



Dynamics of American Political Parties

By *Mark D. Brewer, Jeffrey M. Stonecash*

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In *Dynamics of American Political Parties*, Mark D. Brewer and Jeffrey M. Stonecash examine the process of gradual change that inexorably shapes and reshapes American politics. Parties and the politicians that comprise them seek control of government in order to implement their visions of proper public policy. To gain control parties need to win elections, and winning elections requires assembling an electoral coalition that is larger than that crafted by the opposition. Parties are always looking for opportunities to build such winning coalitions, and opportunities are always there, but they are rarely, if ever, without risk. Uncertainty rules and intra-party conflict rages as different factions and groups within the parties debate the proper course(s) of action and battle it out for control of the party. Parties can never be sure how their strategic maneuvers will play out, and, even when it appears that a certain strategy has been successful, party leaders are unclear about how long apparent success will last. Change unfolds slowly, in fits and starts.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Mark D. Brewer and Jeffrey M. Stonecash have written an important book. It seeks to fill the rather large niche designed by James Sundquist with his Dynamics of the American Party System, and, like him, they provide a rather tight historical development from (in their case) the Civil War through the 2008 election. However, their work is actually richer than Sundquist's. It is richer in theory, with a less rigid framework for understanding political dynamics (and a more plausible one, with lots of feedback, driven by uncertainty). It is also richer in substance, especially in tying the voter more firmly to these dynamics and in better integrating Congress and the presidency. All in all, this is a major achievement."

- John Aldrich, Pfizer-Pratt University Professor of Political Science, Duke University

"Dynamics of American Political Parties is a welcome addition to the literature on American national politics. By focusing on the efforts of Democratic and Republican politicians to manage complex changes to maximum advantage, Mark D. Brewer and Jeffery M. Stonecash succeed in giving readers a highly valuable overview of America's two-party system."

- Earl Black, Herbert S. Autrey Professor of Political Science, Rice University

"This book answers E. E. Shattsneider's famous question, 'what does change look like?' as it applies to the social bases of the major political parties in the United States. This cogent account puts party change in historical context and then brings it up to date, right down to 'change' among Democrats and Republicans in 2008."

- John C. Green, Distinguished Professor and Director of the Bliss Institute of Applied Politics, University of Akron

"This book stands out for its clear appreciation of the historical foundations of the party system, the linkage of this history to contemporary party struggles and divisions, and its savvy and balanced account of current party politics. It is arguably a must-read for anyone who needs a cogent account of change and continuity in our party system."

- John R. Petrocik, University of Missouri

About the Author

Mark D. Brewer is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Maine. His research focuses on partisanship and electoral behavior at both the mass and elite levels, the linkages between public opinion and public policy, and the interactions that exist between religion and politics in the United States. Brewer is the author of *Relevant No More? The Catholic/Protestant Divide in American Politics* and *Party Images in the American Electorate*, and he is coauthor of *Diverging Parties: Realignment, Social Change, and Party Polarization; Split: Class and Cultural Divides in American Politics*; and *Parties and Elections in America*, 5th edition. He has published articles in *Political Research Quarterly*, *Political Behavior*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, and *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.

Jeffrey M. Stonecash is Maxwell Professor in the Department of Political Science, The Maxwell School, Syracuse University. He researches political parties, changes in their electoral bases, and how these changes affect political polarization and public policy debates. His recent books are *Class and Party in American Politics* (2000), *Diverging Parties* (2003), *Parties Matter* (2005), *Split: Class and Cultural Divides in American Politics* (2007), *Political Polling*, 2nd edition (2008), and *Reassessing the Incumbency Effect*

(2008). He has done polling and consulting for political candidates since 1985.

Users Review

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Theresa Adams:

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