**AP GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**

**LECTURE NOTES:**

**POLITICAL PARTIES- PART 1**

1. **Definition and Function of Parties:**

**The founders of this country did not mention political parties in the US Constitution! They did not like them and wished they would just go away. ☺ (Madison’s warning)**

**Created is a government with 2 moving parts: representatives** (elected form the people; *popular consent* **) and the institutions (which would protect the nation and make, implement and interpret policy->>>CONGRESS/PRESIDENT & COURTS.**

**What will connect those two things will be the political party. Parties, them are linkage institutions that connects people to government and allow some people to have a voice in determine public policy. As we will see, the main functions of parties are to win elections and influence government. In the US, as opposed to Europe, being a member of a political party does not require one to pay dues, pass an exam, or swear an oath of allegiance. The major functions of political parties in America are carried out by a small number of elites or activists, as opposed to Europe, where the parties try and enlist thousands of supporters and organize themselves around their supporters. American parties concentrate more on winning elections than signing up a lot of supporters. Also, in the UK, the party determines who will run for office and they can also remove people from the party list. In the US, we have weaker parties for two major reasons:**

1. **Federalism has created a more decentralized system than in Europe. That means, there are more access points to power that can filed by petitioners other than parties.**
2. **The separation of powers and checks and balances in government means that one party cannot control government- there is built in gridlock if the elected officials in Washington, DC do not compromise**

**DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A POLITICAL PARTY AND A FACTION/INTEREST GROUP**

**political party should also be differentiated from a FACTION. Factions, which preceded parties, were simply groups of individuals who joined together to win a benefit for themselves, like the INTEREST GROUPS of today. . Factions existed in this country when there were relatively few offices to run for and when only a small percentage of the population could vote. Today you still might hear the term faction but it's used to refer to a PART of a political party: for example, the “conservative faction or right-wing” of the Republican Party. Yet the biggest difference between a faction and a party is that factions do not have the organizational structure that parties have and while factions often center their attention at individual politicians, parties focus their attention on policy making. The best way to look at political parties is by looking not at what they ARE but what they DO.**

1. **Recruiting candidates to run for office- because it is the goal of parties to gain control of government, they must work to recruit candidates for all elective offices. No one gets elected above the local level without winning the endorsement (or nomination) of his or her party.**
2. **Organizing and running elections. Although elections are run by the federal and state governments, parties help organize voter-registration drives, recruit volunteers to work at the polls and provide the campaign activity to raise the interest level of the people.**
3. **Acting as an organized opposition to the party in power- the party that is the minority in government generally acts as an opponent that will make sure the majority party does not abuse its power- the opposition will help create debate- and gridlock- when it can. In other words, the party will try and hold politicians accountable to the people.**
4. **Parties, once elected, will attempt to operate government and determine public policy**.

**3 sub-units of a Party**

**Political parties are everywhere in American politics: present in the electorates mind, exist as an organization, and serve as a vehicle to formulate public policy once the party’s nominee wins office.**

**Although most people think of parties as one entity- they really can be broken down into 3 sub-units:**

1. **Party-in-electorate: This SUB-UNITrefers to all people who claim attachment to the party name. They need not be members who pay dues or even participate in election campaigns; they simply feel some loyalty to the party or use their party identification as a CUE when voting for certain candidates.**
2. **Party Organization: this SUB-UNIT provides the structural framework for the political party by recruiting volunteers to become party leaders; identifying potential candidates; organizing conventions, caucuses, etc..**
3. **Party-in- Government: This group consists of those elected and appointed officials who identify with a political party. Although elected officials cannot hold official party positions within the party itself, they do work with their party when it comes to fundraising, working with national, state and local organizations**

**Creation of Parties: Federalists and Democratic-Republicans (1789 to 1828)**

**Although the Founders spent a lot of time creating what . they felt was a perfect government and constitution to go along with it- they did not mention political parties, mainly because they did not like them or want them to exist**

**The creation of political parties can be found in the struggle over ratification of the Constitution. The Federalists and Anti-Federalists were the first 2 parties ever although they did not impress the first President George Washington, who in his farewell address to the nation warned against the “baneful effects of the spirit of the party.” Washington viewed parties as a threat to both national unity and the concept of popular government. Vice President John Adams, reflecting Washington’s views, said, “there is nothing I dread so much as the division of the republic into two great parties.”**

**Creation of 2 Party System: THE WINNER TAKES IT ALL**

**Winner take all System- At virtually every level of government in the US, the outcome of elections is based on the plurality, winner-take-all principle. A plurality system is one in which the person who obtains the most votes wins, regardless if he/she got a majority or not. This means that if a person runs in a single-member district and loses by 1 vote, they or their party receives nothing in return- no share of seats in Congress or any role in office. What this means in the US is there a lot of broad-based policies by the 2 major parties in order to make sure they siphon off the votes of any 3rd parties. The most dramatic example of this is the Electoral College. SEE YOUTUBE**

**The Jacksonian period both democratized and nationalized the party system. It democratized it because it extended the right to vote to White men (almost 80%). And it nationalized it; by changing the way presidents were chosen. Instead of electoral votes being based on the vote of the state legislature, they were now based upon the popular vote of the state.**

**-Creation of 2 Party System: Democrats and Whigs (1820-1860)**

**By 1824, the Democratic- Republicans had become victims of their success; Democratic- Republicans who belonged to the factions of Henry Clay and J.Q. Adams ended up forming the Whig Party while supporters of Andrew Jackson formed the Democratic Party- the same one that exists today, making the Democratic Party the oldest continuing party in the Western world.**

**The (Jacksonian) Democrats policy reflected their base of support- rural agrarian society in which the national government had a limited role; they believed in separation of church and state; greater economic opportunities for the common people, etc.**

**The Whigs had a Federalist-inspired philosophy, with their followers believing in rapid industrialization, a strong central government and a merchant-based class that would run the economy and government.**

**Post-Civil War Era: Democrats and Republicans (1865-1928)**

**From the presidential election of 1860 to this day, the same two parties, the Democrats and the Republicans have dominated elections in the US.**

**Lincoln’s controversial victory in 1860, in which he only received 39.9% of the popular vote, losing the entire South, was the start of the modern-day Republican Party, otherwise known as the GOP or Grand Old Party. The Republican Party, originally begun as a third party, was formed out of anti-slavery ideology and filled the political vacuum left by the Whig Party. The Republicans dominated presidential elections up until the turn of the century, winning 14 out of the next 18 elections from Lincoln to FDR. This also was the era of a major geographic split: the North became overwhelming Republican and the South stayed Democratic for the next 100 years. UNTIL 1960’S**

**POLITICAL MACHINES POLITICS (1870-1930)This era in politics was also known for the development of the political machine: Republican and Democratic Party organizations that acted as a party and government combined. The machines (which had their heyday from the 1870’s to the 1930’s) recruited its members with tangible benefits (called patronage): jobs, entertainment, housing, food, etc.**

**Machines were a central element of big city life in places like New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, etc. Party Machines in this era did 2 things: they increased voter turnout to record levels: 70-80% in certain elections and they also led to massive straight ticket voting.**

**straight ticket voting- WHEN VOTERS VOTE FOR ONLY DEMOCRATS OR REPUBLICANS “STRAIGHT” DOWN THE BALLOT FROM PRESIDENT TO CITY COUNCIL AND MAYOR**

**straight ticket voting IS A SIGN OF A STRONG PARTY …**

**A WEAK PARTY HAS “SPLIT-TICKET VOTING”**

**straight ticket voting – ENJOYED ITS MOST DOMINANT TIME IN THE “MACHINE” POLITICS ERA**

**By the early 1920’s though, political machines began to die off for 4 reasons:**

* 1. **There was a drastic decline of immigrants into this country;**
  2. **Many of the PATRONAGE & services the party provided began to be dispensed by the civil service- who didn’t ask for your loyalty; in other words, many services were rights of citizenship now, not privileges of being in a party.**
  3. **The development of the Australian ballot – secret ballot**
  4. **The introduction of the direct primary**

**ELECTION OF 1896**

**A second major Republican era in American Politics started with the watershed election of 1896, perhaps one of the bitterest elections ever to take place.**

**William Jennings Bryan represented the populist inspired Democratic Party: they favored a “free silver” policy; low tariffs rural interests. (Was popular even though he got outspent 20-1.)**

**William McKinley was the Republican candidate who stood for northern industry, continuation of the gold standard, high tariffs, and city interests.**

**With McKinley’s victory, the old split between the North and South that resulted from the civil War was now replaced in part by an East- West rivalry; city-countryside split has persisted up until the next realigning election in 1932. For 3 decades or more, until the stock market of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression, the Democrats were kept out of power (except for ww1 and president Wilson). Then the Depression brought about the last great party realignment with the election of FDR in 1932.**

**The New Deal Coalition (1932-1964)**

**Herbert Hoover’s disastrous handling of the Depression spelled the end of Republican rule in the White House for the next 20 years. Party realignment began after FDR began to implement his New Deal programs. First time voters (including more and more women) began to consolidate the Democratic Party’s hold on certain coalitions:**

1. **Urban Dwellers: Big cities like Chicago and Philadelphia which used to be Republican, turned to the Democratic Party in droves, including thousands of immigrants who were coming to this country, including Catholic and Jewish voters.**
2. **Labor Unions: FDR became the first President to support labor unions and this began a trend in which labor unions (except for Ronal Reagan’s term) became solidly Democratic**
3. **The Poor: because FDR’s programs were aimed at the nation’s poorest, these voters began to associate the Democratic Party as being compassionate- thus began lower income voters historic shift to the Democrats. Social Security and welfare particularly appealed to these voters.**
4. **Southerners continued to flock to the Democrats, including Blacks who also became part of the Democratic coalition.**

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**LECTURE NOTES:**

**POLITICAL PARTIES- PART 2**

**Divided Government (1968-Present)**

**The tide began to turn for the Republicans with the emergence of Richard Nixon after the disaster in Vietnam under Democratic leadership. Since 1968, the Republicans have won the White House 5 out of 8 times. At the same time, while the Democrats before Clinton, were losing the White House year after year, they controlled Congress from 1980 to 1994. All told, the same party has simultaneously controlled both Houses of Congress and the presidency for just 8 of the 33 years from 1969 to 2012.**

**split ticket voting -This discrepancy in voting by the people (called split ticket voting); their desire for divided government is unprecedented in political history.**

**This recent pattern of divided government has caused many political scientists to believe that the party system has DEALIGNED rather than realigned. Whereas realignment involves people changing from one party to the next, party dealignment means people are moving away from BOTH parties. Political scientists generally agree that 2 things have happened to the party system since the New Deal.**

1. **Party Loyalty has declined. Recent polling has shown that more and more people are not only growing intolerant of both parties but feel that it isn’t the party that’s important but the person running for office- in other words, people have begun to identify with CANDIDATES, rather than the party they represent. Also voters are becoming more independent: polls in the last 5 years have shown that almost 35% of the electorate now identify themselves as being independents- the highest numbers since the Watergate scandal.**

**Decrease of Party Control over Nominating Procedures**

**– The establishment of a primary election to decide who will be nominated for office from the 2 major parties in the last 30 years has brought about a significant decline in any party power. In the past, parties used to have a lot of control over who they would run for office. Going back to the days of King Caucus, when members of Congress used to select presidential candidates, to today, where virtually anyone with enough money can run for office even if the party doesn’t want them to, has led to less party control over who runs- almost all of the states now have primaries in which nominees are selected for office.**

**Party System:**

**Considering the range of ideologies that American voters have and the fact that we have a federal system of government, with many different state and local party machines, its amazing that the US has had a 2 party system since the 1800’s. In the world, a 2 party system is rarity- only 15 nations have one. Most European nations have multi-party systems with strong parliamentary forms of government.**

**Strong party competition between parties at the national level has no filtered down to the state level. From 1900 to 2012, the Republicans have won 15 presidential elections and the Democrats have won 14. In state and local elections, however the figures are more one-sided.**

**Political Culture: Because most children get their party identification from their parents, they tend to pass that same identification (usually always Republican or Democratic) to their children, thus the 2 party system tends to self-perpetuate itself. Another reason why Americans gravitate to only 2 parties is the commonality of goals among Americans.**

**Most Americans believe in a capitalist system where goals are achieved through individual rather than collective means. The major division in America has been economic rather than religious, so instead of having strictly Catholic parties or Jewish parties; we have had 2 parties which represent different economic spectrums of society.**

**The Democratic Party, at least since the 1920’s, has based its ideology on helping the middle to lower classes. They have been in favor of government intervention in the economy and more government redistribution of wealth from those in the upper classes to those in the lower classes.**

**The Republican Party has been known in the mid 20th century as the party that supports the middle and upper classes and commercial interest, favoring less government intervention in the economy and less taxation on the rich.**

**WOMEN VOTING FOR DEMOCRATIC PARTY FAR MORE SINCE 1980 TO 2012**

**SIMILARITIES between REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATS**

**Yet even though the Republicans and Democrats differ in their ideology, they do have some things in common which helps explain why they have been able to dominate national politics for so long:**

1. **Both parties do have ideologically diverse factions within the party itself**
2. **Both parties are decentralized in structure to adapt to the federal system of the us and provide a forum for people at the national, state and local levels**
3. **Both parties are centrist for the most part in their philosophy- they both employ pragmatic policies that fit into the moderate ideology that the majority of Americans share. In other words, both parties have been able to co-opt the third parties ideology and morph that ideology into their vision of where America should go.**

**Third parties:**

**The most obvious consequence of 2 party domination in the US is the moderation of political thought. If America had many parties, each would have to make a special appeal in order to stand out from the crowd. If America had 3rd parties there could be African –American parties, farmer’s parties, environmental parties, etc. Yet none of these single groups “anti-war; labor; civil rights”; have not been able to successfully form a party? Why?**

**Because it is so difficult to start and maintain a 3rd party- both the Republicans and Democrats are too big; too rich and too successful at co-opting the issues that other parties make the focus of their existence. The development of party primaries has made it possible for dissident members of both parties to remain in the party and still have some influence. The Democrats and Republicans are so successful now; they do not have to take big political risks when running campaigns.**

**Third Parties are not entirely useless or without hope. The Republican Party started out as a third party and won the Presidency in 1860.**

**Third Parties have actually been with us since 1831 (Anti-Masons) and have represented viewpoints that have entered into the public’s consciousness: SUCH AS 🡻🡻**

**40 hour workweek = Socialist Party**

**abolition of slavery = Republican Party**

**campaign finance reform and balanced budget = Reform Party**

**environmental issues = Green Party**

**national health care = Progressive Party**

**Thus, if a 3rd party doesn’t succeed in an election, they still can claim a victory because some of their ideas are adapted (co-oped) by the major political parties.**

**Political scientists also feel that 3rd parties have acted as safety valves for dissident political groups, preventing major confrontations and political unrest.**

**Other examples of the history of 3rd parties:**

1. **Free Soil Party (1856)- a precursor of the Republican Party and a single-issue party**
2. **The Socialist Labor Party 1877**
3. **The Socialist Party 1901- Eugene Debs, ran for President 5 times and won 6% of popular vote in 1912-ideological- they are the opposite of party machines; they don’t care so much about winning elections as they do about remaining true to their principles- ideological parties survive the longest yet never are able to expand their voter base**
4. **The Communist Party 1919 (split off from Socialists)- ideological**
5. **The Libertarian Party 1972- ideological**
6. **The Reform Party founded in 1992- Ross Perot (issue party)- Perot was not the candidate in 1992 of a third party per se; instead he represented a type of anti-party, attacking both major parties for being ineffective and beholden to special interests.**

**Getting on the Ballot- although the majority of Americans feel it would be valuable to have a third party in national elections, state laws make the task of getting a new party on the ballot very complicated and difficult. Thus making it difficult and discouraging for Third parties to thrive**

**Spin-Off (faction) Parties:**

**These 3rd parties were created out of dissatisfaction with one or both of the major parties when they ignored an important issue. Splinter groups will usually take a strong stance on one issue, try and nominate an attractive candidate and gets the public attention. There’s 2 major ways they can achieve their goals:**

1. **Persuade followers of a major party to defect or at least adopt their principles**
2. **Infiltrate the other party and run candidates under the other party’s name**

**The most successful 3rd parties have been those that are spin-off or factional parties.**

**The most famous spin-off party was the Bull Moose Party, which split from the Republicans in 1912. Although the party was not successful in winning the election under Teddy Roosevelt, they did claim 20% of the popular vote and won 88 electoral votes, allowing Woodrow Wilson [42%] to win (a plurality) because of the split vote among Republican voters.**

**Among other Presidential elections, there have been 3 major spin-off parties cause some Presidents to be elected only by a plurality and not a majority vote of the American public**

1. **Dixie-Crat Party 1948- allowed Truman to win a plurality election [49%]**
2. **American Independent Party 1968-allowed Nixon to win a plurality election [43%]**
3. **Reform Party 1992- allowed Clinton to win a plurality election [43%]**
4. **Reform Party 1996 again!- allowed Clinton to win a plurality election [49%]**