Chapter 10 – Elections
Part I

AP Government
The Paradox of Voting in America

Americans believe voting is important.

They see it as:
- a **civic duty**
- key to maintaining popular control of government
- the very essence of democracy
At the same time, Americans tend not to vote and voter turnout is low by historical standards.

- Between 70 and 75 percent of the voting-age population is registered to vote.
- About 50 percent vote in presidential elections.
American turnout - low compared to many of the world’s other democracies.

Voter turnout levels in other democracies, such as South Africa, Denmark, Israel, Germany, Mexico, Britain, Russia, France, and Canada, range from 15 to 35 percent higher than turnout in American presidential elections.

What is it about American culture, society, and politics that explains Americans’ comparative unwillingness to vote?
ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

The United States trails many democracies in the rate at which citizens vote. Are Americans simply more apathetic about politics, or do institutional features in the United States produce greater obstacles to participation?

NOTE: Average between 1945 and 2006.

SOURCE: International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance

FIGURE 10.1 Voter Turnout around the World, 1945–2006
Voting: A Cost-Benefit Analysis

- Some political scientists argue that it is not “rational” for Americans to vote because:
  - The “costs” of voting in America are comparatively high.
  - The “benefits” of voting in America are comparatively low.
There is a certain bureaucracy to American elections that increases the costs of voting.

- Voter registration rules often require voters to register well in advance of elections.
- Abstract interest in voting
- Many states have laws that “purge” nonvoters from the registration rolls.

Registration differs greatly among different social groups.
FIGURE 10.3 Differences in Voter Registration Rates by Social Group, 2004 (top)
While the costs of voting are high in America, many potential voters perceive the benefits of voting to be low.

Americans often believe that:

• one vote cannot make a difference
• it does not matter which party controls the government
Even fewer vote in off-year, special, and primary elections.

**Primary Elections** are elections used by political parties to select their candidates for general elections; these can be either open or closed.

**Open primaries** are those in which the voter can wait until the day of the primary to choose which party to enroll in.

**Closed primaries** are those in which voters must choose which party to enroll in prior to the day of the primary.
Gerrymandering
Majority and plurality electoral systems tend to accentuate the importance of geographic district boundaries.

**Redistricting** refers to the process of drawing election districts.

When redistricting is viewed as an unfair process designed to give an unfair advantage to a particular group, candidate, or party, it is often called *gerrymandering*. 
Electoral Districts

• American politicians have usually sought to influence electoral outcomes by manipulating the organization of electoral districts.

• Gerrymandering – apportionment of voters in districts in such a way as to give unfair advantage to one political party.
FIGURE 10.4 Congressional Redistricting (top)

Decennial Census

Census bureau applies mathematical formula called “method of equal proportions” to determine the number of congressional seats to which each state is now entitled. Some states gain seats; some states lose seats; others remain unchanged.

Party strategists examine census findings, seat gains and losses, and voting data to try to develop state-by-state districting formulas that will help their party. Strategists also examine election laws and recent court decisions.

National parties invest money and other resources in state legislative races to try to exert maximum influence over reapportionment process.

Party strategists brief state legislators on possible districting schemes.

Members of Congress lobby state legislators for favorable treatment.

State legislatures and legislative commissions hold hearings to develop rules and procedures for redistricting.
FIGURE 10.4 Congressional Redistricting (bottom)

New district boundaries are drawn.

Bill voted in state legislature—sent to governor.

Governor accepts or vetoes.

Losers appeal to state and federal courts, who make final decision.

Parties begin planning for next round.
Electoral Districts

- **Racial Gerrymandering** – Redrawing congressional boundary lines in such a way as to divide and disperse a black population that otherwise would have constituted a majority within the original district.
• Shown above in orange is district 25, called the “Fajita strip” (it is 70 percent Hispanic), and it is intended as a Democratic district, while the other two districts (10 and 21) are intended to elect Republicans.
Racial Gerrymandering

- **Shaw v Reno** – White challenge to racial gerrymandering.
- NC district predominately minority.
- Court ruled in a 5-4 decision that redistricting based on race must be held to a standard of **strict scrutiny** under the equal protection clause.
- However, bodies doing redistricting must be conscious of race to the extent that they must ensure compliance with the **Voting Rights Act**.
Mostly Black District
Benign Gerrymandering

- Federal law has encouraged this to increase minority representation in Congress.
- **Miller v Johnson** – Challenged benign gerrymandering and asserted that the use of race as a predominant factor was unconstitutional. Brought to court by white voters in the Eleventh Congressional District of the state of Georgia.
  - Created to make a district where an African-American would have a high chance of being elected.
  - The Court ruled against the district, declaring it to be a "geographic monstrosity."
  - It was declared unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.
11th District of Georgia
The Electoral Impact of Congressional Redistricting

The method by which electoral districts are drawn may directly impact who gets elected from those districts. Recent decades have witnessed more states utilizing independent commissions or panels to redraw congressional districts in an attempt to limit partisanship in the districting process, but the majority of states still rely on state legislatures to reapportion House seats. At the same time, technological innovations such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software allow mapmakers to be extremely precise in terms of how individual voters are allocated among districts. As a result, congressional redistricting has become a focal point for party strategy.

Consider a hypothetical state where Republicans represent 60% of voters and Democrats represent the remaining 40% of voters. As a result of population changes during the preceding decade, this state now has five congressional districts. Assuming members of the state legislature want to create congressional districts with approximately the same number of people, there are several ways to draw district boundaries.

For instance, a state legislature controlled by a Republican majority could draw congressional districts so that Republican voters clearly dominate three of the five districts and Democratic voters dominate the remaining two. In this scenario, the Republicans could expect their candidates to win three of the five House districts.

Another possibility might arise if the Republican state legislature decides to make the districts slightly more competitive, but also attempts to gain control of all five House districts in the upcoming election.

Suppose that the Democrats are in control of the state legislature. With the same distribution of voters in the state, they could draw the districts to favor Democrats as much as possible (with Democratic voters dominating three of the districts).

By contrast, a non-partisan independent commission or panel may draw more-competitive districts, with a more even distribution of Republican and Democratic voters. A real-world example from Iowa (which employs an independent commission) shows district boundaries before and after the 2002 redistricting cycle.

Note how the district boundaries changed in an effort to promote greater levels of competition throughout the state. This is reflected by the incumbent vote share in the subsequent election. The more-competitive districts created after 2002 meant that incumbents could be challenged more easily, and as a result, Iowa incumbents received a smaller share of votes in the 2004 elections.

**THE OUTCOME**

Incumbent vote share, 2000 House races in Iowa: 62.4%
Incumbent vote share, 2004 House races in Iowa: 56%
Elections
Elections

• Fully democratic elections are occasions in which multiple principals (people, electorate) choose political agents (politicians).

• Two problems
  – Adverse selection
    • Hidden information. Hide or shroud information in ambiguity.
  – Moral Hazard
    • Hidden action – once elected, cannot easily monitor them.
  – Solution For Both  – Openness, transparency, public scrutiny and publicity – Affects re-election
Electoral Composition

- Oldest way to manipulate elections
  - Polls Taxes
  - Literacy Tests
  - Placing polls and scheduling hours to depress voter participation
  - Registration – significant decline in voter turnout with adoption of laws requiring eligible citizens to do this.
Electoral Participation

- Does all of the following
  - Democratic elections socialize political activity
  - Elections bolster the government’s power and authority
  - Elections institutionalize mass influence in politics.
Partisan Ties

- Majority of Americans identify themselves as either Democrats or Republicans.
Turnout Ratio

- Comparing # of voters to a baseline number.
- Denominator of ratio
  - Those 18 and older in U.S.
  - Includes noncitizens, felons, excludes overseas voters
- 19th Amendment – Women right to vote
- 26th Amendment – Lower age to 18
Corruption in Voting

- Progressive reformers
  - Type of politics practiced in large cities where political parties had organized immigrant and ethnic populations (Political Machine).

- Voter turnout declined between 1890 and 1910 due to voter registration requirement.
Other Reasons for Low Voter Turnout

- Little education, Low Income
- Weakness of Party System
- Correction - “Motor Voter” Law
  - Easier to register.
Voter turnout for American presidential elections was significantly higher in the nineteenth century than in the twentieth. What institutional change caused the sharp decline in turnout between 1890 and 1910? Why did this change have such a dramatic effect? Did it have any positive outcomes?

**FIGURE 10.2 Voter Turnout in Presidential Elections**


*NOTE:* Data reflect the population of eligible voters, the percentage of the voting-age population that voted would be smaller.
Higher the stakes in an election, more likely voters will be to see the benefits of participation.

Voter turnout levels vary based on the importance of the offices up for selection, including the presidency.
Turnout is the highest for presidential elections, which are held every four years, when about 50 percent of the voting age population votes.
Midterm elections

Congressional and gubernatorial elections are held in the even-numbered years that do not coincide with presidential elections.

Without the presidency at stake, voter participation tends to be lower.

33 percent of the voting age population votes in midterm elections.
The means by which elections are conducted, votes are counted, and winners are determined play key roles in elections.

**Majority systems**, candidates must receive a majority (50 percent plus one) of the votes in a district in order to win a seat.

**Plurality systems**, most elections in the United States - candidates need only receive the most votes in an election, regardless of whether it constitutes a majority.

**Proportional representation** systems in which multiple seats are awarded for a particular geographic area, and each party receives a percentage of those seats proportional to the percentage of votes it received.
Majority and plurality electoral systems tend to reduce the number of parties in a political system.

Proportional representation electoral systems tend to increase the number of competitive political parties.
Structural features of the American electoral system that undermine the impact of individual votes.

• America’s **single-member plurality (SMP)** electoral system –
  – Dilute the impact of individual votes in specific geographic areas, particularly when compared to **proportional representation (PR)** electoral systems.

• The **electoral college** system of selecting the president also decreases the potential impact of individual votes on electoral outcomes.
Electoral College
Constitution

- The framers of the Constitution intended that the only elected officials at the national level to be subject to direct popular selection would be Congressional Representatives.
  - Senators – Selected by the state legislators
  - President – Electoral College
Electoral College

- Slate that wins casts all the states electoral votes for its party’s candidate in each state except for Maine and Nebraska.
Electoral Votes

- Each state is entitled to a number of electoral votes equal to the number of a state’s senators and congressional representatives.
- Total – 538 (50 plus District of Columbia)
Electors

• Electors proceed to the state’s capital to formally cast their ballots on the Monday after the second Wednesday of December.
• Results sent to Washington to be tallied.
President

• If no presidential candidate receives a majority of all electoral votes, the names of the top three candidates would be submitted to the House of Representatives.

• Elections of 1800 and 1824
  – 1800 - Adams, Jefferson, Burr
  – 1824 – “Corrupt Bargain” – Jackson, Adams, Clay
Australian Ballot

• An electoral format prepared and administered by the state rather than political parties,
  – Presents the names of all candidates for any given office on the same ballot in order to ensure the secrecy of voting, is called the Australian ballot.

• Allows Ticket Splitting
  – Vote for different candidates from different parties. Leads to Divided Government.
Voter Turnout

- Throughout American history, major political parties were the principal agents responsible for giving citizens the motivation and incentive to vote.
- Chicago precinct activities in the 1920’s and 30’s
  - Provided food, fuel, jobs, etc.
- As party power diminished, so has voter turnout.
End of Slide Show

- Hooray – Now, on to part II
Strict scrutiny

- The most stringent standard of judicial review used by United States courts. It is part of the hierarchy of standards that courts use to weigh the government's interest against a constitutional right or principle.
Voting Rights Act of 1965

- Landmark piece of national legislation in the United States that outlawed discriminatory voting practices that had been responsible for the widespread disenfranchisement of African Americans in the U.S.
Chapter 10 – Elections
Part II

AP Government
Referendum

- A vote on final approval of a legislative act that is referred to the electorate.
- Limits on tax rates, block state and local spending proposals, prohibit social services for illegal immigrants.
Recall

- Allows voters to remove governors and other state officials from office before the expiration of their term.
- Begins with a petition.
- 2003 – Congressman Darrell Issa was successful. Special recall election in California was used to remove Gray Davis from office and elect Arnold Schwarzenegger.
How Voters Decide

Voters balance a mix of cues and information including:

- partisan loyalty
- issues
- candidate characteristics
Television and other forms of media have made candidate characteristics and issue appeals more salient in voter decision-making.

Many voters partisanship remains preeminent.
FIGURE 10.5 The Effect of Party Identification on the Vote for President, 2004
Voters who make their decisions on the basis of issues may vote **prospectively** by estimating how a candidate might perform in the future or they may vote **retrospectively**, judging candidates and parties based on their past performance.

Often, such retrospective evaluations are based on economic performance.
Increasingly in the media age of American elections, candidate characteristics such as “decisiveness,” “honesty,” and “vigor” affect individual voters’ choices.
Issue Voting

- Issue voting encourages candidate convergence.
- Median Voter Theorem - Predicts policy moderation on the part of candidates
- Competition between two candidates has the effect of pushing candidates’ issues toward the middle of the distribution of voters’ preferences.
FIGURE 10.6 The Median-Voter Theorem
Median-Voter Theorem

- All candidates head for the center of the distribution of voters' ideal policies and thus, toward one another.
- George Wallace claimed “there ain’t a dime’s worth of difference” between candidates.
Campaign Finance
Money and Politics

As contemporary election campaigns have come to depend more on media, polls, and other “capital intensive” means of reaching voters, candidates and their campaigns increasingly rely on donors.
Campaign Finance

- Federal Election Commission
- Average winning candidate for a seat in the House of Representatives will spend
  - $500,000 to $1 million
- Average winning candidate for a seat in the Senate will spend
  - $5 million
**Individual donors** contribute largely based on issues and ideology, whereas professional givers like **political action committees** often donate money to campaigns to advance their cause and gain access to political officeholders.

- Maximum individual donors - $2,000
- Maximum for a PAC - $5,000

In recent years, campaign finance reforms have sought to reduce the impact of money and fundraising on political campaigns.
**Buckley v Valeo**

- Constitutional guarantee that candidates can spend an unlimited amount of their own money on their campaign.
- Jon Corzine - $60 million to win New Jersey Senate seat – won in 2000
- Michael Huffington - $28 million to win a California Senate seat – lost in 1994
Issue Advocacy

- Independent spending by individuals or interest groups that supports a campaign issue but is not directly tied to a particular candidate.
- NRA - $3 million in 2000 – Remind people of right to bear arms
- Most issue ads are attacks on opposing candidates record or character.
Public Funding

- Major party candidates can receive a lump sum during the summer before the general election – currently $90 million
- May not accept other campaign contributions.
- 2000 – George W. Bush spent $200 million
Third Party Candidates

- Eligible for public funding if they received at least 5% of the vote in the previous presidential election.
- Don’t receive the money until after the election
- 1980 – John Anderson – loans against the prospect of gaining 5% of vote
Campaign Finance Reform

- U.S. only major industrial country to allow large donations to individuals.
- Public funds or in Great Britain, large donations to political parties only.
- Attempts at reform

The 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) sought to reduce the amount of soft-money contributions to political parties.
Still, critics charge that BCRA led to an increase in the influence of independent 527 committees, which funnel large amounts of soft money into elections through issue advocacy ads but are less accountable than political parties.
Donations

- In 2000, President Bush received donations totaling $26 million from banking interests and especially MBNA.
- Once in office, new legislation that tightened bankruptcy laws and made it harder for consumers to escape credit card debts.
Voter Mobilization

- Recently, voter mobilization has been the burden of federal and state governments, political action committees, 527 committees, and individual candidates organizations.

- Motor Voter Bill – 1993
  - No great increase in new voters.
  - More liberalized absentee voting is working
  - Same day registration currently in several states.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>may contribute . . .</th>
<th>to . . .</th>
<th>if . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>up to $2,000 (“hard money”)</td>
<td>a candidate</td>
<td>they are contributing to a single candidate in a single election.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>up to $25,000</td>
<td>a national party committee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>up to $5,000</td>
<td>a PAC.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACs</td>
<td>up to $5,000</td>
<td>a candidate</td>
<td>they contribute to the campaigns of at least five candidates.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 10.1 Federal Campaign Finance Regulation**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals and PACs</th>
<th>unlimited funds</th>
<th>a 527 committee</th>
<th>the funds are used for issue advocacy and the 527 committee’s efforts are not coordinated with any political campaign.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals and PACs</td>
<td>up to $10,000 (“soft money”)</td>
<td>a state party committee</td>
<td>the money is used for voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Rules for Campaign Advertising**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>may not finance . . .</th>
<th>if . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unions, corporations, and nonprofit organizations</td>
<td>broadcast issue ads mentioning federal candidates</td>
<td>they occur within sixty days of a general election or thirty days of a primary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### The Rules for Presidential Primaries and Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates . . .</th>
<th>may receive . . .</th>
<th>if . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In primaries</td>
<td>federal matching funds, dollar for dollar, up to $5 million</td>
<td>they raise at least $5,000 in each of twenty states in contributions of $250 or less.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general elections</td>
<td>full federal funding (but may spend no more than their federal funding)</td>
<td>they belong to a major party (minor-party candidates may receive partial funding).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In any election</td>
<td>money from independent groups (PACs and 527 committees)</td>
<td>the groups’ efforts are not tied directly to the official campaign.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 10.1 Federal Campaign Finance Regulation**
Important Definitions for Campaign Finance Regulation

- **Political action committee (PAC):** Private group that raises and distributes funds for use in election campaigns.

- **527 committee:** Tax-exempt organization that engages in political activities, often through unlimited “soft-money” contributions. The committee is not restricted by current law on campaign finance, thus exploiting a loophole in the Internal Revenue Service code.

- **Soft money:** Unregulated contributions to the national political parties, nominally to assist in party-building or voter registration efforts rather than for particular campaigns.

- **Hard money:** Contributions by individuals and PACs to a particular political campaign. These contributions are subject to federal regulation.

- **Federal matching funds:** Federal funds that match, dollar for dollar, all individual contributions of $250 or less received by a candidate. To qualify, the candidate must raise at least $5,000 in individual contributions of $250 or less in each of twenty states.

- **Federal Election Commission:** The commission that oversees campaign finance practices in the United States.
2004 Presidential Election
The 2004 Elections

George W. Bush - Republican
John Kerry – Democrat -“flip flopper” or inconsistent.

To get reelected in 2004, President Bush’s political strategists believed the following ingredients would combine to solidify his political strength

- an expansive economic policy
- money from fund raising.
- the war on terrorism.
Election Strategy

- As part of its strategy during the 2004 general election, the Republican Party launched a series of ballot initiatives on such "hot button" issues as
  - same-sex marriage
  - abortion
2004 Election

- John Kerry won support from
  - Union members
  - Jewish voters
  - African Americans
  - Women

- George Bush won support from
  - White males
  - Upper-income wage earners
  - Southerners.
Latinos

- 2004 – Supported Kerry 59% to 40%
- 2006 – Supported Democratic congressional candidates 72% to 27%
FIGURE 10.8 Distribution of Electoral Votes in the 2004 Presidential Election

For Bush-Cheney (R): Total = 286
For Kerry-Edward (D): Total = 252
The Consumer Confidence Index before an election*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Index</th>
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<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>142.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>112.0</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>111.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>142.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>92.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Election Results

- Nixon (R) defeated Humphrey (D).
- Nixon (R) reelected over McGovern (D).
- Carter (D) defeated Ford (R).
- Reagan (R) defeated Carter (D).
- Reagan (R) reelected over Mondale (D).
- G.H.W. Bush (R) defeated Dukakis (D).
- Clinton (D) defeated G.H.W. Bush (R).
- Clinton (D) reelected over Dole (R).
- G.W. Bush (R) defeated Gore (D).†
- G.W. Bush (R) reelected over Kerry (D).

SOURCE: Bloomberg Markets.

NOTE: The candidate representing the incumbent party appears in red.

*Survey was bimonthly before 1977, so figures for 1968, 1972, and 1976 are for October; from 1980 on, they are for September.

†Gore won the popular vote, but Bush was elected by the Electoral College.

FIGURE 10.7 Consumer Confidence and Presidential Elections