Political Parties and Elections

M.P.S. in Legislative Affairs
Spring 2018
January 22 – May 2

Political Parties and Elections
LGAF 6222.LH
3 credits

Mondays 6:00pm to 8:00pm
Hall of the States at 444 North Capitol Street, NW (check with front desk each week for room number for that week)

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor
This Course is taught by Martin Frost, a former Congressman from Texas who served 26 years in the U.S. House of Representatives (1979-2005) and who held major leadership positions for House Democrats (two terms as Chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and two terms as Chair of the House Democratic Caucus). Congressman Frost was one of the founding members of the Democratic Leadership Council, a group of moderate Democrats that helped pave the way for the election of Bill Clinton as President in 1992. He chaired America Votes, a major turnout organization for Democrats during the 2008 election. He has co-authored a book on the future of Congress with former Republican Congressman Tom Davis of Virginia.

Contact Information
Phone Number: (703) 577-1897
Email Address: martinfrost@comcast.net

Communication
Please use the above email to communicate with me. I check it often. Do not use the GW email because I check that only once a week or so.

Blackboard Site
A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site throughout the semester, as Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communications between the instructors and the students. Students can access the course site at https://blackboard.gwu.edu. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or helpdesk.gwu.edu.

Academic Integrity
All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Deliberate failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and
without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity.

Support for Students with Disabilities
GW’s Disability Support Services (DSS) provides and coordinates accommodations and other services for students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled by injury or illness. Accommodations are available through DSS to facilitate academic access for students with disabilities. Please notify your instructor if you require accommodations. Additional information is available at https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/.

In the Event of an Emergency or Crisis during Class
If we experience some an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at this location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave here, we will meet outside the Hall of States in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University’s operating status: http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/.

Attendance Policy
You are expected to attend all of the classes. If you are unable to make a class, please email me at martinfrost@comcast.net.

Course Evaluation
At the end of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to evaluate the course through GW’s online course evaluation system. It is very important that you take the time to complete an evaluation. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback throughout the course of the semester by contacting any/all of the following:

Dr. Steven Billet
Director, Legislative Affairs Program
sbillet@gwu.edu | 202-994-1149

Dr. Jack Prostko
Associate Dean for Learning and Faculty Development
College of Professional Studies
jackp@gwu.edu | 202-994-3592

Suzanne Farrand
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM
sfarrand@gwu.edu | 202-994-9309
THE COURSE

Legislative Affairs Program Objectives

Upon completion of the Master’s degree in Legislative Affairs, students will:

1. Gain both theoretical and practical knowledge related to the U.S. Congress, general issues in the legislative arena, and how to effectively advance legislation;
2. Hone their oral and written communication skills in both theoretical and technical aspects of legislative affairs;
3. Be able to conduct cutting-edge research and engage in effective problem solving by learning critical thinking skills;
4. Learn how to work effectively with others, the value of collaborative work, and will understand ethical issues involved in the legislative arena.

Course Description and Overview

This course is designed to provide an in-depth view of the two major parties and how they engage in electoral politics in the second decade of the 21st century. While there will be some discussion of the historical evolution of the parties, the primary focus will be on what’s happening right now.

One major focus of this course will involve how the parties function under the rapidly changing rules governing campaign finance. We will also deal with such contemporary subjects as the evolving role of social media and the nationalization of the two parties which is making them more like their European parliamentary cousins rather than parties functioning under the traditional U.S. separation of powers system. We will examine the changing demographic makeup of the U.S. electorate and how this is influencing strategies adopted by the parties. And we will look at how Congressional gerrymandering has created numerous safe one-party districts with the accompanying effect of eliminating many moderates from office, making it more difficult both houses of Congress to reach bi-partisan solutions to the problems facing the country.

The course will include some guest lecturers who will help us better understand the impact of the new world of campaign finance and efforts to use the courts to restrict the electorate through voter-ID laws. This course is not for the faint at heart. Some weeks students will be asked to do a significant amount of reading which will include key decisions by the federal courts on campaign finance and other topics. Class participation will be an important part of your final grade and this will require full preparation for each class.

This course will also deal with developments in the 2018 congressional election.

Students will be asked to write two relatively short papers and a longer paper with an oral presentation during the final week of the course. The shorter papers will not exceed 2,000 words, with one being due on Feb. 26th. For the longer paper and oral presentation, students will be divided into teams of three which each team being allocated 30 minutes of class time for its oral presentation.

The objective of this course is to prepare students for the world of contemporary U.S. politics with the hope that many of you will want to be a part of the electoral process – either as candidates, campaign organizers or informed citizens.

Grading is based on three factors:
- Class participation, 25%
• Two small papers, 20% each
• Research paper with oral presentation, 35%


Articles from various national magazines and newspapers also are cited in the syllabus and likewise will be made available to students either through links on Blackboard or in hard copy prior to the week when they will be discussed.

Course Learning Objectives

1. By the end of this course, students will have an understanding of the history of the major modern political parties in the United States and the factors that shaped them into the contemporary parties we know today.
2. By the end of this course, students will have learned about the ever evolving role of political parties in the United States federal elections process.
3. By the end of this course, students will have an appreciation for what it means to work on a political campaign.
4. By the end of this course, students will have sharpened their written and oral communications skills, especially with regards to political and policy matters.

Document Citations and Presentation Accuracy

There will be two short essays and one more lengthy final project which will include an oral presentation. Please print out and bring a hard copy of assignments to give to me at the beginning of class on the day they are due. I will keep these for my records. If you would like comments, please hand in two copies of the assignments paper clipped together.

We will use the Chicago Manual of Style for essays, citations and bibliographies. A sample of the style can be found at http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/.

PLEASE NOTE: You can lose points for failure to footnote accurately or for grammatical and spelling errors. This is a graduate course, and graduate level work requires that your work is proofread and presented in an acceptable manner. Spellcheck is not necessarily your friend – it will approve a word that is an actual word but which may be the wrong one for the context under discussion. The best policy is to have a friend or fellow classmate read through your paper for mistakes before submitting it.

Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade*</th>
<th>Grading Standard</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional environment. Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.</td>
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</table>
B+ 87-89 | Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation, but needs some minor work.
B 83-86 | Satisfactory work, but needs reworking and more effort. Note that although not a failing grade, at the graduate level, anything below a “B” is viewed as unacceptable.
B- 80-82 | You’ve completed the assignment, but you are not meeting all of the requirements.
C+ 77-79 | Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.
C 73-76 | Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.
C- 70-72 (lowest grade to pass) | Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.
F Below 70 | Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.

*Please note that you may be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).

Tentative Course Calendar*
*The instructor reserves the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace to accommodate class progress. Students are responsible for keeping up with all adjustments to the course calendar.

Class 1. January 22 – Introduction and History of Political Parties in the U.S.

The objective of this class is to discuss course expectations, assignments and format and to examine the history of political parties in our country from the earliest times to the present.

Reading Assignment for this class:

Brewer and Maisel, chapters 2 and 12

Class 2. January 29 – The future of Political Parties in the U.S.

The objective of this class is to consider the future of the Democratic and Republican parties in the U.S. and to project their paths based on recent election trends.

Reading Assignment for this class:


Class 3. February 5 – Role of Social Media in Politics Today

The objective of this class is to understand the dramatic effect that various forms of social media are having in U.S. politics and to consider what limits, if any, could be placed on social media as a form of political expression.

**First short paper assigned which is due February 26th**

Reading Assignment for this class:

Brewer and Maisel, chapter 10;

Davis and Frost, chapter 10;

Schieffer, chapters 6 and 17;


Class 4. February 12 – The Partisan Divide

The objective of this class is to understand the effect of the strong partisan divide on our elections and on the way Congress functions today.

Reading Assignment for this class:

Davis and Frost, chapter 9;

Frost PowerPoint on the partisan divide, posted on blackboard

Class 5. February 26 – The Role of Race, Gender, Education and Religion in American Politics

**First short paper due at the beginning of class**
The objective of this class is to trace the changing racial demographics in American politics in the past 25 years and how this has influenced the approach taken by the two major parties. We will also discuss the effects on gender, education and religion on this subject.

Reading Assignment for this class:

Frost PowerPoint on the role of race and gender posted on blackboard;

Davis and Frost, chapter 4;


Class 6. March 5 – Campaign Finance – The Rise of Super PACs

The objective of this class is to trace recent development in campaign finance law and how they have changed the political playing field by taking money away from political parties and putting it into the hands of candidate-specific Super PACs which may accept large corporate, labor and individual contributions but which must disclose their donors and tax-exempt organizations which may also accept large corporate, labor and individual contributions but have no obligation to disclose donors.

Reading Assignment for this class:

Davis and Frost, chapter 6;

Brewer and Maisel, chapter 5;


Class 7. March 19 – Running for President

The objective of this class is to discuss the dynamics of recent presidential elections and how each party has been able to put together at least 270 electoral votes in the post-World War II period as the political geography has changed during that time.

Second short paper assigned which is due April 2nd

Reading Assignment for this class:

Brewer and Maisel, chapters 8 and 9;

Frost PowerPoint on the Electoral College on blackboard

Class 8. March 26 – Running for the House and Senate

The objective of this class is to discuss the effects of both racial and political gerrymandering on composition of the House and recent court decisions which will affect the way House districts are drawn in the future. Further, we will explore how Senate races have become nationalized with many voters casting their ballots on the basis of party rather than the merits of individual candidates. Further we will examine the issue trend that all politics are no longer local.

Reading Assignment for this class:

Davis and Frost, chapters 5, 7, 11, and 12;


“The Great Election Grab: When does gerrymandering become a threat to democracy?” by Jeffrey Toobin, the New Yorker, Dec. 8, 2003; http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/12/08/the-great-election-grab

“Drawing the Line,” by Elizabeth Kolbert, the New Yorker, June 27, 2016; http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/06/27/ratfcked-the-influence-ofredistricting
Class 9. April 2 – Working in Campaigns

**Second short paper due at the beginning of class**

The objective of this class is to hear from two campaign professionals about how campaigns are conducted today on the organizational and fundraising sides and the pressures that this places on candidates for both the House and Senate.

Reading Assignment for this class:

To be provided

Class 10. April 9th – The 2018 Elections

The objective of this class is to discuss the electoral prospects for the two parties, both in the House and the Senate in 2018. This will form the basis for oral presentations on individual Senate races which will occur the last two weeks of the class.

Reading Assignment for this class:

Frost power point on 2018 elections, posted on blackboard

Class 11. April 16 – Efforts to Restrict Access to the Ballot

The objective of this class is to discuss the recent trend in voter photo ID laws and by some states to limit the days and hours for in person early voting.

Reading Assignment for this class:

Readings to be posted before class

Class 12. April 23 – The first day of team presentations of individual 2018 Senate races.

Class 13. April 30 – The second day of team presentations of individual 2018 Senate races.

Class 14. May 2 – The final day of team presentations of individual 2018 Senate races.