This seminar provides an introduction to the comparative literature on parties and party systems in democratic regimes. The topic of comparative party politics is broad and includes very diverse research agendas. The syllabus includes a representative selection of these agendas but does not aspire to provide a complete overview of the research on political parties. Our focus will be mostly on theoretical aspects of party politics and comparative empirical analyses rather than on a close scrutiny of particular national cases. Most of the literature that this course will cover focuses on Europe, but empirical studies with cases from other regions are also occasionally included. This course should be of interest to students planning on writing a dissertation on a topic related to political parties, representation, or political institutions.

Requirements and Grading

1. Class participation: This is a graduate seminar, and all students will be expected to have done the required reading before each week’s seminar and contribute to the class discussion. Everyone is also expected to submit three potential discussion questions to the class discussant every week (see point 2). (20%)

2. Class discussant: One or two people will be in charge of leading our discussion, and every seminar participant will have to perform as discussant 2-3 times in the semester. In addition to leading the discussion on the required readings, the discussion leaders should report on extra readings (if applicable). The discussants should prepare a list of discussion questions and submit these no later than Monday (at noon) before class to the entire class. The discussants should also incorporate into their final discussion agenda at least some questions submitted by fellow students (see point 1). (10% each)

4. Group research proposal: A research proposal will look like an empirical journal article, only without the actual analysis. It will include a statement of a research question or puzzle, a review of the literature related to the topic, theoretical arguments that can be used to provide an answer to the question, hypotheses drawn from these theories that can be tested empirically, and a description of what empirical evidence and methods will be used to test these hypotheses (including how the hypotheses could be falsified). It can also contain some initial analysis of the data.
We will be working on a research proposal together as a group throughout the semester. Below, I have listed the class sessions in which each of you needs to make a short presentation about your work on the project. Everyone is also expected to hand in written work as appropriate. (50%) 

**January 29: Choosing a topic**
For this session, everyone needs to present a description of three research ideas about political parties. Please also circulate one page summary of each idea to the entire class by noon on Monday January 28. The summary should include answers to the following questions (and other pertinent info): What is the puzzle? What is the dependent variable? Why do you think this is an important puzzle? What is your initial explanation?

**February 19: Literature review**
On January 29, we will choose three topics to pursue further from among the ones that you have submitted. In the Feb. 19 meeting, each one of you will present and submit (by noon on Monday, February 18) a literature review for one of these topics. Your literature review should include: What has been written on this puzzle before? What potential explanations have been provided? Why are these explanations inadequate? How is your explanation an improvement? Please also provide a full list of references. Your literature review should give us enough information about the topic to discuss and decide whether pursuing that given topic is worthwhile. At this end of this session, we will narrow our research topic down to only one (keeping the others on reserve).

**March 19: Research design and theory**
For this assignment, we will break the class up into two groups, one of which will be working on elaborating on the theoretical argument and the other on research design. The theory group will prepare a document that describes the following: What is the theory? How is the independent variable linked to the dependent variable? What is the causal mechanism? Is there a plausible alternative argument? The research design group will prepare a document on the following: How to test our argument? Is it doable? What data are available? What is the exact testable hypothesis from our theory? What cases to use, what data, what methods? Justify all these choices! What are some of the alternative arguments that we can test? Even though there are separate theory and design groups, the two groups need to coordinate, so plan on meeting as a class before the March 19 class session. Please circulate the final documents to the entire class by Monday, March 18 at noon.

**April 23: Data collection and preliminary results**
We will decide on the specific assignments for this meeting on March 19. In general, it involves some data collection work for everyone and perhaps some preliminary analysis. We will use this last session to discuss whether/how to proceed with the project.

**Readings**

Many of the journal articles and book chapters listed in the course schedule are available to you electronically in a shared Dropbox folder “ps5262.”

We will be reading substantial portions of the following books. You may want (but are not required) to buy these.


Note: I reserve the right to make any changes to this syllabus throughout the semester as necessary.

Course Schedule

1. Why parties? And the state of party research (January 15)


RECOMMENDED


2. Cleavages and party systems (January 22)

Mair West European Party Systems:
   Chapter 9 (Lipset and Rokkan “Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments”)
   Chapter 11 (Sartori “The Sociology of Parties: A Critical Review”)
RECOMMENDED:

3. Choosing a topic (see assignment 3 above) (January 29)

The following readings may help with this assignment:

4. Electoral systems and party systems (February 5)


RECOMMENDED

5. **Parties and mobilization of voters (February 12)**

Adams, James, Merrill and Grofman. *A Unified Theory of Party Competition*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. Chapters 1 and 6, skim the rest.


6. Literature review (see assignment 3 above) (February 19)

7. **Other linkage types: Clientelism and charisma (February 26)**


**Clientelistic linkage**


**Charismatic linkage**


RECOMMENDED


8. **Parties in the legislature (March 5)**

**Party unity**


**Party switching**


RECOMMENDED

9. Theory and research design (see assignment 3) (March 19)

The following readings may help prepare for this assignment:

Theory
Geddes, Chapter 5.
KKV, Chapter 3.

Case selection
Geddes, Chapter 3
KKV, Chapters 4, 6

Case studies and “mixed methods”

Conceptualization and measurement
Geddes, Chapter 4

10. Parties in government (March 26)


RECOMMENDED

11. Partisan government and policy (April 2)


RECOMMENDED


12. **Parties in developing democracies (April 9)**


RECOMMENDED


**On Party system change**


On Party change


13. Niche and extremist parties (April 16)


RECOMMENDED


14. Data and preliminary results (see assignment 3) (April 23)