History of American Political Parties

1848 Whig Party candidates
Zachary Taylor & Millard Fillmore

History of American Parties

- Six “party systems” or historical eras
- Changes in the nature of the two parties
  - Which voters support which party
  - What issues each party adopts
- This change called a **realignment**

First Party System: 1790-1824

Federalist Party	Democratic-Republican Party
Alexander Hamilton	Thomas Jefferson James Madison
Strong national government	Strong state governments

First Party System: 1790-1824

- No parties in Constitution
- Develop at elite level
- Issues
  - National bank
  - Relations with France and England

First Party System: 1790-1824

- Develop inside Congress
  - Loose coalition of supporters or opponents to Hamilton versus Jefferson/Madison
    - facilitates passage of legislation
  - Coordination needed to win presidency

Constituencies

- Constituency
  - Limited electorate
  - Weakly organized
- Federalists: New England, English ancestry, commercial interests
- Democratic-Republican: South and Mid-Atlantic, Irish/Scot/German ancestry, farmers and artisans, prosperity through western expansion

First Party System: 1790-1824

- Electoral outcomes
  - 1796 John Adams (Federalist)
    - Thomas Jefferson, Vice President
  - 1800 tied vote and 12th Amendment
  - Democratic-Republican won next three
    - Madison, Monroe, John Quincy Adams

All election maps from nationalatlas.gov

Source: http://nationalatlas.gov/elections/elect01.gif

Federalists disappear by 1820

- Policy disputes within party
- Failure to organize public support
- Burr-Hamilton duel, 1804
- Opposition to War of 1812
- Republican-Democrats co-opt issues

Second Party System: 1828-1852

- Old Democratic-Republican party split into factions in 1824
  - four factions nominate different president
  - No majority in Electoral College, House selects J.Q. Adams
- Andrew Jackson comes to dominate one faction
- Another faction becomes the Whig party

Second Party System: 1828-1852

- First real party organizations
- First mass-based parties
- Professional politicians

Democratic Party

- Jackson wins presidency 1828
- Issues – limited federal government, hard money policy
- Other presidents (Van Buren, Polk, Pierce, Buchanan)
- Congressional and organizational leaders (Calhoun, Van Buren)

Whig Party

Webster Clay

- Issues - economic development, reform
- Presidents:Harrison, Tyler, Taylor, Fillmore
  - mostly nonpolitical military heroes
- Congressional leaders
  - Daniel Webster - great orator
  - Henry Clay - compromise leader

Constituencies

- Democratic Party
- Small farmer, frontier
- Foreign-born
- Catholic

- Whig Party
- Middle/Upper class
- Native-born or British
- Evangelical Protestant

Changes in Parties in 2nd Party System

- Recognition of legitimacy of parties
- Patronage
- Mass-based parties
- Party convention to nominate president

End of Second Party System

- Failure of compromises over slavery
  - Divides North and South and splits both major parties
- Number of third parties
  - Free Soil (anti-slavery)
  - American or Know-Nothing (anti-immigrant)
- Whig party disappears, Democrats transformed

Third Party System: 1856-1894

- Post Civil War party system
- Era of business expansion more than political leaders
- Current Republican versus Democrats, but different issues and constituencies

Republican Party

Lincoln Grant

- Combination of Whigs, northern Democrats, Free Soil, Know Nothing
- Control presidency with Civil War heroes
- Issues: industrial growth with high tariff laws, restrictions on labor, tight money policy, Homestead Act, land grants to railroads

Republican Presidents: Third Party System

A. B.

C. D.

- Rutherford B. Hayes (1877-1881)
- James A. Garfield (1881)
- Chester A. Arthur (1881-1885)
- Benjamin Harrison (1889-1893)

Democratic Party

- Party of the South
- Only won presidency once (Cleveland)
- More competitive in Congress
- Toward turn of century add urban immigrants, who were locked out of the Republican party

Grover Cleveland

Golden Age of American parties

- Strong party organization
- Strong leaders in Congress and state legislatures
- Loyal party supporters in electorate
- Rise of party machines in urban areas

Fourth party system: 1896-1930

- Failure to realign along class lines
- Economic strains in 1890s, urban & rural
- Populist movement
  - Use government to aid "little guy"
  - Silver standard
  - For income tax
  - 8 hour day for labor

William Jennings Bryan

"You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

Populist leader and 1896 Democratic presidential nominee

Republican Party

- Republican William McKinley won in 1896
- Reemerges as a much stronger party
- Control presidency 1896-1932, except for Wilson elected due to split in Republican party

President McKinley

Changing Competition

- One party control in many states
- Regional split in party constituencies
  - Conservative southern Democratic party
  - Republican party of business in the North
- Decline in voter turnout

Progressive Movement

- Middle class reform movement
- Clean up abuses of power in politics and business
- Registration laws
- Primaries
- Civil service rather than patronage
- Nonpartisan local elections & city managers

Fifth Party System: 1932 - 1960

- Great Depression
- Hoover blamed
- 1932 Democratic Franklin Delano Roosevelt won by "default"

New Deal Realignment

- Large Democratic majority allow dramatic new policies to be passed
- Benefits cement loyalties of new voters
  - recent immigrants from southern and Eastern Europe, Catholic or Jews, northern blacks, union members, poor
- Retained conservative southern Democrats

Fifth Party System: 1932 - 1960

- Democratic majority party but split between liberal North and conservative South factions
- Republicans minority
  - Only President Dwight Eisenhower in 1950s
  - Control Congress only twice

Changes in party structures

- Increasing decline in party machines
- Rise of politician more independent from party
- Media & technology
- Mixed presidential nomination system
- Multiple leadership positions in Congress

Sixth Party System: 1964 -

- Evenly matched parties
- Rise of independent voters & split-ticket voting
- Frequent divided government
- Frequent switch of presidential party
- Candidate-centered campaigns
- Presidential nominations through primaries

Changing Constituencies

- Exit of southern Democrats to southern Republican party
- Strengthening loyalties of African Americans to Democratic party
- Emergence of gender gap

Realignments

- Long-term (30 years) change in nature of parties
- Change in constituencies
- Change in issues
- Change in majority status
- Later years decay in alignment
  - new issues
  - conflicts between constituent groups