

Unit 5: Political Participation

- **Voting Rights and Models of Voter Behavior**

- **Voting Amendments**

- **Fifteenth Amendment:** Extended suffrage to African American men
- **Seventeenth Amendment:** Established the popular election of U.S. Senators.
- **Nineteenth Amendment:** Extended suffrage to women.
- **Twenty-fourth Amendment:** Declared poll taxes void in federal elections.
- **Twenty-sixth Amendment:** Extended suffrage to people aged 18-20 years old by lowering the voting age from 21 to 18.

- **Voting Legislation**

- **Voting Rights Act of 1965:** Legislation designed to help end formal and informal barriers to African American suffrage.
- **National Voter Registration Act of 1993:** Also called the “Motor Voter Act.” Makes it easier for voters to register to vote by requiring states to all citizens to register when applying for or renewing their driver’s license.

- **How do People Vote**

- **Rational Choice Theory:** Describes someone voting in their best interest, supporting the candidate whose platform will give them the most favorable outcome.
- **Retrospective Voting:** Describes voting based on the recent record in office or a candidate or others in their party.
- **Prospective Voting:** Describes voting based on how a citizens thinks a candidate will act and perform if elected to office.
- **Party-line Voting:** Describes consistently voting for candidates of the same political party at all levels of government.

- **Voter Turnout**

- **State Laws for Voting**

- **Voter Registration:** A requirement that eligible voters enroll on an electoral roll before they can vote.
- Requiring voters to present states IDs makes it harder for voters
- Allowing early voting or election-day registration makes it easier for voters

- **Demographics:** Characteristics of a population, like age, race, and education

- **Many Factors Influence Voter Choice**

- **Political Efficacy:** A citizen’s belief that their vote matters and can influence government policies.
- **Compulsory Voting:** Laws that require citizens to register and vote in local and national elections.
- **Midterm Elections:** The congressional elections that occur in even-numbered years between presidential elections, in the middle of each presidential term.
- **Presidential Elections:** Elections that take place every four years, in which voters elect the president and vice-president.

- **Linkage Institutions:** Group in society that connect people to the government and facilitate turning the people’s concerns into political issues on the government’s policy agenda. (**POLITICAL PARTIES, INTEREST GROUPS, MEDIA**)

- **Political Parties**

- **Political Parties:** An organization of people with similar ideologies that seek to influence public policy by getting candidate elected.
- **Party Platforms:** A list of goals outlining a party’s positions on issues and political priorities.

- **How and why Political Parties Change and Adapt**

- **Critical Elections:** An election that leads to a majority party realignment. After a critical election, a number of key supporters of one party (for example, southern white voter after 1968) switch to the other party.
- **Realignment:** A major change in the composition or part coalitions, often brought on by a new or pressing issue (often of economic or war). Ex. The Great Depression- African Americans moved from Republican Party to Democratic Party.
- **Dealignment:** The process by which an individual loses his or her loyalty to a political party without developing loyalty to another party.
- **Campaign Finance:** Fund raised to promote, political parties, or policy initiatives. There are complex laws regulating who can contribute to campaigns and how they can contribute.
- **Political Action Committee (PAC):** An organization, usually representing an interest group or corporation, that raises money with the goal of supporting or defeating candidates, parties, or legislation. There are limits to the amount of money a PAC can donate to a candidate or party in each election.
- **Super PAC:** An independent expenditure-only committee, a super PAC may raise unlimited funds in support of a candidate or party as long as they do not coordinate in any way with the candidate or party.
- **Political Machine:** A party organization with the goal of enriching party leaders, party workers, and citizens supporters through government contracts and jobs.
- **Candidate-centered Campaigns:** Political campaigns that focus on the candidates for office-their personalities and issues-rather than the parties they represent. Since the 1930s, candidate-centered campaigns have predominated in American politics.
- **Direct Primary:** The current process by which voters choose their party’s candidate for national office. Direct primaries have replaced party-controlled mechanisms for choosing candidates.
- **Micro-targeting:** The growing practice of using computer models to identify voters who might support a candidate. Campaigns pay firms to mine consumer data, census records, and voting behavior in order to supply them with names of potential voters.

- **Third Party System:** Also called minority party, a third party is a U.S. Political party other than the two major parties (Republican & Democrat); third parties rarely win elections in the U.S. but frequently influence national politics by drawing attention to issues previously neglected by the majority party.
 - **Independent Candidate:** A candidate for office who does not have a formal affiliation with a political party.
- **Third-party Politics**
 - **Barriers to Third-party Success:**
 - **Two Party System:** An electoral system in which two major parties dominated voting at all levels of government.
 - **Winner-take-all System:** An electoral system in which legislative seats are awarded only to the party who receives the most votes in an election; this is the most common system in the United States; and it does not benefit minor political parties, since third-party candidates rarely win the majority of votes in election
 - **Proportional System:** An electoral system in which legislative seats are awarded in proportion to the percentage of voters garnered by a party in an election; This system is common in Europe and benefit minor political parties.
- **Groups Influencing Policy Making and Policy Outcomes**
 - **Interest Groups:** A formal or informal association seeking to influence government policy in favor of their interests; interest groups may represent social causes, economic and corporate interest, or religious and ideological interests.
 - **Iron Triangle vs Issue Network**
 - **Iron Triangle:** A longstanding, mutually-beneficial relationship between an interest group, congressional committee, and bureaucratic agency, devoted to similar issues; for example the American Association of Retired Persons, the Congressional Subcommittee on Aging, and the Social Security Administration all work closely on issues.
 - **Issue Network:** A group of individuals, public officials, and interest groups that form around a particular issue, usually a proposed public policy that they wish to support or defeat.
 - **Single Issue Voters:** An interest group devoted to one particular Issue. Example: the National Rifle Association.
 - **“Free Rider” Problem:** A problem of group behavior that occurs when an individual can receive a public benefit without making a personal contribution of money or effort.
 - **Campaign Finance**
 - **Political Action Committee (PAC):** Officially registered fund-raising organization that represents interest groups in the political process.
 - **Super PAC:** May raise and spend unlimited sums of money in order to advocate for or against political candidates.
- **Hard Money:** Campaign contributions regulated and limited by the federal government that are given directly to a candidate
- **Soft Money:** Money spent in support of a candidate without directly donating to their campaign, such as paying for ads or campaign events, or giving to the candidate’s party.
- **Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002:** Also known as the McCain-Feingold Act; banned soft money and reduced attack ads.
- **“Stand by Your Ad”:** A provision of the Bipartisan Campaign Act of 2002 which required ads used to support or opposed a candidate to include this line: “I’m [candidate’s name] and I approve this message”
- **Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission**
 - Citizen United sought an injunction against the Federal Election Commission in the US District Court for the District of Columbia to prevent the application of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) to its film Hillary: The Movie.
 - The Movie expressed opinions about whether Senator Clinton would make a good president.
 - The Court ruled that political spending by corporations, associations, and labor unions is a form of protected speech under the First Amendment.
- **Media Impact on Political Agenda and Participation**
 - **“Horse Race” Journalism:** A focus on the contest of politics---- who is winning or ahead in the polls—rather policy agenda and debates.
 - **The Media as a Gatekeeper:** The media’s role in setting the political agenda by drawing public and government attention to certain issues.
 - **Investigative Journalism:** Deep, original investigation on a specific topic, often conducted over a long period of time and/or involving the exposure of secret information.

