. If you have a question, email me and the TA to check.
- **Plagiarizing work or getting others to do your work** are never allowed.

### Accommodations

- **Requesting accommodations:** If you need accommodations regarding accessibility or disability, please register with the [Accessibility and Disability Resource Center](#). Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent full demonstration of the student's ability should contact me directly as soon as possible to discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate educational opportunities.
- **Accessibility:** I do my best to make my course, materials, and assignments as accessible as possible. I typically provide flexible exam formats as well. Please contact me with any concerns.

### Emails and Canvas

- I will post all relevant class materials on Canvas, including this syllabus, class lecture slides, and detailed assignment information.
- You are responsible for reading and following any instructions I send via email or send/post on Canvas.
- You are encouraged to email the TA and me with questions about the course, deadlines, assignments, and so forth. Please allow up to 2 business days for a response, although we will try to respond sooner to time-sensitive requests.
- Please copy both the TA and me on all emails unless you have a specific reason not to.
- Please follow this checklist when emailing the TA and myself:
  - Make sure your question is not readily answered by consulting Canvas, the syllabus, a classmate, the University's resources (IT, library, etc.), or google.
  - Keep your requests reasonable and appropriate (e.g., a request for a recommendation with adequate time is reasonable; a request to print your paper is not).
  - Be professional and courteous. Use my correct titles (Dr. Blum or Professor Blum). Use complete sentences. Keep your request clear and concise.

## COVID CONSIDERATIONS

We will follow all University COVID guidelines. As of the beginning of the Spring 2022 semester, these are:

***For the first two weeks of the Spring 2022 semester (through January 31) masking will be required in all classroom settings. Beginning February 1, the Norman campus will revert to the Fall 2021 masking guidance that encourages masking in the classroom and requires masking for a two-week quarantine period when a confirmed positive COVID-19 case in the class is identified. Individuals in need of a health accommodation should contact the Accessibility and Disability Resource Center by emailing [adrc@ou.edu](mailto:adrc@ou.edu).***

*As has been the policy since the start of Fall 2021, masking will continue to be expected in all indoor settings for all faculty, staff, and students. While cloth masks are still permissible on the Norman campus, the university strongly recommends the use of KN95 masks or disposable surgical masks as they provide far greater amounts of protection against Omicron. KN95 and disposable surgical masks will be made available to OU community members. Campus Safety will provide masks to building supervisors to be made available at all entrances and inside classrooms.*

Please visit [OU together](#) for the most up-to-date information on University policy and guidelines in regards to COVID-19. This page includes instructions for how to use the Health Together app for guidance following a COVID exposure.

## SCHEDULE

- All readings should be completed by the assigned date.
- As we go through the semester, occasional changes to the schedule may be necessary. I will both discuss these in class and publish these on Canvas in advance.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC/ASSIGNMENT DUE</b>	<b>READING</b>
1/18	Introduction to Course	Syllabus
<b>Module 1: Why We Care About Parties</b>		
1/20	How Parties Shape Politics	Masket and Noel, Chapter 1
1/25	What is a Political Party?	Bawn et al 2012 (online)
1/27	History of US Parties	Masket and Noel, Chapter 2
2/1	Normative Issues (Why We Care)	Madison (Federalist 10 and 51, online) Washington, 'Farewell Address (online)
2/3	Problems with Parties: Polarization	<a href="#">Polarization podcast</a>
2/8	Class debate 1: RESOLVED: POLITICAL PARTIES ARE GOOD FOR DEMOCRACY	

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC/ASSIGNMENT DUE</b>	<b>READING</b>
<b>Module 2: Party in Government</b>		
2/10	Parties in Congress I	Masket and Noel, Chapter 3 Rohde Paper (Online)
2/15	Parties in Congress II	<a href="#">Legislative Compromise Podcast</a> <a href="#">Green Article</a>
2/17	Voting Simulation #1 Current Events Paper Due at midnight	
2/22	Parties and the Executive	Masket and Noel, Chapter 4
2/24	U.S. Parties in Comparative Perspective	Masket and Noel, Chapter 5
3/1	Midterm Review	
3/3	Midterm	
<b>Module 3: Party in Organization</b>		
3/8	U.S. Parties in Comparative Perspective	Masket and Noel, Chapter 5
3/10	Machine Politics	Read Masket and Noel, Chapters 6
3/15	Spring Vacation!	
3/17	Spring Vacation!	
3/22	Formal Party Organizations	Read Masket and Noel, Chapters 7 La Raja & Rauch article (online)
3/24	Nominations	Skim Masket and Noel, Chapters 9-10 <a href="#">Noel Article</a>
<b>Module 4: Party in the Electorate</b>		
3/29	Party Activists	Masket and Noel, Chapter 8
3/31	Tea Party I	Blum Book (Chapter 1-3)
4/5	Tea Party II	Blum Book (Chapters 4-7)
4/7	No Class Party Activist Paper Due at midnight	

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC/ASSIGNMENT DUE</b>	<b>READING</b>
4/12	The Party in General Elections	Masket and Noel, Chapter 11
4/14	Parties and Voters	Masket and Noel, Chapter 12 <a href="#">Asymmetric Polarization Podcast</a>
<b>Module 5: The Future of US Political Parties</b>		
4/19	Proposed Changes	Drutman <a href="#">Podcast</a> OR <a href="#">Article</a> <a href="#">Freakanomics Reforms Podcast</a> <a href="#">Term Limits Article</a> <a href="#">Filibuster podcast</a>
4/21	Class Debate 2: RESOLVED: THE US SHOULD CHANGE ITS PARTY SYSTEM	
4/26	Final Project Presentations	
4/28	Final Project Presentations Final projects due Sunday (5/1) at midnight	
5/10	FINAL EXAM: 1:30 – 3:30 pm	