Political parties play an essential role in a modern society; this course explores multiple sociological questions on the party-form. What is a political party and what does it do, internally and externally? In what circumstances does a party shape society or is it rather just a mirror of the society in which it operates? How much power do members have in a party? What distinguishes a political party from other types of organizations or communities? We will firstly explore classical theories of parties, then discuss the mass parties’ engagement with elections, civil society, the capitalist state and their own membership in the 20th century. In the final part of the course, we examine contemporary development of the party as an institution, as existing political systems are entering crisis in many countries. Comparative and historical dimensions are emphasized throughout the course, and we will be paying particular attention to political parties that have sought to transform society in an emancipatory direction, since it is in these parties that dilemmas and dramas of the party-form manifest most acutely. Do we need a party to change the world?

**Course Requirements:**

*Class Participation (25%)*: Active participation in class is an essential requirement for the course. You are expected to attend class every week, and more than one unexcused absences will negatively affect your participation grade. (When you need an excused absence, please e-mail me before the class starts.) Nevertheless, it is even more important for you to actively participate in class discussions. While I will be conducting mini-lectures in some weeks, this is primarily a discussion-based class; attendance without participation does not fulfill the course requirement!!! If there are any factors that are preventing or making it difficult for you to participate, even if it’s a matter of simple discomfort, please discuss it with me.

*Weekly Short Comments (12%)*: It is imperative that you read all the readings for class each week, since discussions proceed on the assumption that you have read all the readings. Engaging, enriching discussions are impossible if you have not read them! To facilitate your reading, you are expected to write a short comment (around 250 words) each week on the readings. These are to help arrange your own thoughts, as well as for me to structure each class better. The comment should at least include a summary of the arguments and your own thoughts on at least two of the readings for the week. The comments are due by 9pm on Wednesdays, the day before class. These comments will not be graded; you will get full points for each comment as long as it is submitted, unless the comments are too late, too short or long, or completely off-topic.

*Presentation (10%)*: Each student will present on the readings for a particular week, once in the semester. The presentation should be for around 10 minutes, and discuss the main arguments of each reading, connections between the week’s readings (as you see them), as well as your own assessment of the authors’ arguments. Do you agree? Disagree? Why? The presentation should
conclude with suggestions for a couple of discussion questions for the class. Further explanations of the historical context, wherever appropriate, are also definitely welcome. You are highly encouraged to see me in office hours prior to the day you are presenting.

**Final Paper (53%)**: You will write a final paper on a topic of your choice regarding political parties. You will choose a party or parties during a certain historical period, and examine at least one of the following: their relations with the state, their relations with civil society and/or social movements, their ideology/program, internal organization, or experiences of party members. Comparative analysis is highly encouraged. If you are unsure if a particular topic falls within the scope of this assignment, please discuss it with me.

The final paper should include engagement with some of the course readings, and most importantly, your own theoretical and empirical argument. Primary source research (archives or interviews) is not a requirement, but highly encouraged if feasible depending on your topic. More information on the paper will be forthcoming in class.

The final paper is a work to be completed throughout the semester; it cannot be completed at the last minute! To facilitate development of the paper, the following pieces of it are due throughout the semester. But, only the in-class presentation (3%) and the final paper (50%) will count towards the grade. Furthermore, you are required to meet with me at least once in office hours to discuss the paper, between Research Proposal and In-Class Presentation.

- Research Proposal (2 pages): Due Sunday, February 24
- Literature Review (2-3 pages): Due Sunday, April 7
- In-Class Presentation (5 minutes): Thursday, April 25 (3%)
- Final Paper (15-20 pages): Due Wednesday, May 15 (50%)

**Required Texts**: All materials are available in the course reader, available at University Copy (2425 Channing). They are also available in pdf on the bCourses page for this class.

**Course Schedule**

**January 24: Introduction**

**January 31: The Party as Oligarchy**

**February 7: The Party and Spontaneity from Below**

February 14: The Party as the Modern Prince

February 21: Electoralism and Its Discontents

Research Proposal (2 pages) due, February 24

February 28: The Party, Civil Society and Articulation

March 7: Postwar Social Democracy

March 14: Experiences in Eurocommunism

March 21: Rise and Fall of the Mass Party
March 28: SPRING BREAK!

**Apr. 4: American Exceptionalism?**

**Literature Review (2-3 pages) due, April 7**

**April 11: The Populist Moment**

**Apr. 18 – Party Democracy in the Digital Age**

**April 25: Paper Workshop!**

**May 2: Conclusion**

**Final Paper (15-20 pages) due, May 15**