Party Systems

Party Systems Overview
- Number of political parties in country
- U.S. two-party system & reasons
- Third (minor) parties in U.S.

U.S. Two Party System
- Democratic Party
- Republican Party
- independent – NOT A PARTY
- Grammar lesson (proper v. common nouns)
  - democrat v. Democrat
  - republican v. Republican

Four Reasons for Two Parties in U.S.
- 1. Electoral system
- 2. Presidential system
- 3. Nature of public opinion
- 4. Continuity of existing system
Reason 1: Electoral System

- United States
  - single-member districts
  - plurality elections
- Most European democracies
  - multimember districts
  - proportional representation

Proportional Representation
One Four-Member District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of Vote</th>
<th>Number of Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: 21%</td>
<td>1 A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: 30%</td>
<td>1 B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: 49%</td>
<td>2 C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plurality Elections
Four Single-Member Districts

- District 1: Vote A, 1 for Party C
- District 2: Vote 1 for Party A
- District 3: Vote for C
- District 4: Vote for C

U.S. Electoral System

- With single-member district, plurality elections:
  - Small parties rarely win a seat
  - Could have 30% of vote nationwide and no seats in the legislature
  - Parties that don’t win seats disappear
Other Reasons for Two Parties

• 2. Presidential system versus parliament
• 3. Nature of public opinion
• 4. Continuity of existing system
  – Ballot access
  – Campaign finance
  – Media
  – Public

Benefits of Multi versus Two-Party System

• Representation?
• Stability of government?

Third Parties in America

• Any party other than 2 major parties
• Issue or ideological parties
  – smaller & long term
  – Green, Libertarian
• Factional or personality party
  – larger & short term

Current Third Parties

• Homework assignment