

EQ #15- What are the roles  
and functions of Political  
Parties in US politics?

Chapter 8

# Wednesday 11/28/18

- What do political parties do in the US?
- How are political parties different in other parts of the world?

# On Political Parties...

Jefferson: “If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all.”

E.E. Schattschneider: “...political parties created democracy...and democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties.”

# Founders on Political Parties

- The authors of the US Constitution did NOT want parties to develop!
  - They wanted politics to be rational and collaborative, NOT competitive
  - They worried about special interests taking control over the majority (factions)

# What is a Political Party? It Depends...

- In the U.S.
  - A political party is a team seeking to control government by gaining office in an election (ELECTION focused).
  - In the US we have TWO major parties
- In most other democracies:
  - Political parties are more ideologically focused (issues and interests).
  - There are MANY parties; some work together

# Activity- Parties in the US

# How are Political Parties Linkage Institutions?

- They translate people's concerns into political issues.
- Hot political issues become the government's policy agenda.
- Make laws to address citizen concerns
- **What concerns are up for Americans today?**

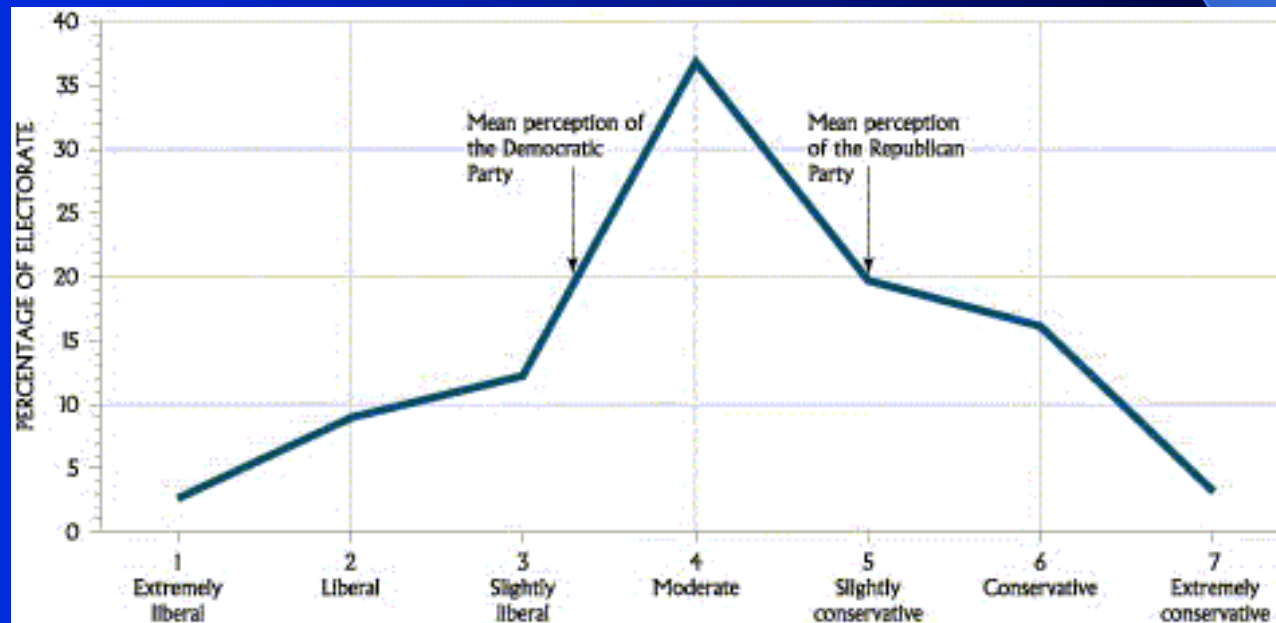
# What do US Political Parties Do?

- TASKS of the Parties-
  - Choose Candidates to run for office
  - Run Campaigns
  - Provide a Political Identity and platform
  - Articulate and Endorse Policies
  - Coordinate Policymaking



# The Downs Model

- Look at the graph
- If you are trying to win an election, who do you appeal to? Why?



# Downs Model

- The wise party selects policies that are WIDELY FAVORED / MODERATE because most voters are moderate.
- EFFECT- Both parties stay in the middle on most issues
- But they also try to show how they differ
- 2/3 of the population believes there is a difference between the D's and the R's

# Parts of US Political Parties

- Parties can be thought of in three parts:
  1. Party in the Electorate
    - Citizens who register to be Republicans or Democrats
  2. Party as an Organization
    - National committees and chairperson
  3. Party in Government
    - Elected office holders

# #1 The Party in the Electorate

- Electorate are those eligible to vote.
- Party identification is a citizen's self-proclaimed preference for one party or the other. Has DECREASED over time.

# #1 The Party in the Electorate

- What is Ticket-Splitting?
  - Voting with one party for one office and another party for other offices on the same ballot.
  - Ticket-splitting has increased in American voting behavior.

# The Party in the Electorate

**Table 8.1 Party Identification in the United States, 1952–2004<sup>a</sup>**

YEAR	DEMOCRATS	INDEPENDENTS	REPUBLICANS
1952	48.6	23.3	28.1
1956	45.3	24.4	30.3
1960	46.4	23.4	30.2
1964	52.2	23.0	24.8
1968	46.0	29.5	24.5
1972	41.0	35.2	23.8
1976	40.2	36.8	23.0
1980	41.7	35.3	23.0
1984	37.7	34.8	27.6
1988	35.7	36.3	28.0
1992	35.8	38.7	25.5
1996	39.3	32.9	27.8
2000	34.8	41.0	24.2
2004	34.6	33.6	31.8

<sup>a</sup>In percentage of people; the small percentage who identify with a minor party or who cannot answer the question are excluded.

Source: American National Election Studies, 1952–2000; National Annenberg Election Study, 2004.

## #2 The Party as an Organization

- These are the people that work for the party.
- At the national level, they organize the presidential national convention
- Parties in the US are decentralized—there are many variations depending on region and location

# What are Grassroots Politics?

- Grassroots Politics-
- Are movements where local citizens are the basis for a political or economic change.
- Feature collective action at the local level
- Knocking on doors and talking to neighbors
- Ideas and energy for the change come from the PEOPLE not ELECTED office holders!



# States influence Parties...

- Holding elections is left up to states and the parties at the state level.
- States choose types of primaries:
  - Closed primaries
  - Open primaries
  - Semi-Open primaries
  - Caucuses

# The Party Organizations: Structure

- The National Party Organizations run national political events
  - National Convention: Chooses P candidate.
  - National Committee: Keeps the party operating between conventions.
  - National Chairperson: Responsible for day-to-day activities of the party.

# #3-The Party in Government

- These are the party members who are elected to offices in government.
- Members of the House and Senate work with others in their parties to achieve their platform goals.
- Candidates are less dependent on parties to get elected, but they still need help.
- Coalition:
  - A group of individuals with a common interest upon which every political party depends.

# Fun Write!

Political parties play important roles in US elections and government institutions. Over the past decades, the influence of political parties has declined.

- A. Describe TWO important functions of political parties in US elections.
- B. Explain how EACH factor below has weakened the influence of political parties over the political process.
  - \*Direct primaries
  - \*Candidate-centered campaigns

- What does good writing look like?
- What do you need to do to write a good essay?
- How do you organize writing in an essay?

# Quick Write Peer Review

- Read the example student response.
- Critique it with your partner. Check for accuracy / grasp of content; for organization.
- Offer THREE critiques
- Exchange your response with partner
- Do the same process and discuss

# Scoring Guide

- A- Two points; 1 for each clearly articulated reason.
- B. Two Points-
- Is there a topic sentence for each paragraph?
- Is it organized and clear?
- Is there a brief introduction?

# Friday 11/30

- Why does the US have a TWO Party system?



EQ #16- Why does the US  
Have a Two-Party System?

# Read the Handout- Two-Party System

1. What is a TWO-PARTY system?
2. How common is this system?
3. In our two-party system, what is the majority party? The minority party?
4. Skip to Causes on p. 3. Explain WHY we have a two-party system by using the term “single-member district.”

# Warm-Up 11/30/18

1. Describe THREE key functions of political parties in US politics.
2. What factors have weakened the influence of political parties over time? Describe THREE.

# Political Party Systems

- One-Party Systems- One party has all control; dictatorships; China, North Korea, Iran
- Multi-Party Systems- Several parties compete; parties have clear ideological differences; must combine to win; common.
- Two-party systems- Only two parties compete and can win; less common

# Why do we have a Two Party System in the U.S.?

1. Strong Consensus on Core Political Values
2. US Elections perpetuate it-
  - \*Winner take all /
  - \*Single Member Districts
3. Tradition / First Election- Federalists and Anti-Federalists
4. Legal Barriers to 3<sup>rd</sup> Parties-

# 1. Strong Consensus

\*Americans share a strong commitment to a group of core political values –belief in freedom, political equality, individualism and equality under the law.

\*Most Americans identify themselves as moderates who hold beliefs that fall between liberal and conservative views.

## 2. Winner-Take-All / Single-Member Districts

- Almost all American elections are held in single-member districts –an election in which only ONE candidate can win EACH office on the ballot.
- Candidate with most votes wins office
- Other candidate gets nothing!
- Voters are forced to choose between major parties or risk having no voice.

# Single-Member Districts (cont.)

Parliamentary Systems have proportional representation- each party is awarded legislative seats *in proportion* to the vote it receives. Many parties are represented.

- Example-in a state with 10 congressional seats, a party receiving 20% of the vote would be awarded 2 seats. In contrast, in winner-take-all, single-member district system, the same party would receive NO seats.



### 3. Legal Barriers

- The names of Democratic and Republican candidates are automatically placed on state ballots.
- In contrast, minor party candidates can't always get their names placed on the ballot.
- Minor party candidates kept from debates.

## 4. Force of Tradition

- America has had a two-party system since 1800 (Federalists and Anti-Federalists)
- The two-party system has generated self-perpetuating laws and traditions.
- As a result, it is very difficult for a minor party to become a major force in America politics.

# Pair Share

- Brainstorm THREE advantages and disadvantages to our two-party system
- Discuss with partner

# Tuesday 12/4

1. What is a two-party system?
2. Is it common in the world today? Explain.
3. Describe THREE reasons the US has a Two-party system.
4. List TWO advantages and disadvantages to the two-party system.

# Advantages & Disadvantages of Two-Party System

- **Advantages-**

- Less confusing for voters; only TWO choices
- Appeals to most voters who are moderates
- Stability- less volatile

- **Disadvantages-**

- Gridlock- nothing gets done / slow
- Can lead to disillusioned voters
- Limited options / can ignore innovative solutions / stagnant

# What are Political Party Eras in American History

- Party Eras (party systems)
  - Are historical periods in which ONE of the two major parties dominate elected national office for a significant time period.
  - Periods where ONE party controls BOTH the executive and legislative branches.

# Party Eras / Systems Activity

- Use the classroom textbooks to record key information about YOUR assigned political party era in US history (p. 253-258 in red textbook) on your group's poster (see handout)
- Record info Gallery Walk in INB
  - Years, Party names & which dominated
  - Key Issue(s) & how party in power dealt with it

# When do Party Eras Change?

## Critical Elections & Realignment

- What is a Critical Election?
  - An electoral “earthquake” where new issues and new voting coalitions emerge.
  - Caused by war, economic depression or social movement
  - Ends one party era and starts a new era
- Party Realignment
  - The displacement of the majority party by the minority party, usually during a critical election
  - Happens because a voting block within the party in power switches parties.



# Party Eras in American History

- 1796-1824: The First Party System
  - First party were the Federalists
  - Anti-Feds concerned with creation of powerful national government under the Constitution
- 1828-1856: Jackson and the Democrats and the Whigs
  - Modern party founded by Jackson
  - Whigs formed mainly in opposition to Democrats

# Party Eras in American History

- 1860-1928: The Two Republican Eras
  - Republicans rose as the antislavery party
  - 1896 election revolved around the gold standard
- 1932-1964: The New Deal Coalition
  - After Great Depression, Democrats rise
  - Democrats - relied upon urban working class, ethnic groups, Catholics and Jews, the poor, and Southerners

# What is divided government?

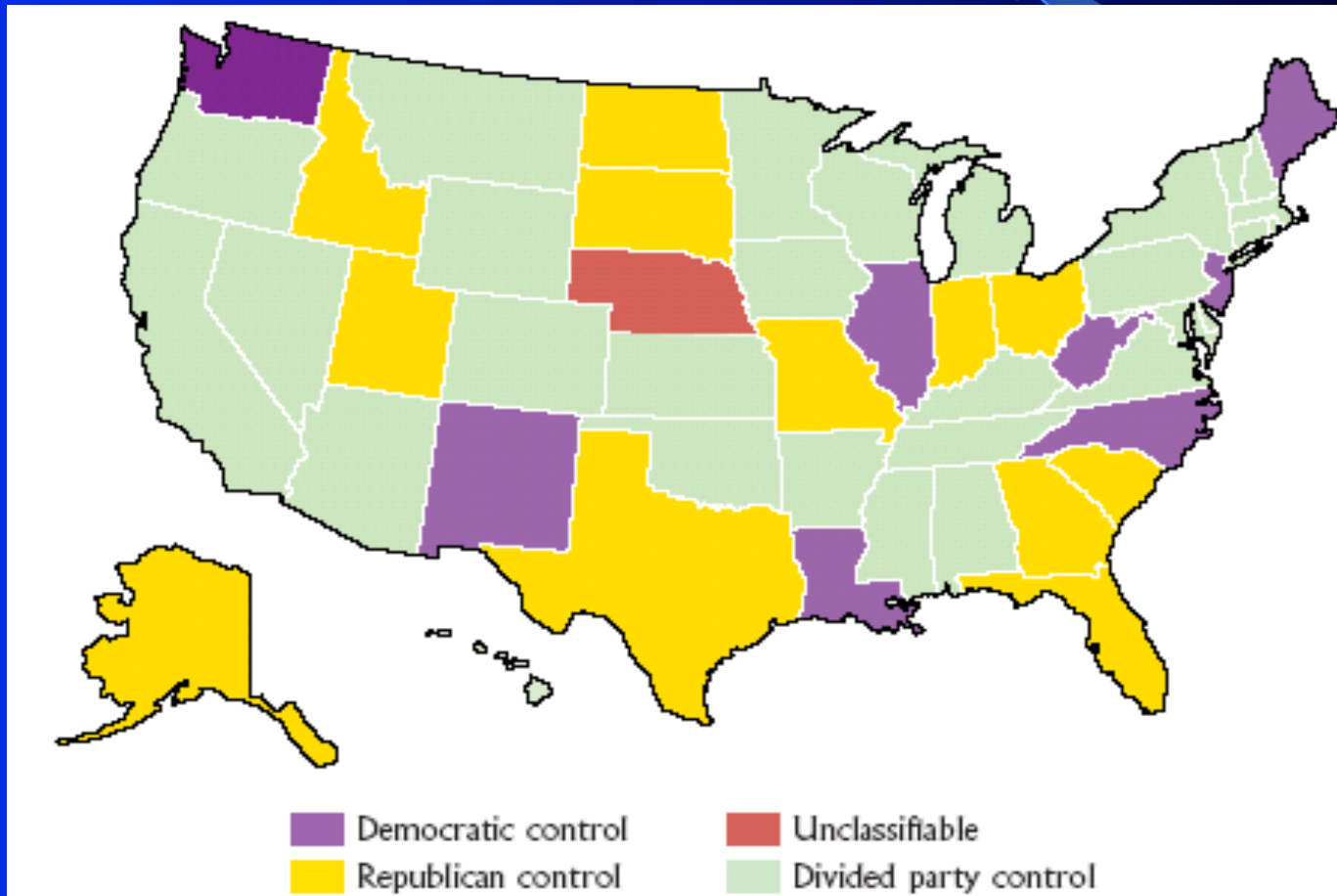
- 1968-Present: The Era of Divided Gov't
  - **Divided Government:** One party controls EXECUTIVE branch and the other the LEGISLATIVE branch during the same administration
  - Executive branch has switched back and forth between parties; legislative branch, too
  - What are the costs and benefits of this set-up?

# What is Gridlock?

- Describes the lack of cooperation between the two parties in divided government
- Is deadlock or political stalemate
- Is common in current era
- There is difficulty passing laws because the votes are evenly divided and the parties can't agree

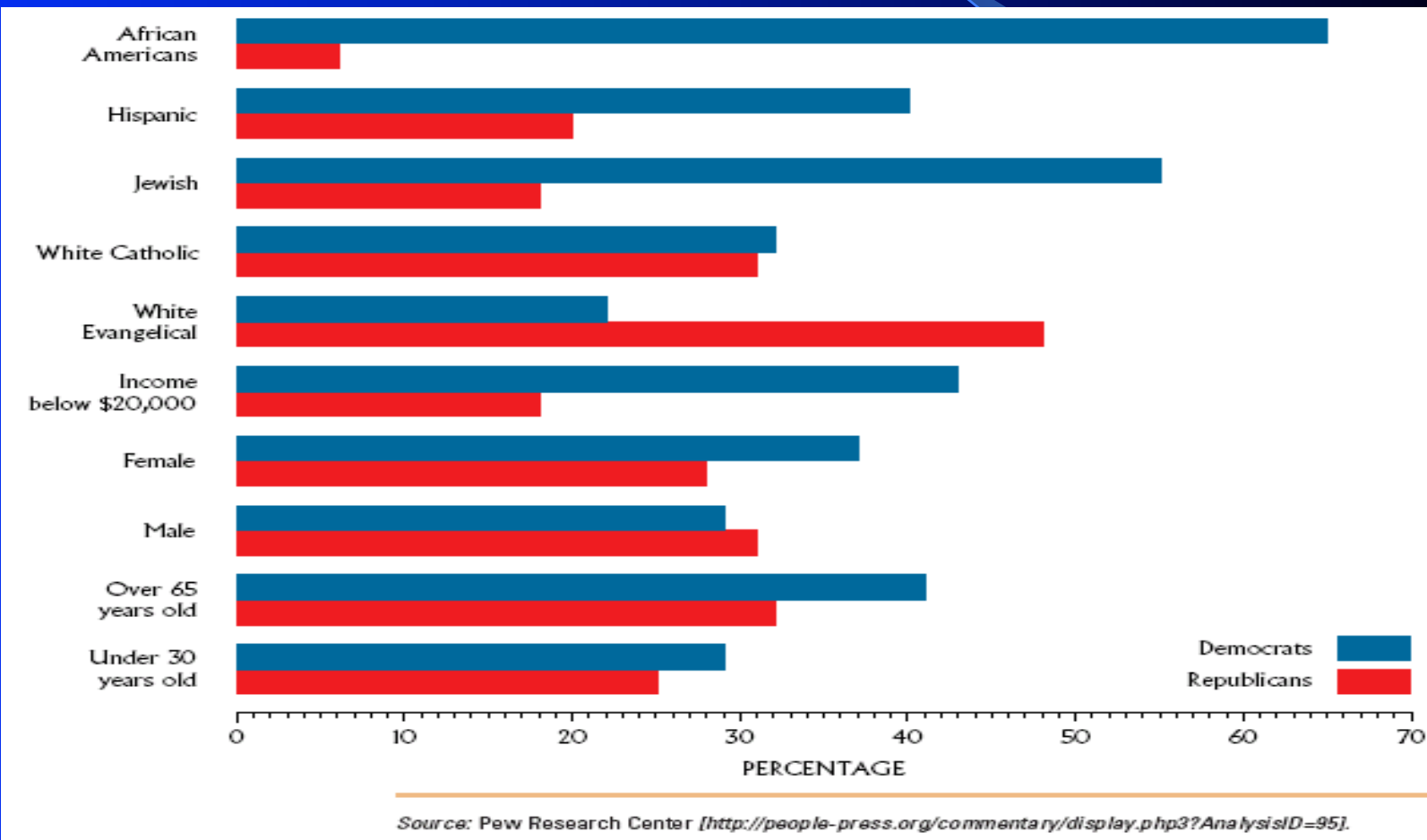
# Party Eras in American History

- Partisan Control of State Governments: 2005 (Figure 8.3)



# Party Eras in American History

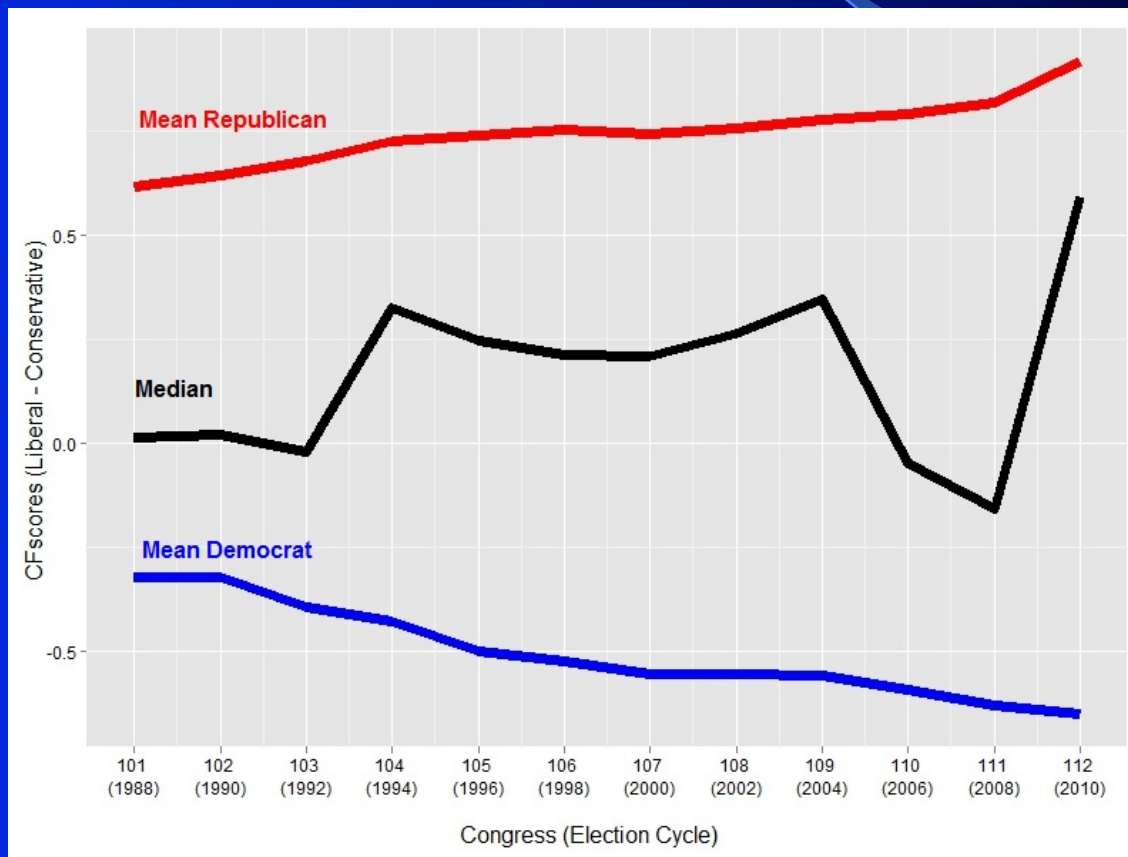
- Party Coalitions Today (Figure 8.2)



# Party Polarization

- Is at an all-time high today
- Describes the increasing ideological division between Democrats and Republicans (as in “polar opposites”).
- Studies show that partisan mistrust and disdain is deeper and more extensive than at any point in the last two decades.
- Divisions are greatest among those who are the most engaged and active in politics.

# Party Polarization in Congress





# Is the Party Over?

**Party Dealignment** – Voters moving AWAY from the two major parties;

-Choosing to be unaffiliated/ independent.

-Split ticket voting

**Party neutrality** – Voters are indifferent towards the two parties

# VO Keys: Theory of Critical Elections

- Critical Election-

- An election that usually votes out the majority party and replaces it with the *other* party
- Can signal the beginning of a new party era
- Marks the shift of a voting group from one party to the other (White southerners became Republicans in 1960's/ Blacks became Democrats)
- A new coalition forms

# VO Keys: Critical Elections

- Maintaining Election: Party in power gets re-elected
- Deviating Election: a temporary shift away from one party who was dominating
- Reinstating: a return to previous party dominance after a deviating election
- What was 2016 election???

# Activity- Critical Elections

- Use the handout
- Discuss the questions on the handout.
- What was 2008? What was 2016?

# Wednesday 12/5

- How have minor parties affected US politics?
- Why are they limited in what they can achieve?

# Warm-Up

Pair terms that have a strong relationship; one group will have THREE terms; explain your reasoning. Define each term.

- Gridlock
  - Party Polarization
  - Dealignment
  - Realignment
  - Party Era
- \*Critical Election
  - \*Divided Gov't
  - \* Current Era

EQ #17- What are Minor Parties? What is their effect on US Politics?

# What are the Impacts of Minor / Third Parties on American Politics?

- What is Minor Party?
  - Any political party other than Democrats or Republicans (but NOT Independents)
- Have been around throughout our history
- Rarely win elections but are important in US politics.



# Types of Minor Parties

1. IDEOLOGICAL- Have a strong set of beliefs and an ideological focus

-EXAMPLES- Socialist, Communist, Tea Party

2. SINGLE-ISSUE- Organized around ONE key issue— for example, abortion or slavery.

-Examples- Free Soil, Temperance Party

# Types of Minor Parties

3. ECONOMIC PROTEST- Common during economic hard times then fade when resolved.

4. SPLINTER PARTY- a faction that breaks away from one of the major parties; usually with a strong, established leader.

-Example- Teddy Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party;

# Why are Minor Parties Important?

1. Express strong views on controversial issues. Take strong stance that major parties avoid.
2. Can be a spoiler—take votes from one of the major parties so the other wins the election  
-Example- Nader took votes from Gore in 2000 and Bush narrowly won the Presidency.
3. Can be innovative—bring new groups and ideas into politics; can force issues onto the political agenda.

# Minor Parties- Why don't they win?

- Rarely win elections because
  - Winner-take-all format of presidential elections prevents voters from supporting them.
  - Single-member districts in congressional races keep minor party candidates from winning seats
  - Minor party candidates are excluded from Presidential debates and many state ballots.

# Major v. Minor Parties

- Create a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast the major parties and minor parties in US politics. Consider their-
- Focus/Purpose,
- Current Examples,
- Effect on politics in US
- Ability to win elections.

# Criticisms of the two-party system

- 1 Little choice for voters because two parties are fairly moderate
- 2 Less opportunity for political change
- 3 Because we have only two, each major party is decentralized and lacks unity on major policy issues

# Is the party over?

- Cite THREE reasons to suggest the dominance of the major parties is waning.
- Add ONE reason to explain that the major parties still are quite powerful in US politics.

# Is the Party Over?

- Is the Two-Party System Over?
  - Political parties are no longer the chief source of information for voters
  - Majority of people still identify with a party, but there is an increase in split ticket voting.
  - Number of independent voters is increasing
  - Parties will continue to be around