Introduction to the American Political Process

Elections
Several topics in the next three lectures:

- The spatial model revisited – electoral responsiveness
- The mechanics of the process: How do we choose our leaders?
- The campaign: Strategy and tactics
- The role of the media
- Campaign financing
- How do people decide for whom to vote?
- The place of negative campaigning
The Spatial Model Revisited

- Apply to elections
  - Electoral system matters: PR vs. Plurality rule
  - Plurality rule system
    - One-dimensional policy space
    - Single-peaked utility function
    - Majority rule
    - Prediction: candidate convergence
Presidents, and House and Senate Means, 1st Dimension of Joint Space

Conservative

Liberal


IKE LBJ Nixon Ford Reagan Bush

House Senate Presidents

-0.6 -0.4 -0.2 0 0.2 0.4 0.6
Where’s the convergence?

- Presidential candidates?
- Congressional candidates?
- Why does the median voter theorem fail?
  - Primaries?
  - Candidate reputation?
  - Different distinct medians?
- Importance of parties
Political Parties in American Politics

- Parties serve goals of candidates
  - Parties regulate competition for office
  - Parties avoid chaos in Congress
  - “Party” in government can lead to “party” in the electorate
  - Parties can coordinate action across different levels of government

- Perverse consequences
Campaigns and Elections

- The importance of elections
- Elections ensure that government *can* be responsive to its citizens
- Properties of elections legitimate process
  - Elections are regular
  - Everyone gets one vote
  - Procedures are in place so we can (usually) agree who won
Presidential Nominations

- Nominations: A historical perspective
- How are candidates selected?
  - Primary elections
  - Local caucuses
## Money Raised

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Total Raised</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>$145,627,589*</td>
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The Modern System

Evolution over time

- 1912-1924: The first wave of primaries
- 1924-1968: Party leader centered politics
- 1972-Today: The second wave of primaries
Presidential Nomination

- Unintended consequences
  - Frontloading
New Hampshire

- 7th Smallest State
- 2 million residents
- “First in the nation” Primary
- 2000 Turnout:
  - 238,606 Republicans
  - 154,639 Democrats
The Dynamics of the Electoral Campaign

- Winnowing
- The “Big Mo”
  - Election – The horserace
  - Pre-Election: Name recognition and money
- The Horserace
  - Creating Momentum
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