

APG: Unit III: Political Participation

Chapter 8: Political Parties

1. Survey
2. Read chapter and do “New to you” vocab (5-15 words you are unfamiliar with that are not strictly “government” terms).
3. Take notes on the chapter that thoroughly answer the study guide questions. Be organized and make them “studyable”.

DUE: 3/22

At the most basic level, a political party is a group of office holders, candidates, activists, and voters who identify with a group label and seek to elect to public office individuals who run under that label. This is a practical definition in keeping with the practical nature of American politics. Our parties tend not to be as ideological as parties in other countries. Ours is a centrist party system.

Our system contains two major parties: the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. Parties create platforms on which to run. Basically, a party’s platform states its main issue positions and ideology. There is often a debate about how important platforms actually are to people and the parties to which they belong. In the 2016 presidential race, they seemed to accurately characterize the positions of the presidential candidates and the national party

We also have a number of minor or third parties at any given time. Among the more important third parties today are the Reform Party and the Libertarian Party.

Parties are made up of three types of “members”—

- governmental party: the office holders and candidates
- organizational party: workers and activists
- party-in-the-electorate: those who vote for the party or consider themselves to be allied or associated with it.

Governmental Terms and Concepts to know - Who, What, Where, When, Why, and So What?

1. Political Party
2. Linkage Institution
3. Rational Choice Theory
4. Party Image
5. Party Identification
6. Ticket Splitting
7. Party Machine
8. Patronage
9. Closed Primaries
10. Open Primaries
11. National Convention
12. Coalition
13. Party Eras
14. Critical Election
15. Party Realignment
16. Party Dealignment
17. Third Parties
18. Winner-take-all system

Study Questions:

1. Explain the five tasks political parties should perform if there are to serve as effective linkage institutions.
2. Identify the most prominent trend in party identification in recent years.
3. List four elections which might be considered “critical” or “realigning” and explain why.
4. Explain two ways in which third parties can have an impact on American politics.
5. Explain the key problem of the American political parties today.