

The 2 party system

The Big Idea

The United States' two-party system is a result of history; several factors have helped maintain it over time.

Why we have a 2 party system

History

two parties arose during
ratification

Tradition

it's the way it has always
been

Consensus

Americans generally agree
on key matters

Elections

election laws discourage
minor parties

Two-Party System

- Republicans and Democrats
 - they are the major presence in all elections
 - because they are the TWO-PARTIES
- But there are also minor parties
 - it is hard for them to gain any power because of the system
- Election laws are written to favor to the two major parties
 - how to get on the ballot
 - not on the ballot you probably are not going to be elected

The Good

- Two-party system limit the choices of candidates
 - keeps the process from being too complicated or a “free-for-all”
- Defined platforms and clearly defined opposition helps voters align themselves with a candidate
- easy for people to identify with a candidate and get involved with the process.

Are there any bad? (discuss)

Elections

- our electoral system promotes a two-party system
 - Winner-takes-all
 - the candidate with the most votes is the winner.
 - aka Plurality System
 - easily understood and cost effective
 - one of the 2 candidates will get the more votes.
- Doesn't work as well when there are more than 2 candidates
 - what if they winner only gets 25% of the votes.
 - that isn't really winning the most votes

Multiparty system

- Where many parties both major and minor are able to seriously compete for elections
- this is set up for most European Countries today
- most of the parties are based on a particular interest
 - often a more diverse representation of the electorate

Problems with Multiparty

- It is difficult for one party to get the majority of the votes in order to take control
 - this is a majority system not plurality
 - the winner must get more votes than all others combined
 - so they have to form a coalition
 - power is shared among groups
 - a temporary alliance of several groups to form a majority
- it can cause instability

One-Party System

- dictatorship
- No-Party system
- only works if you are the party in power
 - not great for everyone else