FYS: American Political Parties

Mark Ramirez
Junior Fellow
Dept. Political Science
480.560.3349
mark.ramirez@asu.edu

Course meets Mondays 12:40 – 1:30 in SS313

Course Description: The purpose of this seminar is to introduce students to the academic study of political parties. The first section of the course will develop the theme of ambivalence towards political parties as present among the founding fathers and general public. This section will address the fundamental intellectual question of why do parties exist. Much of what we know about political parties is derived from the historical record. Therefore, the course will focus on the evolution of the two-party system from the founding into the 20th century.

Next we will focus on why past and present ambivalence towards the two-party system has not created any viable third parties. This will lead us into the organization, function, and structure of political parties and the academic study of their relevance in modern politics compared to previous eras. In addition, the concept and role of partisan identification among the electorate is crucial to understanding political parties in contemporary politics.

Finally, the course will examine contemporary partisan issues, party platforms, and partisan economic policies.

Requirements: Attendance, Preparation, and Participation: Students are expected to attend class regularly for course credit. Students must also be prepared to discuss the required weekly readings.

Assignments: Provided by the instructor.

Text: Course Reader

Course Schedule:

A Historical Account of Political Parties in the U.S.

August 25 – Introduction & discussion: Why do parties form?

September 1 – Labor Day: no class

September 8 – Formation of the American two party system: Federalist & Democratic-Republicans

September 15 – Jacksonian Democracy and the Formation of Party Organizations

September 22 – Whigs and Republicans: The First Realignment?

September 29 – Party Realignment, Progressive Politics, and a New Deal

**Party Organization**

October 6 – Party Organization

October 13 – The Critical Era of the 1960’s
Video: The 1968 Democratic Convention

October 20 – The Decline of Political Parties

October 27 – Third Parties in a Two Party System


November 10 – Party Identification as a “Running Tally?”

**Contemporary Issues and Political Parties**

November 17 – 1994: A new partisan era?

November 24 – Economic Platforms: Keynesian versus Supply Side & Monetarists

December 1 – Party Platforms
Class discussion