To understand the functioning of democracies, it is essential to understand the nature of political parties and electoral behavior. Parties are central to fundamental political processes ranging from representing societal interests, providing political alternatives, mobilizing voters, and channeling conflict. Parties are also often the core institutions that connect voters to the state and often powerfully shape voters’ attitudes about government. Political behavior, the study of voters’ attitudes and behaviors surrounding elections, is similarly important for understanding how democracies function. Questions from why voters turn out to vote to why they vote against the incumbent government are important for making sense of the dizzying array of election results we’ve seen in recent years.

This course introduces students to the study of parties and electoral behavior with an emphasis on party functioning in developing democracies. We will often explore influential readings that apply to developed countries (the U.S., Europe) alongside studies of parties in developing democracies where institutional contexts are quite different. We will cover topics such as voter turnout, partisanship, electoral volatility, party organization, and consider of variety of types of parties. We will also explore the functioning of elections and why this is important for democratic quality and the nature of electoral competition.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

**20% - Class Participation.** Attendance is obligatory. An active role in discussions by everyone enrolled in the course is expected, as is the completion of the required readings before the session for which they are assigned. Each student is permitted one unexcused absence (i.e. without a written note from a doctor or a dean). If you miss any class, you will write a three-page make-up response paper that critiques that session’s readings.

**20% - Country/Region Case Study Presentations** – I will ask each student to complete one presentation on a country (or party within a country) as it applies to the course theme of that particular session. The presentation should last about 10 minutes. The goal of the presentation is to get you to think about the theoretical arguments addressed in a class session and to apply this to a country (or party) case. All presentations should address theoretical arguments including course readings and additional readings relevant to your case and apply that theory through a case study that includes a presentation of evidence.

**10% - Response Papers** – You will write one 4-5-page (double spaced) response paper. In the response paper, you will be asked to critically engage required readings from a week of class.
The response paper should not be a summary of readings. Instead, you may contrast conceptual and methodological approaches across readings or identify issues left unanswered by the readings.

50% - Final Paper – For the final paper you will be asked to write a longer (approximately 20 pages) substantive research paper. Your paper could develop an analysis of a single party or you could develop an analysis of multiple parties/party systems. Regardless of your topic, each student should clear their topic by me no later than the 8th class session.

Readings

This course requires you to carefully read all assigned readings before class. Generally, 4 articles or book excerpts are assigned for each class meeting. Make sure that you not only understand the basic argument, but give yourself time to think critically about the readings before class. I also encourage you to complete the reading worksheet linked below for each reading.

Books for Purchase:


Course Schedule and Readings

Session 1: Course Introduction:

Session 2: What are political parties and are they essential to democracy?


Part 1: The Conduct of Elections

Session 3: Elections in Non-Democracies I

**Session 4: Elections in Non-Democracies II**


TBA Short Reading on Russian Elections

**Session 5: What Makes Elections Free and Fair: The Logistical Challenge**

Schmitter, Phillip and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. “What democracy is... and is not.” *Journal of democracy, 2*(3) 75-88.


**Session 6: Campaign Finance in Comparative Perspective: How it Works**


Cases: India, U.S.

**Session 7: Campaign Finance in Comparative Perspective: Consequences for Democracy**

Vaishnav, Milan. When Crime Pays, Chapter 1.


**Part II: Parties, Party Systems, and Theory**

**Session 8: What Do Parties Do? Interest Aggregation and Collective Action**


**Session 9: When Cleavages Shape Party Systems**


**Session 10: When Parties Mobilize New Cleavages**


**Session 11: Party System Institutionalization**

*In this class session, we discuss the concept of party system institutionalization and consider cases that provide variation on this concept.*


**Session 12: The Problem of Weakly Institutionalized Parties**


**Session 13: Party-Voter Linkages: Partisanship in Comparative Perspective**
In this class session, we discuss mainstream theory of partisanship and discuss partisan dynamics in Russia and Latin America.


**Session 14: Looking Under the Hood: Party Organization**

In this class session, we look under the hood of party organizations and party machines engaged in voter mobilization.


**Part III: Party Linkage Strategies and Political Behavior**

**Session 15: Clientelism**


**Session 16: Clientelism on the Ground: Latin America**


**Session 17: Ethnic Parties**


**Session 18: Religious Parties**


**Session 19: Populist Parties**


**Session 20: Workshop on Student Papers**

*In this class session, we will break into groups according to topic and discuss paper proposals or drafts.*

**Session 21: Political Behavior in Comparative Perspective: Turnout**

*In this class session, we discuss theory on voter turnout and economic voting. We engage this theory with research from India and Africa.*


**Session 22: Why do people vote the way they do? Understanding Retrospective Voting**

Volatility in the Indian States.” *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 41 (8) 1069- 1091.


**Session 23: Strategic Voting in Comparative Perspective**

Readings TBA

**Session 24: Parties, Party Systems, and Distribution**

*In this final class session, we review the key arguments of the class. We also discuss the implications of party systems and competition on distributive strategies.*


**Session 25: Course Conclusion**

Final Paper Due at the beginning of class.