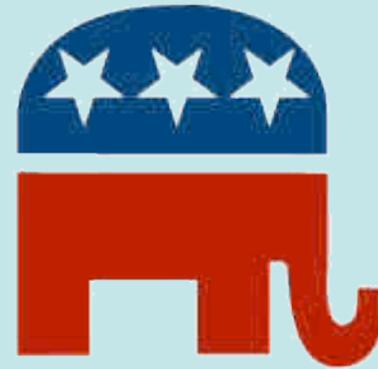


America's Two Party System



The Democrats

and



The Republicans

Key Issues and Questions

- What are political parties and what do they do?
- Why do we have a two party system and how does a two party system differ from a multi-party system?
- What differentiates our major parties and how have they evolved over time?
- Are we on the verge of an historic realignment? What did the November 2006 election signify?

What Are Parties?

**Organizations that want to seize
control of the government**

What Do Parties Do?

- Raise money.
- Create Platforms and recruit members.
- Nominate and Support Candidates.
- Work together in Government to get their policies implemented.

How Parties Are Organized

- Parties are basically disorganized. (The Democrats more so than the Republicans).
- Anyone can join a party, not matter what you believe, any member can run for election under a party label, no matter what they believe.
- Candidates often raise their own money, so it is hard for the party leadership to control them.
- However, if you widely disagree with a party's **platform** (statement of what it supports) it makes little sense to join. Platforms thus do tend to represent what most party activists believe.

Party Systems

One Party Systems

Two Party Systems

Multi-party Systems

Why America Has Only Two Dominant Parties

- Historical Circumstance
- The Stability of Two
- Laws that Preserve the Two Party Monopoly
- Informal Institutional Supports

Why America Has Only Two Dominant Parties

- Historical Circumstance
 - Parties are not mentioned in the Constitution.
 - They were in fact were seen as sinister by the framers.
 - Yet, they rose out of an ideological debate about the nature of government:
 - Hamilton: strong gov./promote econ. dev.
 - Jefferson: weak gov./let the common man flourish

Why America Has Only Two Dominant Parties

- Historical Origins
 - Not mentioned in the Constitution, in fact seen as sinister.
 - Arose out of an ideological debate about the nature of government
 - Hamilton: pro-bank, anti-France.
 - Jefferson: anti-bank, pro-France.

Why America Has Only Have Two Dominant Parties

- Historical Circumstance
- The Stability of Two

It just so happened that two major factions emerged in our early years. However, once this happened, it became difficult for any third faction to for a third party to survive. This is because a third group would steal votes from one of the other existing parties, thus splitting the votes and dooming both of them. Thus, new groups usually merged into one of the two existing factions.

Why America Has Only Have Two Dominant Parties

- Historical Circumstance
- The Stability of Two
- Laws that Preserve the Two Party Monopoly:
 - Single member districts/winner take all
 - Vs. a proportional system
 - Minor party candidates seldom get the MOST votes in any particular district or state, but across a state they may get millions of votes repeatedly coming in 2nd or 3rd. However, since only the one with the most votes wins a seat, 3rd parties get zero representation despite all of their votes. This system basically locks out challenges to the two major parties as people do not want to “waste” their votes.
 - In a proportional system, rather than having one person elected from a district, a large district would have a number of representatives, with each party getting a number of representatives based on their proportion of the vote. If the Libertarians got 20% of the vote, they would get 20% of that district’s representatives.

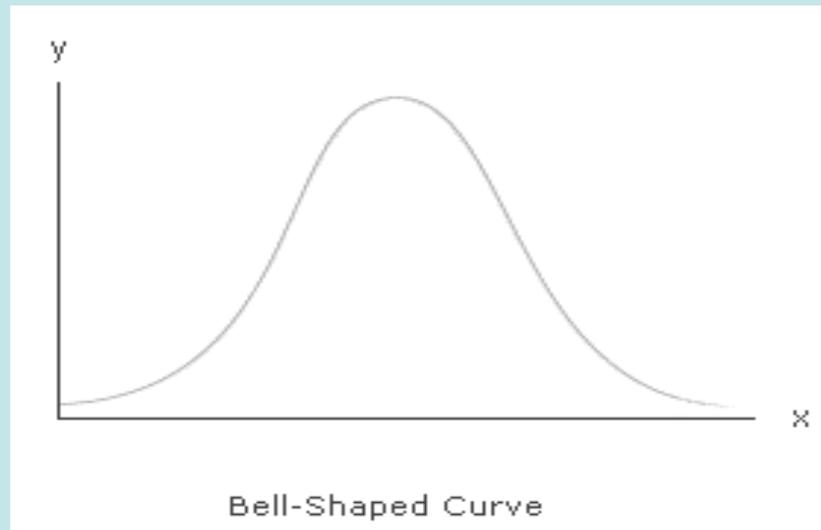
Why America Has Only Have Two Dominant Parties

- Historical Origins
- The Stability of Two
- Laws that Preserve the Two Party Monopoly
 - Single member districts/winner take all
 - Restrictive ballot laws and filing fees
 - It is extremely difficult to get your name on the ballot if you do not represent one of the major parties. Rules vary state to state but usually involve raising loads of money or collecting gobs of signatures in a very short period of time.
 - Even Ralph Nader in 2000, the strongest 3rd party candidate in years was on the ballot in only about 2/3 of the states. (Green Party)
 - Matching Funds
 - Only the nominees of the two major parties are automatically eligible for matching funds where they exist. (These are funds the government provides if candidates agree to limit their spending.

Why Does America Has Only Two Dominant Parties

- Historical Origins
- The Stability of Two
- Laws that Preserve the Two Party Monopoly
- Informal Institutional Supports
 - Media Coverage
 - Voter Loyalty
 - Ability to Raise Cash
 - Public Perception (third parties are just for wackos)

Effects of The Two Party System: Demopublicans?



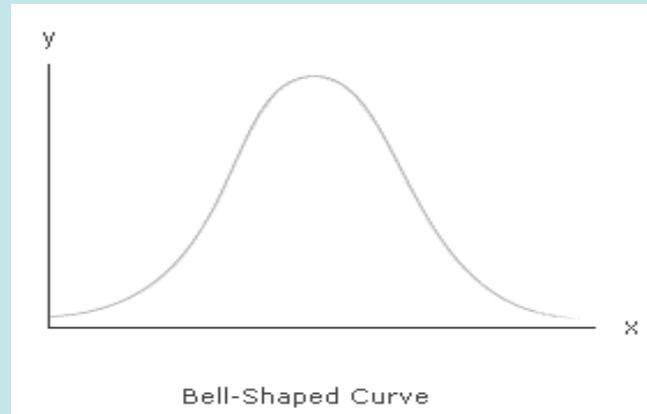
- What do parties generally need to do to win?
- Why might the center not always win?

The Role of Third Parties

(aka minority parties)

- Types:
 - Single issue (Peace and Freedom, Independent Party)
 - Candidate Driven (Reform Party, Bull Moose)
 - Often “factional parties”
 - Ideological (Green, Libertarian, Socialist)
- 3rd Parties Generally Don't Expect To Win
It is often said that they die when they succeed.

Multi-party Systems



The lesser of two evils

- Is the middle really one group?
It might be said that 51% represents a “hollow majority” that is a numerical majority void of political content.
- Multi-party systems are characterized by a multitude covering a wide variety of ideological mixes.

Multiparty Systems

- A closer look a multiparty system:

India 1998: (275 seats for majority)

The United Front (a 14 party coalition)	96
Congress Party	166
BJP (Hindu)	245
Others	25

- Multiparty systems generally result in coalition governments.
- Small parties can thus have disproportionate power.

Would the U.S. be better off
with a multi-party system?

Two Party vs. Multiparty Systems

- Both systems, being democratic, rest on compromise.
 - In a two party system, compromise takes place prior to elections as parties select moderate candidates who they believe can win a majority.
 - In multiparty systems, ideologically pure parties are forced to compromise after elections in order to form a majority coalition to pass laws (and often select a prime minister).

Two Party vs. Multiparty System

pros and cons

- Two party systems tend to be more stable.
- Multi-party systems offer voters more choice.
- Having only two choices may dampen voter turnout.
- Two Party Systems narrow legislative debate:
 - Even if outvoted, small parties if represented are likely to raise issues the other parties wouldn't otherwise discuss.
- Two Party Systems may be more polarizing:
 - Parties in multiparty systems must work together and form coalitions which forces members to reach across party lines.