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

Where’s the convergence?

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

Democratic Seats and Votes

Where’s the convergence?

Presidents, and House and Senate Means, 1st Dimension of Joint Space

Where’s the convergence?

Democratic Seats and Votes

Where’s the convergence?
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

Money Spent

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
The Rise of Presidential 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”
  - Pre-Election: Name recognition and money
- The Horserace
  - Creating Momentum

CNN/USA Today Poll

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<th>1/17-1/19</th>
<th>1/20-1/22</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kerry</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
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Money Raised

- Bush
- Gore
- Kerry
- Clinton
- Edwards
- Lieberman
- Edwards
- Sharpton
- Musgrave

Bar Graph representing Money Raised in Millions