PSC 558: Comparative Parties and Elections
Fall 2012
Tuesdays 2 - 4:40pm
Harkness 329

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How and why do political parties emerge? What determines party success and failure? What are the causes and consequences of adopting different electoral rules? Under what conditions does strategic voting occur? What role do the economy, ideology, and partisan identification play in shaping the choices voters make? The goal of this seminar is to examine the classic and contemporary literature on political parties, electoral systems, and voting in comparative politics. We consider multiple methodological approaches to these topics and compare the dynamics of parties, elections, and voting across a range of empirical contexts, including the United States, Western and Eastern Europe, India, Africa, and Latin America.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is a seminar. Students are thus expected to actively contribute to the discussion each and every week. This necessitates a careful reading of the material prior to the class. In preparing for class, students should think carefully about both the substantive and methodological aspects of each reading individually and in comparison with each other. Student responsibilities include leading discussion of one of the readings in each seminar, drawing the class into describing and comparing the readings substantively and methodologically. (There will be some flexibility about this depending on the size of the class and the readings for the week.) A one page handout of notes should be provided. Grades will be based on these presentations and general class discussion (33%); the take-home “midterm,” (33%); and a take-home “final” (33%), covering the 2nd half of the course.

**Barring extraordinary circumstances, late exams will be marked down a third of a grade (for ex. A to A-) for each 24 hour period after they are due. Thus, if a paper is turned in any time during the first 24 hours after it is due, it is penalized a third of a grade. Any paper not turned in within a week of the assigned due date will automatically receive a zero.

REQUIRED READINGS

In this course, we read a combination of books, book chapters and journal articles. Articles and book chapters will be available through Blackboard. The books for the course are listed below. One copy of each book will be on reserve in the library, but you will probably find it easier to purchase them.


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**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**September 4: What is a Party?**


**September 11: Party Systems I**


September 18: Party Systems II


September 25: Party Positioning


October 2: Explaining Party Success and Failure I


October 9: Fall Break – NO CLASS

October 16: Explaining Party Success and Failure II
Meguid, Bonnie M. 2008. *Party Competition between Unequals: Strategies and Electoral Fortunes in Western Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP. Chapters 1-4 plus 1 case study chapter (either ch 5, 6 or 7)


**October 23: New Parties and Political Challenges**  
**Take-Home Midterm handed out in class. Due October 30 by 5pm.**


**October 30: no class; Midterm Exam due by 5 pm**

**November 6: Voting I: Issue and Partisan Voting**


Additional Readings (tba)

**November 13: Voting II: Economic and Retrospective Voting**


**November 20: Voting III: Strategic and Expressive Voting**


**November 27: Turn-Out and Vote Buying**


**December 4: Electoral Rules**


**December 11: Electoral Aggregation**

**Take-Home Final Exam handed out in class. Due MONDAY, December 17 by noon.**
