This seminar seeks to understand the origin, importance, and consequences of political parties and interest groups in the United States. The typical kinds of questions we will investigate include, “Why are there political parties and interest groups?” “When and how might they ‘matter,’ and, if they do, to whom?” and “How, if at all, are they related to the workings of democracy?” As intermediary agents, parties and interest groups have attracted and continue to attract as much normative as scientific questioning (to the extent these are separable domains). Parties and interest groups are not – at least in the U.S. – institutions separate from the politics of this republican democracy. In rational choice parlance, political parties and interest groups are “endogenous” to democracy, that is to the citizens and politicians. To ask normative questions about parties and interest groups, therefore, is actually to ask normative questions about democracy. Yet, to attach normative values to these intermediary agents, per se, requires a “scientific” understanding of their role in democracy. As a result, whether your interest is normative or scientific or both, you must understand political parties and interest groups scientifically and you must do so first before you can judge them normatively.

There are two methods by which to study the major American political parties. The first is from a comparative perspective, and the second is historically. Both ways are valuable, and, therefore, we will utilize both. We employ a cross-national comparative perspective that examines different kinds of “party systems” (in quotes, because that phrase has several meanings) and their relationship to the larger governmental and electoral settings. We then will assess the major U.S. parties in historical perspective (which is, after all, a “longitudinal” rather than “cross-sectional” version of comparative politics). This is done because the historical sequencing (a.k.a. “path dependence” or “political development”) is important – especially so in the case of political parties.

We then turn our attention to the classic and contemporary professional research on the activities and strategies of interests groups in American politics. We will study the democratic attributes of interest groups, the organization and maintenance of groups, congressional lobbying, political action committees and the role of money on elections and legislation, and interest group access to and influence over the federal bureaucracy.

**Requirements:**

The main requirements for this course are simple – READ, THINK, and DISCUSS! You are expected to read all of the assigned books and articles listed on this syllabus, and do it before the class for which they are assigned. Your full participation in the seminar (even if you are auditing) is fundamental to its success.

The noted political scientist William Riker believed that graduate learning occurs in thirds: students learn one-third from their professors, one-third on their own, and one-third from their graduate student colleagues. I believe this formula to be correct. I will make every attempt to do my part; I expect you to do the same.
**EVALUATION:**

Your seminar evaluation will be based upon a research paper, one report and presentation on an outside book, and your class participation. The research paper accounts for 50% of your seminar grade and should be a 20-30 page work of original research, conforming to the APSA Style Manual, and of potentially publishable quality. The topic and methodological approach of the paper is your choice, but it would be wise to make these decisions in consultation with me. A two-page proposal is due in class during Week 7. Each student also will present an analytical report on one book chosen from the list of recommended readings (marked with an *). Copies of your four to five page report should be distributed to all seminar participants on the corresponding date indicated in the syllabus. The analytical report accounts for 20% of your course grade. Finally, your seminar participation accounts for the remaining 30% of your grade.

**Texts:** The following texts have been ordered through the Russell House Textbook Store and are required for this course:


Additional readings can be found on reserve in the International Studies Library, 4th Floor Gambrell

**Some readings are available electronically on the course webpage:**

http://www cla.sc.edu/gint/faculty/gomezbt/gint756.htm

(simply click on the electronic version of the course syllabus)
REQUIRED READINGS

Political Parties

Week 1: Introduction: Why Parties?


Week 2: The Downsian Model


Recommendation:


Week 3: Advanced Spatial and Directional Models


**Recommendation:**


**Week 4:**

**Electoral Institutions and Party Systems**


**Recommendation:**


**Week 5:**

**Parties and American Political Development**


**Recommendation:**


**Week 6:**

**Time’s Arrow: Periods, Cycles, Discontinuities**


**Recommendation:**


**Week 7:**

**Parties-in-Elections** (Note: Proposals Due)


**Recommendation:**


**Week 8:**

**Parties-in-Government I**


**Week 9:**

**Parties-in-Government II**


**Recommended:**


**Week 10: Parties-as-Organizations**


**Interest Groups**

**Week 11: Classics of Pluralism**


*Recommended:*


**Week 12: Organization and Membership**


*Recommended:*


Week 13:  
**Interest Groups and Congress I**


**Recommended:**


Week 14:  
**Interest Groups and Congress II**


Recommended:


Week 15: **Interest Groups, Bureaucracy, and Representation**


Recommended:
