



POLS

3122

Section H1
Spring 2026

POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS (CRN: 5582)

Time: **MWF 11⁰⁰am to 11⁵⁰am**; Loc.: **2014 Young Hall**; Credit: 3 hours

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Office Hours: MTW 3:00pm to 5:00pm, by email or appointment

Whether...safe or marginal,...congressmen must constantly engage in activities relating to reelection.
- David Mayhew

Course Description:

Prerequisite: POLS 1101

This course is a study of U.S. political parties, including their development, functions and significance as democratic institutions and policy-making instruments. The election process and voter behavior are also examined. We will focus on the 2024, and upcoming 2026 national elections.

Required Readings:

Texts:



Theiss-Morse & Wagner, 2022.
Political Behavior of the American Electorate, 15th ed.



Nelson, ed, 2025.
The Elections of 2024.

Web Sites:



Google News/Politics

<https://news.google.com/news/section?&q=Politics>

POLITICO

<http://www.politico.com>

(We will likely also use several other sites as article sources)

Additional material: see <http://faculty.ung.edu/ccavalli/3122bib.htm>

ONLINE: Home – <http://faculty.ung.edu/ccavalli/3122.htm>, D2L (“eLearning”) – <https://ung.view.usg.edu>, Turnitin – <http://turnitin.com>

Course Objectives and Format:

Outcomes: Students will understand the **history and functions** of American political parties and elections, explore **issues** involved in partisan and electoral activity from analytical and practical viewpoints, and be aware of other **actors** that influence, provide resources to, and regulate political parties and elections.

This is a “half at a distance” course which will meet part of the week, with online activities filling out the week. We will use D2L online (also known as *eLearning*), but I like to keep things simple. We will not use any “modules”, etc. Unless otherwise noted, all activity and communication will take place via the announcement and discussion sections. In class, we will engage in as much **discussion** possible. To that end, *you need to read the assignments before their due date*. Be able to *discuss* and answer *questions* about them. The texts lay out the basics. We will start each new topic (see Schedule) with the appropriate readings. We will examine past elections and also follow 2022 developments to get a “current” view. Therefore, you must also *stay informed* of the progress of these events. We will follow current events mainly as covered in the *Google News* (<https://news.google.com/news/section?&q=Politics>) web site.

In addition to assigned readings, we will review *Google News/Politics* articles (or ones from other sources) most weeks. *You will present* and lead **discussions** of these online. Together, we will select articles that complement class topics¹. So in a real sense, you will help shape course content! Of course, you **all** are responsible for **all** assigned articles, text, and any other materials. In presenting articles, I would like you each to assume a particular role (e.g., candidates, party strategists, the press). This helps us gain particular insights into different perspectives on electoral and partisan issues. A list of roles appears at the end of this syllabus.

For **most weeks** (see Schedule), the class meets **Monday and Wednesday only**. **Online discussion replaces most Friday classes:** We will begin new topics and readings *after* each Wednesday class. You are **required** to post comments on that material to our D2L (“eLearning”) discussion site. You are **required** to post at least one **substantive response** (1. *not* just “I liked...”, or “I didn’t like” or similar words; 2. *analytical*, not judgmental) to discussion/notes I will post on D2L each week *and* at least one **substantive original comment**. Treat online discussions as required readings – you are responsible for and may be tested on them. There may be videos to view, or other activities assigned as part of these discussions.

Exams	Written exercises	Other	90+ = A
Exam #1	15% Bibliography/Outline	5% Online Discussions	10% 80 to 89 = B
Exam #2	15% Project	10% Articles/Role-Playing	5% 70 to 79 = C
Final	15% Presentation	10% Participation/Attendance	5% 60 to 69 = D
	Revision	10%	
Total:	45%	35%	20%
			Grand Total: 100%

There are **two ‘mid-term’ exams and a final**. Each is 15% of your grade. They consist of two essay questions. A few days *before* the exam, I will give you four essay questions. On the *day* of the exam, I will select two of these questions for you to answer. *Please do not miss exams* (you know *our* schedule *now*, so plan *your* schedule well ahead). *I will not give makeups unless you 1) notify me or the department in advance (no exceptions); and 2) verify a family/medical emergency in writing*. **Note:** I will *not* give any makeups *after* the graded exams are *handed back* in class. A **group project** of 18-24+ pages (depending upon group size), due no later than *April 24th*, is another 10% of your grade. The format and topics are covered on our web site, but you must consult me before proceeding. To prepare you for the project, an **annotated bibliography** is due by *April 3rd*, and an **annotated outline** is due by *April 10th*. Together, these are worth 5% of your grade. A **revision** worth 0% of your grade is due *during finals week* (see the schedule). *Do not turn in late papers!* If I accept them (and I may not!), you will lose either 5% or 1 point of your paper grade (whichever is *greater*) for each *day* late. Your **online posts** are another 20% of your grade. Finally, a **presentation** of your project during the last week is another 10%.

I do not **grade** on a curve (You earn what you earn...I *hope* you all earn “A”s!). A typical class average is about a mid- to upper- “C” (“C” is *average* — *not* below average... “B” is *above* average). Just completing the requirements most likely earns a “C” (70-79). “B” (80-89) requires effort *beyond* just requirements. “A” (90-100) requires *extraordinary* performance. *Notes on “attendance”:* 1. The **UNG attendance policy**

¹ Each week, we will select articles for discussion for the *following* week’s class. Links to articles will be posted in the appropriate D2L discussion topic.

(see the latest UNG *Student Handbook*, or *Bulletin*) applies to this course; 2. Any D2L **announcements** are considered sufficient notice. So, *attendance matters*, and please check your email and D2L often.

Course Schedule:

Legend: **Theiss** = *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, 15th ed.; **Nelson** = *The Elections of 2024*. Numbers following the names are chapter numbers. **Other names** refer to articles. **Italicized titles** refer to videos (see Additional material link, above). **Articles** = Google News articles (to be selected in class — see <http://faculty.ung.edu/ccavalli/3122.htm>). Items in **Bold type** are activities or assignments. [Light cells are class days]. [Dark cells: D2L discussions]. [Red cells: exams]. [Red Text: Project]. Grey cells: off days.

Monday: Class Discussion; videos		Wednesday: Class Discussion; Role Playing		Friday/Online: New Topics: Discussion due 12p Mon.	
01/12	Intro.: "Hello, my name is..."	01/14	Introductory lecture	01/16	Intro Lecture (cont); Drop/add ends
01/19	—Happy Birthday MLK!—	01/21	Introductory lecture (continued)	01/23	Democracy/The Setting: Theiss 1, Nelson 1
01/26	<i>A Third Choice</i>	01/28	Discussion, Role Playing (RP)	Online	Context & Strategy: Theiss 2
02/02	Discussion	02/04	Discussion, RP; Exam questions	Online	Presidential Nomination/Election: Nelson 2, 3
02/09	<i>Dark Money</i>	02/11	Exam 1 (material through 2/09)	Online	Campaign Finance: Nelson 4
02/16	Discussion	02/18	Discussion, RP	Online	Turnout & Participation: Theiss 3
02/23	Discussion	02/25	Discussion, RP	Online	Unconventional Participation: Theiss 4
03/02	Discussion	03/04	Discussion, RP	Online	Partisanship: Theiss 5
03/09	—Spring Break: Beaches! Beer!! Bikinis!!! Hangovers! Headaches!! Home!!!—			Online	Public Opinion & Ideology: Theiss 6
03/16	Discussion	03/18	Discussion, RP; Exam questions	Online	Media: Theiss 7, Nelson 5
03/23	Discussion; Withdraw ends Friday	03/25	Exam 2 (material through 3/23)	Online	Presidency: Nelson 6; Bibliog Fri., 5pm
03/30	Discussion	04/01	Discussion, RP	Online	Congress: Nelson 7; Outline Fri., 5pm
04/06	Discussion	04/08	Jacobson ; Discussion, RP	Online	Choice & Decisions: Nelson 8
04/13	Discussion	04/15	Discussion, RP	Online	Conclusion: Nelson 9, 10; Project Fri., 5pm
04/20	Discussion	04/22	Discussion, RP	Online	(class if needed)
04/27	Presentations 1-3	04/29	Presentations 4-6	05/01	

Project revisions due: 5pm May 5th; **Final Exam: Wed., May 6th, 10:20am to 12:20pm**

Cancellations: we will pick up where we left off—and meet Fridays if needed.

POLS 3122 Roles:

Article presentations and other class discussions will use *Socratic Dialogues*, requiring class members to assume various roles during discussions.

What is a Socratic Dialogue? The Socratic Dialogue format uses role playing, hypothetical case studies, and a roving inquisitor to compel panelists to confront what they would do in situations where the “right” choice is not clear. The question “What would you do?” is different from “What do you think?” in that it drives a participant to reveal how he or she would confront a specific problem. The exercise is designed to identify the perceptions and decision-making processes of all sides and to enable participants to better understand both their own positions and the imperatives driving others’ actions. As panelists wrestle with the hypothetical situations, the drama created helps illuminate complex issues in an enlightening way. [Viewer’s Guide, *Beyond Black and White: Affirmative Action in America*. 1999. PBS. [WWWdocument]. URL <http://www.pbs.org/pov/tvtracinitiative/beyondblackandwhite/viewer.html#socratic>]

Presidential Election	Congressional Election/Party Specialists	Outside Actors
Republican Presidential Candidates	House/Senate Republican Candidates	Interest Groups
Democratic Presidential Candidates	House/Senate Democratic Candidates	The Press
Independent Presidential Candidate	Republican/Democratic Campaign Strategists	The Public

STAY INFORMED: UNG Political Science and International Affairs on social media! Blog: <http://blog.ung.edu/psia-news/>



CHEAT = FAIL. Cheating or plagiarizing will result in an automatic zero for the exam/assignment, a zero for participation and attendance, AND forfeiture of all extra credit. At my discretion, it may ALSO result in academic integrity charges and an “F” for the course.

UNG Integrity Code: “I will not lie, cheat, steal, plagiarize, evade the truth or tolerate those that do.”

All students in this class are bound by the above Integrity Code. For information on Academic Integrity as defined by UNG, see the *UNG 2013-2014 Undergraduate Catalog* (http://catalog.ung.edu/content.php?catoid=12&navoid=252#Academic_Integrity_Policy). See also <http://www.plagiarism.org/>.

Plagiarism in any form is a violation of UNG Academic Integrity policies and will not be tolerated:

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Terms and Conditions of Use posted on the Turnitin.com site.

The use of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) is prohibited by the student code of conduct

For additional policies, see: <http://ung.edu/academic-affairs/policies-and-guidelines/supplemental-syllabus.php>

Accessibility Statement: If you need this document in another format, please email me (carl.cavalli@ung.edu) or call 706-864-1872.



Accommodations for disabilities: <http://ung.edu/student-disability-services/>

The University of North Georgia is committed to equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an accommodation, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and the Office of Student Disability Resources. In this case, contact Candis Hill, Assistant Director of Student Disabilities Services, in the Stewart Student Success Center, Room 233 (706-867-2782, disability-dah@ung.edu).