Administrative Unit: History and Social Sciences

Course Prefix and Number: POSC 361

Course Title: American Political Parties

Number of Credit Hours: 3  Lecture Hours: 3  Laboratory Hours: 0

Catalog Description: Practical and theoretical study of the American party system. Prerequisite: POSC 111. Offered even Fall.

Prerequisite(s)/Corequisite(s): POSC 111.

Text(s): Most current editions of the following:


Any text appropriate for courses in American political parties.

Course Objectives:

- To understand the history, causes and effects of the two-party system.
- To understand the role of money in electoral politics.
- To understand the nomination and election process at the presidential, congressional, state and local levels.
- To understand voting patterns.
- To understand the role of parties in the legislature and executive.

Measurable Learning Outcomes

- Describe the functions of political parties.
- Describe the history, causes and effects of the American two-party system.
- Describe the history and role of minor parties in America.
- Describe the decentralized nature of party organization.
- Describe the history and challenges of campaign finance legislation.
- Describe the nomination process, presidential and other.
- Describe the history and trends of presidential election campaigns.
- Describe the role of and trends in the media in campaigns.
• Describe the effects of party identification on voting behavior.
• Describe the history and dynamics of voter turnout.
• Describe the effect of partisanship on legislative and executive behavior.
• Analyze the future of American political parties.

Topical Outline (major areas of coverage):

• Meaning of party
• Party characteristics and functions
• Party origins and development
• State and local parties
• National party structure
• Maintaining, deviating, and realigning elections
• The electorate, voting rights, reforms
• Primaries, delegate selection
• National convention
• Campaigning
• Campaign financing
• Party and the legislature
• Party and the executive
• Electoral College
• Future of American parties

Material from this course may be tested on the Major Field Test (MFT) administered during the Culminating Experience course for the degree.

Recommended maximum class size for this course: 30

Library Resources: Online databases are available at http://www.ccis.edu/offices/library/resources.asp. You may access them from off-campus using your eServices login and password when prompted.

Prepared by: Dr. Terry Smith
Date: February 4, 2005

NOTE: The intention of the master syllabus is to provide an outline of the contents of this course, as specified by the faculty of Columbia College, regardless of who teaches the course, when it is taught or where it is taught. Faculty members teaching this course for Columbia College are expected to facilitate learning pursuant to the course objectives and cover the subjects listed in the topical outline. However, instructors are also encouraged to cover additional topics of interest so long as those topics are relevant to the course's subject. The master syllabus is, therefore, prescriptive in nature but also allows for a diversity of individual approaches to course material.