

POLS 3300 American Political Parties

ANN CLEMMER, INSTRUCTOR
OFFICE: 608B STABLER HALL
PHONE: 569-3331(O)

E-MAIL: avclemmer@ualr.edu Note: Please direct questions and comments to me through the Web Course e-mail (WebCT) format—unless there is a problem accessing the course or unless there is an emergency.

***ATTN!!* The syllabus should be reviewed carefully as it contains my requirements and expectations of you this semester. STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS SYLLABUS—PLEASE USE IT THROUGHOUT THE COURSE FOR REFERENCE. I highly recommend printing, or saving an electronic copy outside WebCT, for use if for some reason you are unable to connect to WebCT.**

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will examine the nature, conduct, and role of political parties in the United States. **Students should have completed a course in American government prior to enrollment.** This is a completely online class. All exams will be taken online. All assignments submitted online. There is a time component to all work submitted: a time limit on exams, and time deadlines for discussions and papers. To succeed in this on-line course, students will be expected to meet requirements outlined in this syllabus. *Please see course goals and objectives explained more at the end of this syllabus.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: In addition to on-line exams and research, the student will be expected to work independently on the course material; this should be understood clearly. Students will need to access on-line journals through the UALR library (Ottenheimer Library) to complete the assignments in this course. Regular and dependable access to the Internet is required. A high-speed connection will be necessary from time to time to access materials for the course.

REQUIRED TEXT: Hershey, Marjorie Randon, *Party Politics in America*, 13th Edition. Pearson Longman Publishers, 2009.

CLASS FORMAT: This class is an on-line class. There will be weekly readings for the students from the text, online lecture notes, and/or online websites. Students should plan to devote at least the same amount of time to this course as they would spend attending a traditional class on campus. Students will be expected to keep up with weekly reading assignments and post responses to questions from the lessons, to take tests and complete exercises during the windows of time provided. Students will be expected and should be prepared to participate in class “discussions” in the form of bulletin board postings each week. Discussion topics should be directed and focused for the benefit of the class. I welcome weekly discussion postings on topics in the news related to the course. (Obviously, the internet is a great source for such news—you can go online and search for news updates.) Discussion questions will typically posted by me once each week. These will be used to structure and guide student participation. **Students are expected to participate multiple times each week in discussions.** (Students with extended periods of non-participation may be

denied access to the course. Should this happen, the student will need to contact me via regular UALR e-mail (avclemmer@ualr.edu) to explain their circumstances and request renewed access.)

EXAMS AND GRADING: Exams will cover both lecture and reading material. Exams will be essay and identification/short answer. Your grade for the course will be based on the following:

3 exams	300 points
Paper	150 points
Participation	150 points
Total points possible	600 points

Exams will be taken on-line during the times posted on the course calendar. There will be a time limit on all exams. You will be able to use all your materials during the quiz and exams, but to complete the exams in the time limit required, you will need to be familiar with your readings before beginning the timed exam. WebCT will keep track of your time, but will not stop you during the timed exams. You will need to monitor your own time, as answers posted after the time limit will not be graded.

As you will have your materials available during exams and ample time allotted to complete the exams, I have high expectations for performance. I will be looking to gauge your understanding of material, and thus do not want to see text or lesson material quoted verbatim and definitely will not accept material cut and pasted from other sources. I expect you to use your own words.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT (150 points): During the course of the semester, students will write a paper on an approved topic on political parties. This will be a research length paper, but could form the basis for future independent research you might wish to engage in. You will be expected to use an electronic database for a portion of your research. UALR's Ottenheimer Library has the resources you will need for this project. I want the bulk of your sources to come from JStor. I do not accept online materials that are not refereed. (This means sources from blogs, Wikipedia or other similar type sources will not be accepted. If in doubt, ask me. Using JStor will always be safe.) You will need to review articles available online, so your classmates and your instructor can access these same articles. You will need to provide either a hotlink to these articles, or provide an electronic copy at the end of your paper. Part of your paper will include an interview with an elected official or party activist on the topic of your paper. You should have much of your research done before the interview takes place, in order for the interview to be truly substantive and evaluative.

PARTICIPATION: Participation will be measured by the regularity, frequency, and quality of lesson postings to the on-line bulletin board. Students should consider posting to be the equivalent of class attendance and participation—and thus should log on to participate at least three days each week. Students will be expected to respond to readings with questions and comments—this is first priority for participation. You may contribute information from the news—as it relates to political parties—ideally by posting a hotlink for the news item—if it is available on-line. (This does not replace the need to post on the assigned questions.) Students are expected to read the postings of their classmates.

Each lesson will contain questions based on the reading assignment for that lesson that all students are expected to know. Responses to these will be a main component of the participation grade. You are to comment on the readings AND respond to comments from your fellow classmates. I will

expect all of you to participate in the posting and commentary three days each week, posting a minimum of 5 comments. I expect students to not only answer the assigned questions, but to post remarks to someone else's posting during each lesson. I want you to interact with each other to simulate a class discussion. There is no need to answer the same question with the same response multiple times. Repetitive comments may not be counted toward your discussion credit! The class is responsible for correcting erroneous information in each other's postings. (Engaging in this critical activity will earn points in my grading system.) You may want to post about something you find interesting, enlightening, or you may wish to take exception to something in the assigned material. You may find a remark partisan in the text, feel free to point that out diplomatically. Additional assignments for participation points may be assigned based on events.

Significant weight has been given to participation (20% of your final grade) as it is perhaps one of the most crucial parts of an on-line course. For more information on participation, see the "Discussion Guide" below.

ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY: Cheating, helping others to cheat, or plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is "To adopt and reproduce as one's own, to appropriate to one's own use, and incorporate in one's own work without acknowledgment, the ideas of others or passages from their writings and works.... When a faculty member believes that a student has behaved dishonestly, he or she will immediately notify the Dean of Students of his or her suspicion of cheating, plagiarism, collusion, or a similar activity...." (UALR Faculty Handbook) For our purposes online, I will expect that everything you write in answer to a test question will be in your own words, even though they will be open book exercises. For research, I will expect any words used that are not your own to be cited appropriately—either with footnotes, endnotes, or in-text references using the MLA format.

COMMUNICATION: Please direct all communication with me through the WebCT course format. (Click on the icon for "Mail" on the course homepage.) This allows me to identify you better and allows me to keep better records of our communication. I will normally log on once a day, with the exception of some weekends. If immediate assistance from me is required, It would be acceptable for you to call or e-mail me at my ualr.edu address (avclemmer@ualr.edu) to tell me your situation—but only after you have attempted to direct your question through the WebCT course set up on-line. (In other words, even if you call or e-mail me outside WebCT, you will need to resend the e-mail through WebCT, so I will have a written record of your question contained inside the course. This would hold true for any correspondence. When I get ready to assign participation grades—I will be looking exclusively at your activity and records contained in the WebCT format.)

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: It is the policy and practice of *the University of Arkansas at Little Rock* to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or to accurate assessment of achievement--such as time-limited exams, inaccessible web content, or the use of non-captioned videos--please notify the instructor as soon as possible. Students are also welcome to contact the Disability Resource Center , telephone 501-569-3143 (v/tty). For more information, visit the DRC website at www.ualr.edu/dis

CLASS SCHEDULE

There will be reading assignments for each lesson. Reading and posting dates will be posted in the course calendar and the current assignment will be on the homepage. Each week, students must participate in the discussion, or points will be lost. A discussion guide follows and is posted separately in the course for your reference. **There is a calendar inside the course that will direct you to due dates and exam dates. It will also assign your reading assignment for that week. If additional reading material is loaded into the course, you will find it under “Course Content”.**

Paper and Exam Schedule (Subject to minor modification on the course calendar)

First Exam—September 26-28 -- Chapters 1-5
Second Exam—November 7-9 -- Chapters 6-12
Final Exam— December 5-7 -- Chapters 13-16
Paper Due Date—November 16

As long as work is submitted by midnight on the date above, it will not be considered late. Exams have a scheduled availability, which will limit your access to that window. Be careful about waiting too close to these deadlines to begin your exam. Strong penalties exist for those who miss exam windows.

Discussion Guide

Overview of Discussion Assignments

There are multiple purposes to the discussion topics. One is to direct your reading to significant areas for purposes of preparing you for the exams. Secondly, the give and take between students is to simulate a class discussion (although not in real time) and allow you to think more in depth about the reading assignment. Without the discussion element, the online course would not much different than a correspondence course. An upper division class should provide students the experience of sharing in the ideas of others, and should provide an avenue for a critical appraisal of those ideas. Students often have the example or connection that helps another student finally understand a concept. Thus, you are expected to make a significant contribution to these discussions. "Significant" is not easy to define, but it involves crafting meaningful ideas with factual information. A good post must say more than simply "I agree or disagree with what you said." Or "well done". Your comment should be relevant to the question or to the ongoing discussion about the question, and it should be based on knowledge of the assigned reading or lecture. The bottom line is that you need to participate. If you are confused about something, the discussion area would be the way to resolve your confusion. I will be keeping track of each discussion and your grade will depend on whether or not you are involved and whether or not your responses reflect a good connection to the course material as a whole and to the discussion question at hand. Since elections are about competition within and between parties, partisanship is frequently a source of argument in class discussions. While it is natural to allow your partisan leanings to influence your comments, the goal is to present conflicting ideas as a source of deeper understanding for everyone involved. Try to take the role of a political analyst in your remarks, rather than taking the role of "party hack". As you find on-line news items worthy of reading and comment, please post the hotlinks, so the class will be able to access these articles. Giving some summary of what is at the hotlink, or

creating a new topic for discussion would be an acceptable form of participation, if it were in line with the content being studied at the time. (I retain the right to delete any and all posts that do not contribute to the topic of study that we are engaged in at the time of the post.)

How to Discuss

The Discussion tool in WebCT provides for threaded discussion in which the posts (messages) are arranged by subject and by the post to which they are responding. This allows for online conversations among people who take part at different times.

Here is what happens on the Lesson postings:

I begin by posting a discussion assignment during the week the reading assignments are made. Study questions are found following lesson notes (found in the “course content” window) and the questions will be copied to the discussion window organized for that chapter. Discussion for each chapter will be open for a finite period. You will need to finish the assigned reading before you begin posting. Once the time for posting has expired, I will lock the window for new posts, but you can still access the questions and comments for reading and study purposes. Remember there will often be lecture notes that correspond or complement the assigned chapter reading; there may be additional articles on the web for you to read as well.

When you are the first to answer a discussion or study question, cut and paste the question to which you are responding, put some reference to the question number and topic in the subject line. All responses to a question should remain part of the same thread, thus organizing the discussion board by question.

Based on the assignment reading you will select questions to answer and post. (The number of questions varies with each lesson, so some lessons will require you to answer several questions and other lessons may require only a couple.) If others have already posted answers to questions, you should choose other questions to answer. After posting your own unduplicated answers, and after reading what has already been posted, you are encouraged to respond with your own thoughts to your fellow classmates' comments. When you log on the next time, you will see if anyone has responded to your initial posting. If so, read their comments and respond accordingly. Continue reading the new postings of others. Responses are made by using the **Reply** function, not by creating a new composition with a new subject. Even though you are replying, it is still good to place your comments in context, by perhaps making it clear what part of the post you are replying to. As other students post responses, we can have an ongoing discussion. To see the ongoing discussion at one time, click on the subject.

2. **Make your posts relatively brief.** These are not intended to be long essays. You do not have to give all the details or answer the whole question all at once. Reading long posts is about as much fun as listening to long speeches. Provide some input that incorporates facts from the reading or from other sources (be sure to cite), wait to see what other people have to say, and then jump back in. I will monitor the discussion and make comments as necessary, just as I would if we were having a face-to-face discussion in class on campus. However, since this is an exercise for you—I'll usually stay quiet, until it looks like everyone has posted, or has had the opportunity to do so. As a class, you are responsible for correcting any misinformation in the postings. As individuals, you will need to be familiar with all the information from the discussion questions for exams.

3. **A discussion period will have a set beginning and ending time.** Any time during that allotted discussion period, you can post and respond. At the end of the allotted time, I will close the Topic and we will start with the next lesson, If you miss a discussion time, you will miss the points for that assignment. Missing a discussion is much like missing a class activity if you were on campus. Like missing a class activity, make-ups don't really work. We cannot recreate the discussion for you.

4. **DON'T wait until the final day for discussion** to quickly make your postings. This point is important. If you wait until the last day to post your comments, then not much dialogue occurs and the discussion session becomes more like journal postings than a conversation among students. Waiting to make such a last minute posting would be like coming to class during the last 5 minutes and making a quick comment. Such last minute postings can receive only partial credit.

5. The method for postings is to post your comments on separate days each week, allowing for others to respond to your post(s). **You can make more than one posting each time you access the bulletin board, but you must access and post to the discussion board a minimum of three times over the course of the week.** You can access and post on any day and at any time of the day during the allotted time frame. Posting on different days will ensure that you are reading and responding to several other students. I encourage you to access and post to the bulletin often.

6. **You do not have to post answers to all the study questions**—again, think of the questions as being submitted to the entire class as they might be in the classroom. There is no point in hearing the same answers to the same questions over and over again. You are responsible for understanding all of the material correctly, regardless of what is posted. I encourage you to engage in fine-tuning each other's answers, amplifying or correcting as necessary.

Grading Scale for Discussion

To earn full credit you must:

- Make a minimum of five postings each week, posted on three different days..
- Well-developed, thoughtful postings that demonstrate understanding of material.
- A willingness to engage in dialogue with other students; i.e. react and follow-up on what others say.
- Read the postings of your classmates each week.

Failure to accomplish the above requirements will result in the loss of points for discussion.

Examples include:

- Making less than the required number of posts on different days
- Making short, underdeveloped, redundant remarks that do not add to the discussion's content.
- Making posts just before the deadline

No Credit (0%) will be given for late postings.

GOALS and MISSION:

The Political Science Department at UALR has articulated both knowledge and skill goals for our majors and for those who take classes in our department. These are articulated below. Next to the goal is one application of that goal for this course. The mission statement follows at the bottom.

Knowledge Goals – students majoring in political science will be exposed to a wide range of substantive information about the world of politics, covering subjects such as:

- 1. The history, characteristics, and impact of political institutions and systems, including international, national, state, and local governments.** We will look at how political parties have changed over time and how these developments have brought changes in our political system as well.
- 2. The behavior of individual actors at both the mass and elite levels.** We will look at the political party as an organizational structure made up of national leaders and those who make up the political party at the grassroots level.
- 3. The processes involved in creating government policy and the impact of those policies.** We will look at the factors driving changes in the legal environment that affected both the operation of political parties and consequently the election system as a whole.
- 4. The debates over the normative foundations of the state, the scope of its activities, and the nature of justice.** We will critically examine the role political parties play in advancing the cause of democracy in the United States.

Skill Goals – students majoring in political science will develop practical and marketable skills which will help them to apply that knowledge to any number of career paths. These skills include:

- 1. Critical thinking – the ability to read and evaluate primary texts, ideas, theories, and political analysis.** Students will read online documents and refereed academic journals in this course. This will be used as the information component for a course paper.
- 2. Analysis/Research – the ability to pose and answer questions effectively.** Students will answer questions each week in an online discussion format. They will conduct individual research on an approved topic or question and present the research in the form of a written and documented paper.

3. **Argumentation/Persuasion – the ability to use logic and evidence to build a persuasive argument.** These skills will be honed in the weekly discussion postings, where students will build and evaluate answers to topics.
4. **Written and Verbal Communication – the ability to communicate ideas clearly on paper or through oral presentations.** Students will participate in this activity through written posted remarks each week.
5. **Working in Groups – the ability to effectively coordinate with others on a project.** Students will be asked to post their research for their classmates to read and critique.
6. **Practical Applications – the ability to take information gained through coursework and use it effectively in real world or simulated exercises.** One way this will be applied in this class is through various aspects of the research project. Examining a topic, preparing to look at this topic in a systematic way, and posting it in an easily accessible electronic format will develop the student’s technology skills. (Employers often demand the ability to read and understand the main points of a given issue, to present reports to co-workers or clients in electronic format.)

Mission Statement

The mission of the department is to provide students with both a substantive knowledge of politics and the skills necessary to make use of that knowledge effectively, not only as private citizens participating in a democracy, but also in a wide range of careers. The department has implemented a program of assessment to measure achievement of these objectives. Students in the department are exposed to both the theory and practice of politics. The department’s faculty covers a broad range of substantive specializations, encompassing American politics, comparative politics, constitutional law, international relations, and political theory. Courses in the department also strive to instill in students a number of important skills, including critical thinking, analysis, writing, and the practical application of ideas to real world situations. The combination of substantive knowledge and practical skills instilled by courses in the department provide a solid background to help our students to excel as leaders in a variety of fields, including politics, government service, law, teaching, and business.