Overview: In this course students will explore the role that political parties and interest groups play in U.S. politics, with a special focus on how these roles have changed over the last 150 years. Students will form groups during the first class meeting after shopping week, when the class enrollment has been fixed (ideally each group will have three students). Each group will write a research paper to address an important question in the study of parties and/or interest groups. The research papers will feature statistical analyses of data extracted from historical newspaper archives. While not necessary, it is desirable for students to have completed at least one course in statistics or econometrics and be comfortable using packages such as STATA or R.

Grading: The grade for the course will be based on two factors:

(1) Class Participation and Memos (1/3). Each week two groups will write short memos documenting the progress made on their projects. The other groups will write memos summarizing key points from the weeks readings. (i) What was exceptionally good or bad about the readings? (ii) What issues do the readings raise but not adequately address? That is, what do the readings suggest about promising directions for further research? These will form the basis for the discussions, with the student groups taking the lead.

(2) A Final Paper (2/3). Each group must write a research paper. Note that the groups will be responsible for ensuring that each member of the group contributes approximately equally to the final paper. The papers are due on May 7, 2019.

Readings: The readings consist mainly of journal articles and a few book chapters. These will all be available either on JSTOR or on the course website.

Topics:
1. Theories of Political Parties


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2. Parties as Informational Cues for Voters


3. Party Platforms


3. Parties and Roll Call Voting


4. Parties and Fiscal Policy Outcomes


5. Parties and Distributive Politics


6. Effects of Interparty Competition

