

NOVA COLLEGE-WIDE COURSE CONTENT SUMMARY
PLS 220 – POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES (3 CR.)

Course Description

Teaches basic concepts of American political parties and elections. Lecture 3 hours per week.

General Course Purpose

This course will focus on American political parties and the wide variety of elections that take place in the United States. Explanations for why America is a two-party nation, and how the two party system has changed through time will be presented. Also, the impacts of various third party efforts will be analyzed. Party organization at both the US and state levels will be considered. As for the electoral process, the class will learn about various theories of voting behavior, the nomination process at both the state and national level, general elections at both the state and national levels, with an added focus on US presidential elections and the changes to that process over time. Finally, the class will learn about the role of a variety of factors that play important roles in parties and elections, such as money, the media, and interest groups.

Course Prerequisites/Co-requisites

Ability to use English language correctly and effectively as reflected in satisfactory scores on appropriate English proficiency examination.

Course Objectives

Upon completing the course, the student will be able to:

- Analyze the factors that makes the United States a two-party nation.
- Critically evaluate the role that third party efforts have played in American politics.
- Compare and contrast the changing party dynamics throughout American history.
- Scrutinize the organization of political parties at both the state and national level
- Interpret the electoral process in America, at both the state and national level.
- Evaluate the role of money, the media, and interest groups in America's elections.

Major Topics to be Included

- a. Development of American political parties.
- b. Party organization.
- c. Political participation.
- d. Theories of voting behavior.
- e. State and local nominations.
- f. State and local elections.
- g. Presidential nominations.
- h. Presidential elections.
- i. Campaign finance.
- j. The media and the electoral process.