

# Government 30

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## Lecture 10

### Parties and the Electoral Landscape

March 8, 2006

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## Announcements

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First Paper Grades: returned today.

Average Grade: 2.7 on 0-4.0 scale, or B-minus.

Fear not; we grade upon improvement. Nobody got an "A."

But, improvement is necessary. Some suggestions.

Overall...consult your TFs, me

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## General Suggestions

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1. Many strayed from the *Federalist Papers* -- can't represent Hamilton's position on social K w/o referring to his *Federalist* essays.

Main point: these are not book reports.

2. Elaborate your logic -- why exactly does the national govt need to provide for defense?

3. Represent both sides of debate -- recognize merit in A-F position

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## General Suggestions

5. Use quotations as evidence. Don't just cite. Add a sentence explaining why the quotation supports your case.
6. Same principle w/ current events or contemporary examples. Need to state the relevance of these, explicitly.
7. Take opportunity to bring in other concepts from class (you'll get bonus for this). For example, defense and need for federal taxation. Good chance to bring in collective action logic.

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## Participation: Findings

- I. Over time, as *value* of leisure time ↑es (or as leisure gets scarce), participation ↓es.  
[E.g., as # of hours spent working, commuting ↑es, Part ↓es.]
- II. Across people, as leisure time increases (as value of leisure declines), participation ↑es.  
[E.g., the elderly.]
- III. Across people, as \$ ↑es, participation ↑es.  
[E.g., poor participate less.]

Source: Filer, Kenny and Morton, "Redistribution, Income, and Voting," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 63-87.

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## Parties and Participation

- Emphasize not just individual desire to turn out, show up ["supply side"], but...
- Are you asked, are you mobilized, are you contacted ["demand side"]?

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## What are Parties? Parties as Labels, Banners, ID

Recall role of informational shortcuts in making decisions.  
Parties serve as simple indicator of ideology, preferences, alliances, likely (voting) behavior once in office.  
Parties serve this role even though they do so “noisily,” i.e., with considerable error.  
  
Even in this sense, though, declining strength of party ID over the last century.

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## What are Parties? Parties as Organizations

- Connect voters to government – Republican politicians answer mainly to Republican voters, same with Dems
  - Discipline elected officials to keep in line w/ voters and in line w/ their own promises
  - Cohere officials to one another – party discipline in the U.S. Congress
  - Cohere citizens to one another – life of the Tammany district leader.
- Machine: a party organization that recruits its members w/ tangible incentives and is characterized by a high degree of control over member activity.

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## Plunkitt's Strategies

“To learn real human nature you have to go among the people, see them and be seen. I know every man, woman and child in the Fifteenth District, except them that's been born this summer – and I know some of them, too.”

Networks: local knowledge provides familiarity for incumbent. Easier in smaller electorates (think of Mass town meetings, state legislative districts).

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## Plunkitt's Strategies

"What tells in holdin' your grip on your district is to go right down among the poor families and help them in the different ways they need help. I've got a regular system for this. If there's a fire in Ninth, Tenth or Eleventh Avenue, for example, any hour of the day or the night, I'm usually there with some of my election district captains as soon as the fire engines. If a family is burned out I don't ask whether they are Republicans or Democrats, and I don't refer them to the Charity Organization Society, which would investigate their case in a month or two and decide they were worthy of help about the time they are dead of starvation. I just get quarters for them, buy clothes for them if their clothes were burned up, and fix them up until they get things runnin' again. It's philanthropy, but it's politics, too – mighty good politics.

...

If there's a family in my district I want to know it before the charitable societies do, and me and my men are first on the ground. I have a special corps to look up such cases. The consequence is that the poor look up to George W. Plunkitt as a father, come to him in trouble – and don't forget him on election day" (S & W, 211-212).

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## Life in the Machine

### *The Strenuous Life of the Tammany District Leader*

District leader provided everyday services

paid rent of poor family

bailed out locals

employed workers to watch for fires

***community-building***

Machines usually cross-ethnic, but not multi-racial

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## Life in the Machine

Power based upon networks, his centrality in the community

"Everybody in the district knows him. Everybody knows where to find him, and nearly everybody goes to him for assistance of one sort or another, especially the poor of the tenements." (176)

"By these means the Tammany district leader reaches out into the homes of his district, keeps watch not only on the men, but also on the women and children; knows their needs, their likes and dislikes, their troubles and hopes, and places himself in a position to use his knowledge for the benefit of his organization and himself. Is it any wonder that scandals do not permanently disable Tammany and that it speedily recovers from what seems to be crushing defeat?" (178)

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## A Brief History of American Political Parties

### A. Federalist Period: the rule of elites (1800-1829)

- parties = local notables
- prez electors chosen by st legs

### B. Jacksonian Period (1829-1860)

- "To the victors go the spoils."
- prez electors chosen by the people
- nominating system – CAUCUS

### C. Civil War Period & Gilded Age (1860-1896)

- sectional politics and tariff
- N/S alignment

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## A Brief History of American Political Parties

### D. Progressive/Reform Period (1896-1932)

- direct democracy (senators [17th Am], referenda, primaries)
- merit reform

### E. New Deal (1932 -- ?)

- Democratic dominance – N & S coalition
- benefits thru fed govt, not party
- Hatch Act ('39)

### F. NOW...Second Republican Era?? Unclear

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## Why Two Parties?

(a) HISTORY -- early two-party division remains

(b) ECONOMIC, GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS

(c) lack of ethnic, racial, religious parties

(d) INSTITUTIONS -- "DUVERGER'S LAW"

- Plurality rule v proportional representation
- Single-member districts
- Sincere v. strategic voting -- strategic voting can eliminate 3rd parties (e.g., Gore/Kerry urging Green voters to vote Democratic).

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## Decline of Parties (Why?)

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A. More multifaceted society -- fewer 2-issue divides to rent into one group or another.

B. Decline of machines, urban and rural networks

C. Decline of associationalism

D. Technology --

1. the professionalization of politics

2. the dominance of individualistic campaign strategies in elections

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