

US Institutions: Political Parties and Presidential Elections

The United States has the purest two-party system of any large liberal democracy in the world. The system has undergone a number of significant changes during the history of the Republic, but the parties have remained the glue binding together a governmental system divided both vertically (as a result of federalism) and horizontally (as a result of the separation of powers). The course will trace the development of the party system, examine how and why the US party system is different from many European party systems, and show the significance of these differences.

Although the names ‘Republican’ and ‘Democratic’ have remained unaltered since the Civil War, neither the party system they dominated nor the electoral coalitions that support them has been static. Their electoral bases and political purposes have often altered suddenly: the introduction of a major new issue or crisis has caused new cleavages to emerge in the electorate, thereby precipitating partisan realignments. The presidential campaign of 2020 will constitute a laboratory for an analysis of the new hot issues in American politics and its relation to the electorate.

There are three books that will nourish our research:

1. Nigel Bowles & Robert K. McMahon, *Government and Politics of the United States* (3rd edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
2. *US Constitution: Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights, and Amendments, Founding Fathers* (Publisher: Independently published, 16 May 2020).
3. David McKay, *American Politics and Society* (9th edition. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2017).