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Political Parties

Read and précis Chapter 3 of 'US Government and Politics' by A J Bennett before the lecture.

- Other resources: 'American Politics and Society' David McKay, 'A2 US and Comparative Government and Politics - Question and Answer guide' Paul Fairclough.

You should know by now.....

- Turn off your mobile
- Do not chat whilst others are talking
- Raise your hand if you have a question
- Supplement your PowerPoint PDF notes.

The two party system

- The two main parties, Democrats and Republicans, dominate political life in the USA.
- At the same time the size of the USA makes national political parties weaker than in the UK. They are very much state based organisations.

Ideologies and traditions of the parties

- Republicans.....
- Can you name some Republican presidents?
- Were originally 'The Federalists' at the 1787 Philadelphia Convention.
- Were the pro-Union party under Abraham Lincoln during the civil war.
- Strong supporters of 'rugged individualism' in first half of 20th century.

Ideologies and traditions of the parties

- Nixon gained victory in 1968 and 1972 speaking for what he claimed was the 'silent majority': patriotic and conservative voters.
- Republican programme under Reagan and Bush I and II: low taxes, smaller role for federal government, conservative Christian moral values and an interventionist foreign policy

Ideologies and traditions of the parties

- Democrats.....
- Can you name some Democratic presidents?
- Were the 'anti-Federalists' at the 1787 Philadelphia convention.
- Originally the party of choice for Southern landowners and poor southern whites during the Civil War.
- 1930s championed New Deal.
- By the 1960s had come to represent the federal drive for more racial/social equality and criticism of the Vietnam war.
- Through 1980s and 1990s: came to adopt many of the positions of the Republicans but remained popular among women and ethnic minorities.

Ideologies and traditions of the parties

- Using figure 3.1 create a timeline which charts the developments of the two main parties, including the different policies and ideas promoted by each President.

Group research and presentation.....

- Historic Democratic and Republican views on...
- Group 1: The form of government and democracy.
- Group 2: Slavery
- Group 3: The economy
- Group 4: Civil rights
- Group 5: The role of the federal government.
- What about modern areas? i.e. foreign policy

Major parties and ideology.....

- Is 'democracy' and 'republicanism' as ideological as Socialism or Fascism?
- Democrats and Republicans have different views depending on region and/or weather they take a 'liberal' or 'conservative' approach.
- Even the term 'conservative' can mean different things i.e. George Bush's 'compassionate conservatism'
- Read and discuss 'Democrat chameleons target bible belt', *The Guardian*

Major parties and ideology.....

- Both major parties have experienced internal ideological debates over the past two decades.
- The 'old Democrats' (liberals from the North) were seen as election losers.
- Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) was created to pull the party back to the 'centre ground'.

Major parties and ideology

- Similar debates have happened within the Republican party.
- This debate has been between the 'conservative' and 'moderate' wings of the party.
- Goldwater vs Rockefeller
- Ford vs Reagan
- Bush II included both 'conservatives' (Rumsfeld) and 'moderates' (Powell) in his administration.

Liberal V conservative

- Can we determine the choice of parties by individuals by describing them as 'Liberals' or 'conservatives'?
- With whom do we associate these terms?
- What do they tend to believe in?

The parties and ideology.....

- Imagine you are the following people – who would you vote for? Explain your reasons.
- A disabled person reliant on Medicare.
- The chief executive of a large corporation in a competitive market.
- A gay man wishing to marry his male partner.
- A shareholder of a US arms company
- The manager of an abortion clinic.
- A member of the National Rifle Association.

Different views on party ideology...

- Both parties are 'broad churches'
- "Some politicians are Republican, some Democratic and their feud is dramatic, but except for the name they are identically the same" (Ogden Nash)
- "The break up of the 'solid south' may have led to the two major parties becoming more ideologically distinct" (Bennett)

Major parties and ideology.....

- Read and discuss....
- 'Running against the big shots', *Time* magazine
- 'The Torture battle royal', *The Guardian*
- 'Lieberman loses Senate candidacy to anti-war rival', *The Guardian*
- 'Congress expects first socialist', *The Guardian*
- Think back to Ogden Nash's view. Do you agree with him?

The polarisation of American Politics

- The swapping of the south?
- The 50-50 nation?
- A shade of purple?
- Nowadays, conservative Democrats are becoming increasingly rare, as are moderate Republicans

5 causes for decreasing moderates

- 1. **Reagan.** (An idealist rather than a centrist)
- 2. **The end of the Cold war.** No continuing need for consensus.
- 3. **Clinton.** Impeachment/ Health
- 4. **George W Bush.** Stance on Iraq.
- 5. **Technology.** Causing a shrinking state, removing borders to communication.

Role play.....

- Form five groups:
- Group 1: 'old' Democrats
- Group 2: 'conservative' Republicans
- Group 3: 'New' Democrats
- Group 4: 'moderate' Republicans
- Group 5: The US electorate (see table 3.5)
- A Presidential election is coming up. In your groups you must choose which three of the following policies you will campaign on. The electorate must decide which policies to support.

Policy areas....

- Tax cuts
- Increased social welfare spending
- A 'get tough' attitude to criminals
- Opposition to the Death Penalty
- Stricter gun control
- Opposing abortion
- Pulling out of Iraq
- Reducing role of federal government
- Support for gay/lesbian marriage
- Supporting prayer in public (i.e state) schools

Role play.....

- The two groups from each party must now try to come to an agreement on the policies they will campaign on.
- Representatives from each party present their agreed campaign policies and bid for the votes of the electorate.

Party organisation.....

- Produce a flow chart showing the different levels of organisation in the Democratic and Republican parties.
- One student to show their chart to the class.

The two party system

- How do we define a 'two party system'?
- In all the presidential elections between 1968 and 2008, Democrats and Republicans accounted for more than 80% of the vote.
- What is the situation in Congress?
- All 50 state governors are Democrat or Republican.
- Every President since 1853 has been either a Democrat or Republican.

Break into groups.....

- Each group to research and explain to the class one of the following theories on US two party dominance:
- 1. Effect of the electoral system
- 2. Democrat/Republican ideology
- 3. Effect of primary elections
- 4. The 'one party' system idea
- 5. The 'fifty party' system idea

Third party difficulties.....

- Some third parties in the USA....
- The Reform Party
- The Libertarian Party
- The Green Party
- The Socialist Party
- American Independence Party
- States Rights Party

Third party difficulties....

- There is no US equivalent of the Liberal Democrats i.e. a third party which wins a significant number of seats in the legislature at each election.

Third party difficulties

- In pairs prioritise the following factors in terms of their importance in explaining third party difficulties in the US (give reasons):
- The electoral system
- State funding of parties
- Ballot access laws
- Media coverage
- Lack of well known/qualified candidates
- The American people (i.e. too moderate)
- The 'broad churches' of the main parties

Third party difficulties.....

- In those same pairs analyse the implications of this lack of a third party for:
- Democracy in the USA
- Representation in the USA
- Accountability in the USA
- Now share your ideas with another pair.

Exam question.....

- 'To what extent is it true that third parties are doomed to failure?'
- Plan an answer to this question individually. Using theories of party decline and renewal.
- Then pair up and share your ideas
- We will then go through the question as a class
