

Illinois State University  
Department of Politics and Government

**POL 214: U.S. POLITICAL PARTIES and INTEREST GROUPS**  
Fall 2011

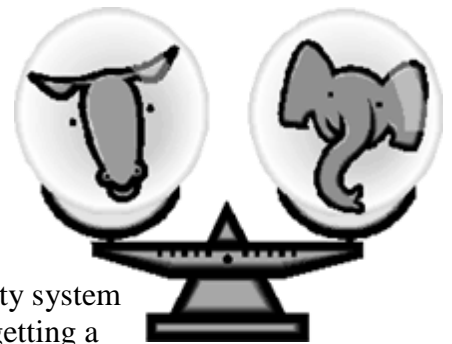
Professor: Shamira Gelbman  
Email: [sgelbman@ilstu.edu](mailto:sgelbman@ilstu.edu)  
Office: 405 Schroeder Hall  
Office hours: T 12:30-1:30 PM,  
Th 4-5 PM and by appt.

*Class meetings:* Section 1: T, Th 11-12:15 in 215 SCH  
Section 2: T, Th 2-3:15 in 104 SCH

Course website:  
<http://www.ilstu.edu/~sgelbma/POL214F11/pol214.html>

**Course Description and Learning Outcome Goals**

The framers of the U.S. Constitution designed a government that was intended to operate without political parties, but parties began to take shape very soon after the Constitution went into effect and soon enough became – and have remained – a pervasive force within the American political system.



Over the course of the semester, we'll explore how the American party system developed over the course of the last 220 or so years as a means for getting a handle on the sources of its current dynamics and idiosyncrasies. Along the way, we'll introduce an array of concepts and frameworks that political scientists have developed to make sense of the dynamics and distinct features of the American party system. We'll also pay special attention to parties' role in the presidential candidate nomination process in preparation for the rapidly approaching 2012 primary election season.

In addition to attending to these topics, we'll be working throughout the semester on a multifaceted State Parties and Platforms Project (SPPP), which is supported by ISU's Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology and the Wikimedia Foundation's Global Education Program. As part of this project, you will make substantial improvements to one state political party organization's Wikipedia entry and collaborate with your peers to develop national party platform planks on a number of key policy issues.

When all is said and done, by the end of the semester you should:

- Understand the origins and development of the American party system, and the implications of this history for parties' operations and role in contemporary politics
- Be able to apply and express your new knowledge about political parties in "real-world" discussions of contemporary political affairs
- Have a clear sense of the role state parties play in the American political system and an in-depth understanding of the development and operations of at least one state party organization.
- Have extensively developed and/or practiced a variety of academic and professional skills.

## Requirements and Grading

Your course grade will be based on the total points you earn in the following ways:

1. Engagement and participation (300 points maximum)

This course requirement entails your consistent, alert, and informed participation in class discussions and activities. While there is no formal attendance policy for POL 214, frequent absence or lateness will reflect very poorly on your engagement in the course. Feel free to check in with me during the semester to discuss your progress on this front.

2. Take-home exams (2x150=300 points maximum)

There will be two take-home exams, due via email at 11:59 PM on Thursday, October 6 and Thursday, November 17. Both will call on you to respond in “mini-essay” format to op-ed columns and other texts drawn from current, real-world discussions of political affairs. Your responses will be evaluated based on your

- Demonstrated understanding and ability to apply course material
- Critical engagement with the exam text
- Quality of written communication

3. State Parties and Platforms Project (1200 points maximum + bonus opportunities)

As mentioned in the course description, this is a multifaceted, semester-long project that will take you through substantial improvements to Wikipedia’s state party organization articles and the development of national party platform planks. The 1200 points allocated for the SPPP are spread in 100-point increments across a variety of activities and assignments, most of which also have opportunities to earn bonus points. More information about the project components and bonus point opportunities is available on the Wikipedia course page. Detailed instructions will be provided in separate handouts and/or in class.

### *Point-Grade Conversion*

At the end of the semester, all of the points you earn will be totaled and letter grades will be assigned according to the following table:

Points	Letter Grade
1680 or more	A
1440-1679	B
1260-1439	C
1080-1259	D
Less than 1080	F

See the course website for a link to a secure site where you can log in with your ULID and password to check your grades.

## **Miscellaneous Policies**

All members of POL 214 are expected to comply with ISU's Code of Student Conduct, which can be downloaded from the Dean of Students Office website and which prohibits, among other things, academic dishonesty. Violations will be reported to the Community Rights and Responsibilities for disciplinary action.

Assignments submitted via email should always be in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) format. If you use a different word processing program (e.g. Microsoft Works), make sure to convert all documents before sending them to me to ensure that I am able to open them.

Late written assignments will most likely not be graded in a timely fashion and will reflect very poorly on your engagement in the course. Your presence is required to earn points for graded assignments and activities that are to be completed in class, including project training sessions, workshops, policy committee meetings, and presentations.

It is generally a good idea to communicate with me as early and often as possible in the event of an emergent circumstance or situation that may in any way impinge on your participation in POL 214.

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented disabilities. Contact the Office of Disability Concerns: (309) 438-5833, (309) 438-8260 (TDD).

## **Texts and Web Resources**

There are no required books for POL 214. Several shorter texts will be assigned as required reading throughout the semester, however, and the "engagement and participation" component of your course grade will rest heavily on your demonstration of having diligently completed those reading assignments. Required readings are noted in the schedule below and will be made available to you free-of-charge.

Two websites will serve as online clearinghouses for course information and resources. One is the course website, which I'll maintain at <http://www.ilstu.edu/~sgelbma/POL214F11/pol214.html>. Information and announcements will be posted there, as will electronic copies of most and handouts, PowerPoints, and a link to a secure site where you can check your grades. The other is the course page on Wikipedia, which you can find here:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Ambassadors/Courses/U.S.\\_Political\\_Parties\\_\(Shamira\\_Gelbman\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Ambassadors/Courses/U.S._Political_Parties_(Shamira_Gelbman)).

This portal for the "state parties" part of the State Parties and Platforms Project contains links to the articles we'll be working on, assignment instructions, and access to a wide array of helpful resources from the Wikimedia Foundation's Global Education Program and the Wikipedia community.

## Schedule

### I. Introductions and Preliminaries

Tuesday, August 23 – First Day of Class

Thursday, August 25 – Preliminary Topic #1: Factions

Read Federalist Paper #10 and bring a copy with you to class. It's available here (among many other places online): <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm>

Tuesday, August 30 – Preliminary Topic #2: Collective Action Problems

You should have the “Get yourself set up on Wikipedia” assignment done before the start of class. You'll get 100 points for completing it plus possible bonus points for exemplary work. See the course page on Wikipedia for instructions.

Thursday, September 1 – No Class

I'll be at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA) in Seattle, so there won't be office hours either. If you have any questions or concerns while I'm gone, send an email to [sgelbman@ilstu.edu](mailto:sgelbman@ilstu.edu).

Tuesday, September 6 – State Parties and Platforms Project Training in 213c Milner Library

Read the Wikipedia Referencing handout before coming to class. This is part 1 of a two-part, required, in-class training for the SPPP. You'll get 100 points for participating in both parts and can earn bonus points for exemplary work.

Thursday, September 8 – More SPPP Training in 216 SCH

There are a few things for you to do in preparation for this training session. See the course page on Wikipedia for instructions.

### II. The Rise of the American Party System

Tuesday, September 13 and Thursday, September 15 – The First Party System

Review your notes and other materials from August 25 and August 30 before coming to class.

Tuesday, September 20 and Thursday, September 22 – The Second Party System

Read “The Country Demands the Existence of Parties” (chapter 2 in Joel H. Silbey, *The American Political Nation, 1838-1893*, Stanford University Press, 1991) before class on Tuesday.

Tuesday, September 27 and Thursday, September 29 – The Third Party System

Make sure you're up to speed on everything that happened prior to the 1850s before coming to class on Tuesday. Since this is the last topic we'll be covering in this unit, you'll receive the questions for the first take-home exam this week.

Tuesday, October 4 – NA/ADP Workshop and Policy Committee Meetings

Bring a copy of your Needs Assessment and Article Development Plan with you to class for a self- and peer-review workshop, which will guide you in making some revisions before submitting them via email no later 11:59 PM on Wednesday, October 5. The NA, ADP, and review activities are each worth 100 points. Bonus points will be awarded to the best three NA/ADPs in each section.

Thursday, October 6 – Downtown Bloomington Walking Tour

Greg Koos, Executive Director of the McLean County Museum of History, will show and tell you about the founding of the Illinois Republican Party, which happened here during the mid-1850s. Be at the Museum no later than 11:15 (section 1) or 2:15 (section 2). Also, your first take-home exam is due via email to [sgelbman@ilstu.edu](mailto:sgelbman@ilstu.edu) no later than 11:59 PM.

### III. 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Reforms and the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Status Quo

Tuesday, October 11 and Thursday, October 13 – Parties during the Progressive Era

In class, we'll discuss "the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" aspects of U.S. party system development at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Tuesday, October 18 – The New Deal Party System and ensuing calls for "Responsible Parties"

Before coming to class, read the "Forward" and "Summary of Conclusions and Proposals" from "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System" (1950), Julius Turner's "Dissent from the Floor" (1951), and Austin Ranney's "Commentary" (1951). Links to all three are available here: [http://www.apsanet.org/~pop/APSA\\_Report.htm](http://www.apsanet.org/~pop/APSA_Report.htm).

Thursday, October 20 – Why Third Parties Fail in the United States: The Case of 1948

Take a look at 270ToWin.com's page on the 1948 election ([http://www.270towin.com/1948\\_Election/](http://www.270towin.com/1948_Election/)) before coming to class so that we can run through the facts of the election fairly quickly and devote as much time as possible to the question of why third parties fail.

Tuesday, October 25 and Thursday, October 27 – The 1960s and the Contemporary Party System

Before coming to class on Thursday, read "The Invisible Primary: Theory and Evidence," a chapter from Marty Cohen et al., *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Tuesday, November 1 and Thursday, November 3 – Polarization

Before coming to class on Tuesday, read Alan Abramowitz and Kyle L. Saunders, "Why Can't We All Just Get Along? The Reality of a Polarized America," *The Forum* 3 (2005) and Alan S. Gerber and Eric M. Patashnik, "Problem Solving in a Polarized Age: Comparative Effectiveness Research and the Politicization of Evidence-Based Medicine," *The Forum* 8 (2010). You'll receive the questions for the second take-home exam sometime this week.

Tuesday, November 8 – SPPP 1-Month Progress Reports Workshop in 216 SCH

Bring copies of your current state party article and 1-month progress report to class, where they'll be subjected to self- and peer-review. See the Wikipedia course page for more information. The progress report, in-class review, and article improvements are each worth 100 points, and there are bonus point opportunities for meeting your planned improvement goals and receiving your section's "most improved article" award.

Thursday, November 10 – Policy Committee Meetings

You'll have an opportunity in class to meet with your policy committee members to work on your platform plank. Also, your revised 1-month progress report and other materials from Tuesday's class are due. See the Wikipedia course page for more information.

#### **IV. Postlude**

Tuesday, November 15 and Thursday, November 17 – Special Topic (to be determined)

Sometime before the 15<sup>th</sup>, you'll have had a chance to weigh in on what the special topic will be. Depending on the topic, there may be some required reading to facilitate class discussion. Also, your second take-home exam should be submitted via email to [sgelbman@ilstu.edu](mailto:sgelbman@ilstu.edu) no later than 11:59 PM on Thursday.

Tuesday, November 22 and Thursday, November 24 – Thanksgiving Break

Tuesday, November 29 and Thursday, December 1 – Party Convention Week

Events for this week are still being planned. Details TBA as soon as they become available. Your policy committee activities this week will be worth 100 points, with bonus points awarded to the committees that produce winning platform planks.

Tuesday, December 6 and Thursday, December 8 – State Party Presentations

Come to class prepared to give a short (1-2 minute) presentation about something in your state party article. Like the "Did You Know?" section of Wikipedia's main page, it should aim at encouraging your audience (i.e. your classmates) to take the initiative to take a look at what you've been working on. You'll get 100 points for giving your presentation, plus bonus points for exemplary work.

Thursday, December 15 (finals week) – Portfolios are due no later than 5:00 PM

In addition to dropping of a hard copy of the full portfolio (either in my office or the Politics and Government Department office), make sure to email your cover letter and final progress report to [sgelbman@ilstu.edu](mailto:sgelbman@ilstu.edu) and take the end-of-semester survey. The portfolio and article improvements are each worth up to 100 points, and you can earn bonus points based on the final quality of your state party article and other Wikipedia contributions.

**Have a great winter break!**