

Political Parties
Political Science 3316F
Department of Political Science, University of Western Ontario
Fall Term 2026

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Office hours: Thursday 4-5:30 pm, or by appointment

Course Description:

E.E. Schattschneider famously wrote that “modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties.” However, if democracy and parties are intertwined, the relationship is far from unproblematic. Parties are broadly unpopular, and arguably in crisis or even decline. One set of responses has, however, involved the emergence of new parties, or the reworking of existing parties, in ways that have created space for populist or anti-system politics and much more polarized party systems.

This course provides a comparative survey of the literature on political parties, with a strong emphasis on the Canadian case, as well as others, and with a view to developing an understanding of what parties are, what roles they play within democratic regimes, and what shape parties are in at this point. The course also places great stress on the concept of party systems, examining in detail the development of national party systems, the changes they have undergone in recent decades, as well as the effects of party systems. Can we imagine representative democracy without parties? If not, what kinds of parties will inhabit and help define our political regimes throughout the 21st century?

Learning Outcomes:

Students in this course will learn to: (a) define political parties; (b) explain their historical emergence and relationship to democratic politics; (c) identify and evaluate the adaptations of political parties to various challenges to party-based democracy; and (d) set the Canadian experience securely within the broader comparative context in these and other respects.

Course Format:

We will meet in person on a weekly basis. Our class meetings will combine significant lecture segments with plenty of opportunities for questions and discussion. So, please do show up having read and absorbed the assigned readings, and ready to engage with the material in vigorous and critical fashion. All assigned readings will be made available on the OWL site, at the Course Readings tab.

****Attendance is required for success in this course.**

****Electronic devices will be permissible only for the purpose of note-taking and any other class-related activities. Disruptive use of these devices will not be permitted.**

Prerequisite: Political Science 2230E or 2530F/G or 2234E or 2244E or 2245E or 2545F/G. Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

- (a) Participation: 10%
- (b) Mid-term exam (90 minutes): 30%
- (c) Political party profile: 25%
- (d) Final exam: 35%

Participation: Students will be expected to come to class prepared, and to participate regularly and constructively in our weekly meetings. Participation will be evaluated based on the following considerations: relevance, responsiveness to the material laid out in assigned readings and lecture segments, and insightfulness. Keep in mind that a well-informed and helpful question can be an important element in course participation.

Mid-Term Exam: The aim will be to examine students on the early weeks of the course, but with added preparation based on student absorption of at least three high-quality sources (e.g., articles, book chapters) covering the relevant details of a political party the student wishes to subject to analysis. The main exam essay will therefore cover both the assigned materials and the additional, non-syllabus student coverage. This will allow the student to address questions like the following: What type of party is it? Does it fit easily or with difficulty into its category? What are the indicators that help you to determine this? What are the strengths and weaknesses associated with its character and organization? In what ways is its performance affected by these features? The exam will feature 30 minutes of identification questions on course content, followed by a 60-minute essay applying the key typological material as discussed above. The exam will take place in class on October 22. This assignment is not eligible for absence without documentation, but rather only on medical or compassionate grounds, based on approval by Academic Advising. Students receiving formal accommodation will have the opportunity to write the one and only makeup exam on October 29 at 6 pm.

Case Analysis: Political Party Profile: Students will be expected to pick a political party other than the one emphasized in their mid-term preparation, either from the same national context or a different one, and respond to the following questions in a written and submitted paper: How successful has the party been over the course of its existence? On what basis do you draw this conclusion? How do you explain the degree of success or failure experienced by the party? The key is to consider the various tools developed in the course to explain the party's performance: party type and organization including the extent to which it is internally democratic, party financing, the party system within which it operates, the influence of populism and polarization, and so on. Length: 6-7 pages, double-spaced, one-inch margins. In addition to syllabus materials, please use *at least* five non-syllabus sources. A fuller assignment description is available on the course website.

*Deadline: **December 6, 11:59 pm.** Flexibility: No late penalties on submissions received by **December 8, 11:59 pm.** Late penalties will then be 2% per day.*

Final Exam: Students will write a two-hour formal exam. The exam will take place as determined by the registrar. Details on the structure of the exam will be provided ahead of time.

Extensions and Accommodations

The mid-term exam will be the course requirement with accommodation limited exclusively to those providing supportive documentation on medical or compassionate grounds. Undocumented absence will not justify missing the exam. The one and only makeup exam is scheduled for October 29th for those granted such accommodation. The party profile paper will feature built-in deadline flexibility – if you require medical or compassionate accommodation, this must be registered before the proper deadline, *not* the flexible deadline, which means by December 6th. All requests for accommodation must proceed through Academic Advising, not the professor. Students with a formal accommodation permitting them to write exams separately or with extra time should contact Accessible Education as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and AI

Academic offenses such as plagiarism and reliance on AI technologies such as ChatGPT will be taken very seriously. Students are expected to research and write their own assignments in full. The substantial benefits derived from engaging in independent research, formulating and organizing your own thoughts, and expressing them clearly and persuasively cannot otherwise be accessed.

Plagiarism involves reliance on the work of another author without attribution. Students must compose their own essays and assignments, in their own words. Whenever students incorporate an idea, or a passage, or data from another author, they must fully acknowledge this by using quotation marks where appropriate and by properly citing the borrowed material.

Plagiarism can be direct, involving straightforward copying of an author's work without providing both attribution and quotation marks. It can be less direct, involving lightly paraphrasing an author's work, rearranging their sentences while maintaining the same general structure and meaning, or stitching together material from two or more sources — these would count as plagiarism even with the source or sources identified, as they rely too heavily upon the way the author or authors chose to present their ideas. Take note that students may satisfactorily write up an author's ideas in their own words, but then neglect to cite the source or sources of the ideas, which also counts as plagiarism. And students may plagiarize themselves by submitting work they have previously submitted in other courses.

Plagiarism is a major academic offence, one which is taken seriously at Western.

See Scholastic Offence Policy and Procedures in the Western Academic Calendar for more detail:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/undergrad_scholastic_offence_procedure.pdf

"All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)."

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Use of Artificial Intelligence for generating content is prohibited in this course. The aim of the paper project is to improve your ability to think, to develop and organize your ideas, and to present the results cogently and effectively. The ideas as well as their expression should be your own; anything else is

plagiarism. AI-generated writing tends in any case to be bland and mediocre, which your grader may easily recognize. When using AI, reliance on false citations (i.e., AI hallucinations) will also be considered as an academic offence. Although this doesn't involve plagiarizing from a specific author, it does involve inclusion of AI-generated material without proper attribution, and which simply may not even exist to properly attribute.

Appeals

Grade appeals must begin with a brief statement (1-3 paragraphs) of what you feel the professor missed or failed to fully appreciate in your assignment. The appeal will only be taken up if the provided reasons are sufficiently compelling. Please wait at least 48 hours after the release of grades before submitting a grade appeal. No appeal will be accepted beyond three weeks after the release of grades.

Grading and Grade Adjustments

The Department of Political Science has a policy that undergraduate final course grades will only be rounded to the next whole grade if they end at 0.5 or higher; otherwise, they will be rounded down. Grade adjustments will only occur based on the appeals process, as above.

Lecture Notes

Lecture slides will be provided to students, generally just prior to the lecture. These slide sets are no substitute for the lectures themselves, but having them may permit less in-class note-taking and more engagement in class discussions.

Support Services

Please contact accessibility@uwo.ca if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you.

<https://accessibility.uwo.ca/index.html>.

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts on the Wellness and Wellbeing website <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/index.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. <https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>.

Course Meetings and Assigned Readings

Week One: Introduction (September 10)

No required readings.

Week Two: Political Parties – What, When, and Why? (September 17)

John Kenneth White, 2006. "What is a Political Party?" In Richard S. Katz and William Crotty, eds., *Handbook of Party Politics* (SAGE Publications).

Richard S. Katz, 2006. "Party in Democratic Theory." In Richard S. Katz and William Crotty, eds., *Handbook of Party Politics* (SAGE Publications).

Susan E. Scarrow, 2006. "The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Modern Political Parties." In Richard S. Katz and William Crotty, eds., *Handbook of Party Politics* (SAGE Publications).

Russell J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg, 2002. "Unthinkable Democracy: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies." In Russell J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg, eds., *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (Oxford University Press), pp. 3-14.

Week Three: Party Origins – Presidential and Parliamentary (September 24)

William Crotty, "Party Origins and Evolution in the United States." In Richard S. Katz and William Crotty, eds., *Handbook of Party Politics* (SAGE Publications).

Gary W. Cox, 1987. *The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England* (Cambridge University Press), chapters 3, 6, and 7.

Week Four: Party Types (October 1)

Maurice Duverger, 2009. "Caucus and Branch, Cadre Parties and Mass Parties." In Peter Mair, ed., *The West European Party System* (Oxford University Press).

Otto Kirchheimer, 2009. "The Catch-All Party." In Peter Mair, ed., *The West European Party System* (Oxford University Press).

Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, 1995. "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party." *Party Politics* 1 (1): 5-28.

Ingrid van Biezen and Thomas Poguntke, 2014. "The Decline of Membership-based Politics." *Party Politics* 20 (2): 205-216.

Week Five: Party Types – Canadian Innovations (October 8)

Nelson Wiseman, 2020. *Partisan Odysseys: Canada's Political Parties* (University of Toronto Press), chapter 1.

Gordon T. Stewart, 1980. "Political Patronage under MacDonald and Laurier, 1878-1911." *American Review of Canadian Studies* 10 (1): 13-26.

R. Kenneth Carty, 2002. "The Politics of Tecumseh Corners: Canadian Political Parties as Franchise Organizations." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 35 (4): 723-745.

R. Kenneth Carty, 2013. "Has Brokerage Politics Ended?" In Amanda Bittner and Royce Koop, *Parties, Elections, and the Future of Canadian Politics* (University of British Columbia Press).

****Break Week (no class on October 15)**

Week Six: Mid-Term Exam (October 22)

Addressing lecture and reading content to date, with consideration of at least three strong sources on a party of choice.

Week Seven: Party Systems and their Sources (October 29)

Steven Wolinetz, 2006. "Party System and Party System Types," in Richard S. Katz and William Crotty, eds., *Handbook of Party Politics* (SAGE Publications).

Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, 2009. "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments," in Peter Mair, ed., *The West European Party System* (Oxford University Press).

Week Eight: Canadian Party System Development (November 5)

R.K. Carty, "Three Canadian Party Systems: An Interpretation of the Development of National Parties." George Perlin, ed., *Party Democracy in Canada* (Prentice-Hall, 1988).

Richard Johnston, 2010. "Political Parties and the Electoral System." In John C. Courtney and David E. Smith, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Politics* (Oxford University Press).

Royce Koop and Amanda Bittner, 2013. "Parties and Elections After 2011: The Fifth Canadian Party System?" Royce Koop and Amanda Bittner, eds., *Parties, Elections, and the Future of Canadian Politics* (UBC Press).

Scott Pruyers, Anthony Sayers, and Lucas Czarnecki, 2020. "Nationalization and Regionalization in the Canadian Party System, 1867-2015." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 53 (1): 151-169.

Week Nine: Ideology, Strategy, and Electoral Competition (November 12)

Éric Bélanger and Jean-François Godbout, 2010. "Why Do Parties Merge? The Case of the Conservative Party of Canada." *Parliamentary Affairs* 63 (1): 41-65.

Russell J. Dalton and Ian McAllister, 2015. "Random Walk or Planned Excursion? Continuity and Change in the Left-Right Positions of Political Parties." *Comparative Political Studies* 48 (6): 759-787.

Robert Ford and Will Jennings, 2020. "The Changing Cleavage Politics of Western Europe." *Annual Review of Political Science* 23: 295-314.

Week Ten: Partisanship, Polarization, and Populism (November 19)

Mike Medeiros and Alain Noel, 2014. "The Forgotten Side of Partisanship: Negative Party Identification in Four Anglo-American Democracies." *Comparative Political Studies* 47 (7): 1022-46.

Paul Pierson and Eric Schickler, 2020. "Madison's Constitution Under Stress: A Developmental Analysis of Political Polarization." *Annual Review of Political Science* 23: 37-58.

Frances E. Lee, 2020. "Populism and the American Party System: Opportunities and Constraints." *American Political Science Review* 18 (2): 370-388.

Judith Sijstermans, 2021. "The Vlaams Belang: A Mass Party of the 21st Century." *Politics and Governance* 9 (4): 275-85.

Week Eleven: Private or Public Parties and Party Financing (November 26)

Ingrid van Biezen, 2004. "Political Parties as Public Utilities." *Party Politics* 10 (6): 701-722.

John C. Courtney, 2015. "Canada's National Parties: From Private to Public Institutions." In Campbell Sharman and Richard Johnston, eds., *Parties and Party Systems: Structure and Context* (UBC Press).

Ingrid van Biezen and Petr Kovecký, 2017. "The Paradox of Party Funding: The Limited Impact of State Subsidies on Party Membership." in Susan E. Scarrow, Paul D. Webb, and Thomas Poguntke, eds., *Organizing Political Parties* (Oxford University Press).

Peter Aucoin and Herman Bakvis, 2015. "Canadian Public Funding of Parties and the End of Per-Vote Subsidies: Parties, Strategic Interests, and Decartelization." In Campbell Sharman and Richard Johnston, eds., *Parties and Party Systems: Structure and Context* (UBC Press).

Week Twelve: Intra-Party Democracy (December 3)

Ofer Kenig and Scott Pruyers, 2018. "The Challenges of Inclusive Intra-party Selection Methods," in Guillermo Cordero and Xavier Coller, eds., *Democratizing Candidate Selection: New Methods, Old Receipts?* (Palgrave Macmillan).

Scott Pruyers and Anthony Sayers, 2018. "Party Primaries in Canada," in Robert G. Boatright, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Primary Elections* (Routledge).

Piero Ignazi (2020). "The Four Knights of Intra-party Democracy: A Rescue for Party Delegitimation." *Party Politics* 26 (1): 9-20.

Richard S. Katz and Tristan Klingelhöfer (2026), "Politics Remains a Team Sport: On the Continued Relevance of Studying Party Organization." *Party Politics* 32 (3): 391-401.

****Party Profile Due** (December 6, with flexibility to December 8)