Political Parties in America: Our Two-Party System
Beginnings of Our Two-Party System

- Emerge from Washington’s Presidency
- Democratic-Republicans (Jefferson)
- Federalists (Hamilton)
Democratic-Republicans

- AKA – The Jeffersonian Republicans
- Limited federal government
- Strict interpretation of the Constitution
- Pro-French Revolution
- Identified more with common people, especially farmers
- Agriculture as the backbone of America
Federalists

• Strong central gov’t
• Loose interpretation of the Constitution
• Pro-British – rebuild our ties with them (trade)
• Wanted a government run by the ruling class
• Did not trust ordinary citizens to govern
• Gov’t of the elite
• See business and industry as the backbone of America
War of 1812

- Democratic-Republicans = pro-war (war hawks)
- Primarily had support in the South & West
- Federalists are against the War
- Fearful that it will harm their shipping based economy
- Strongest support in the Northeast
- By the end of the War, the Federalist Party disappears
Realignment of the Political Parties

Realignment after the War of 1812:

Federalist Party
- Had opposed the War (New England states)
- Hartford Convention = Talked about leaving the Union
- After the War, the Federalists crumble
- Eventually, replaced by the Whig Party (formed to oppose Jackson)
- Strong support by Northerners & wealthy business types

Democratic-Republicans
- Strongly support the War & Madison (Western & Southern states)
- Remain the only party for a while
- Factions within the party lead to it crumbling (regional differences)
- Eventually, replaced by the Democrats (Jackson)
- Strong support in the South & West; by farmers & explorers
Birth of the Democratic Party

- Roots trace back to Jefferson and Jackson
- Pro-slavery; southern economy
- Strong in the South
- Dominates southern politics until the 1950s and 1960s
Birth of the Republican Party

• Republican Party – formed in 1854 (Lincoln & his followers)
• Anti-slavery
• Strong primarily in the North
Historic Changes

• Modern Republican Party (Harding & Coolidge)
  • Limited gov’t (laissez faire economics)

• Modern Democratic Party – FDR
  • Strong government activism
  • New Deal Programs – Completely changes the role of government in the economy
Civil Rights

• Regional differences
• Kennedy & LBJ (Democrats) – push for strong civil rights legislation
• Many Southern Democrats become Republicans
• Nixon (Republican) – Southern Strategy; appear sympathetic to the old segregated South
Political Parties Today

• More polarized than ever
• Deep divisions in American Society = Urban vs. Rural split
• Less Party Identification
• More people consider themselves independents
• Reality = people are more partisan than they want to admit
Functions of Political Parties

1. Recruit candidates and run campaigns (nominations; open vs. closed primaries)
2. Give cues to voters (taps into their party image)
4. Coordinate Policymaking – Congress is organized based upon political party affiliation
Minor Parties

• Green Party
• Libertarian Party
• Socialist Party of America
• Communist Party of America
• Veterans Party
• The Constitution Party
• Typically, they start because of some issue