

POLS 3055: Parties and Elections, Spring 2013

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CRN 27700, Section 01: TR 2:00–3:15 p.m., Jones Hall 396 (Macon)¹

Macon Office Hours (Jones Hall 325, 478-471-5325): TR 3:30–5:15 p.m., or by appointment.

Warner Robins Office Hours (Academic Services Building faculty suite): MW 10–11 a.m., 2–3 p.m.

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. 2013. *Party Politics in America*, 15th ed. New York: Pearson. ISBN 978-0-205-25177-3.

Alan I. Abramowitz. 2011. *The Disappearing Center: Engaged Citizens, Polarization, and American Democracy*. New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press. ISBN 978-0-300-16829-7.

They should be available, new and used, at the Middle Georgia State College bookstore location in Macon; 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 Desire2Learn 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 Desire2Learn 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.*

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

¹The room assignment is subject to change; if we do not have a large number of students, we may move the class to a seminar room in Jones Hall or another building.

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,² 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.

A general guideline is that you should devote 2–3 hours of time out of class for every semester hour of class, per week, in *each* course; that means you should expect to spend 6–9 hours a week studying for this course, *in addition to* the 2½ hours in class.

► **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 late January, 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 above. 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 days in advance.

My primary office is on the Macon campus; if my door is open—which it usually is when I am in the office, unless I am on the phone—please feel free to drop in even if it is not during my scheduled hours. I generally will not be available on the Warner Robins campus except at the times I am teaching and in scheduled office hours, as my other obligations to the college are centered on the Macon campus.

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, I will always get back to you within one business day, and frequently sooner.

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

²Some assignments, such as the reading quizzes online, are automatically graded, so you can expect fairly quick feedback on those. You should expect the grading of written work to generally take between 5 and 10 business days.

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.

Finally, while you may find me in various guises on various social media sites, I will not “friend” current or past students who are still enrolled as undergraduates; please do not take this personally.

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 Desire2Learn). 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.³

► **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.

► **Attendance and absence policy:** To encourage regular participation in class, I will take daily attendance. In accordance with college policy, students who have more than four unexcused absences may be assigned a failing grade (“FA”) at my sole discretion; in particular, any student who has earned a failing grade in the course based on their overall average who also has excessive absences will automatically receive the “FA” grade. Attendance is a factor considered when assigning students’ participation grades; however, perfect attendance does not guarantee a perfect participation grade, and it is possible, but perhaps unlikely, that you could receive a perfect participation grade if you have missed a class or two.

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.

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.

³Students with disabilities who require notes or other learning environment accommodations should consult with the MGSC Counseling Center for assistance.

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.

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:** I take academic misconduct (including, but not limited to, cheating on exams and plagiarism of written work) very seriously. So does Middle Georgia State College.

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.maconstate.edu/studentlife/docs/studenthandbook.pdf>.

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 college-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 in your mind about whether something is academic misconduct, *ask me before handing in the assignment for grading*.

► **Plagiarism Prevention Policy:** 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.

► **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 documentation from the MGSC Counseling Center on the Macon campus (478-471-2985; Student Life Building, Room 266; <http://www.maconstate.edu/counseling/>).

► **Tutoring:** Middle Georgia State College provides tutoring services for political science courses, free of charge,

on both the Macon and Warner Robins campuses. In Macon, please visit the History and Political Science tutoring center in Jones Hall 314; in Warner Robins, tutoring services are provided in the Academic Resource Center in Oak Hall 128. Hours when political science tutors are available are posted at the ARC website, <http://www.maconstate.edu/arc/>. Tutoring services are not a substitute for regular class attendance, and all students are welcome.

Withdrawal Deadlines: The last day to drop the course without it appearing on your transcript is Thursday, January 10. The withdrawal deadline (last day for a “W”) is Monday, March 11; withdrawals after this date, except under extraordinary hardship, will generally be awarded a “WF” grade, which counts the same as an “F” in your GPA.

Course Outline: Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class and will be posted to the course calendar and in Desire2Learn. 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 and Abramowitz).

Jan 8: Introduction to the course A general overview of the course requirements and assigned materials.

Jan 10: Defining Political Parties and Interest Groups What are political parties? What do they do in the American system?
Reading: Hershey, ch. 1.

Jan 15, 17: The Two-Party System Why *two* parties?
Reading: Hershey, ch. 2.

Jan 22, 24: Party Organizations Local, state, and national party organizations; party activists; parties and interest groups.
Readings: Hershey, ch. 3–5.

Jan 29, 31; Feb 5: The Party in the Electorate Party identification; party change and realignment; voting and political parties.
Readings: Hershey, ch. 6–8.

Feb 7, 12, 14: Campaigns and Elections The nomination process; general election campaigns; campaign finance, interest groups and political campaigns.
Readings: Hershey, ch. 9–12.

Feb 19, 21, 26: The Party in Government Legislative parties; parties in the judiciary and executive branch; the goal of a “responsible party system.”
Readings: Hershey, ch. 13–16.

Feb 28 Midterm Exam

Mar 4–8 Spring Break—No Class

Mar 12: What is political polarization? Reading: Abramowitz, ch. 1.

Mar 14, 19: Political engagement Reading: Abramowitz, ch. 2.

Mar 21, 26: Partisan-Ideological Polarization Reading: Abramowitz, ch. 3.

Mar 28; Apr 2: Polarization and social groups Reading: Abramowitz, ch. 4.

Apr 4, 9: Polarization and elections Reading: Abramowitz, ch. 5.

Apr 11 No Class: Midwest Political Science Association conference.

Apr 16, 18: Polarization in a changing electorate Reading: Abramowitz, ch. 6.

Apr 23, 25: Polarization, representation, and democratic governance Reading: Abramowitz, ch. 7–8.

Apr 30 Review for final exam.

Tuesday, May 7, 1–3 p.m. Final Examination