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political parties
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We The People – Unit 3
James Madison University, July 2005

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Anti-Fed ideas
- B. 11 of Right

Culminating Hearing Question: How did political parties arise in American politics?

- What were the objections of the Federalists to political parties? What relevance, if any, do these objections have today?
- What advantages and disadvantages do political parties have in a democratic system of government?

I. Reading Madison's *Federalist 10* closely B key questions:

- What does Madison mean when he uses the word "faction"?
- What, according to Madison, is the problem posed by "factions"? Which "factions" are most dangerous?
- What, according to Madison, are the ways to grapple with the problem of faction?
- Why, according to Madison, is an "extensive republic" a good solution to the problem?

CONTEXT: Why did Madison write *Federalist 10*? What or whose concerns was he seeking to address? Who might have disagreed with his definition of "faction," his diagnosis of faction as a "problem," and his "cure"—and on what grounds?

II. "Factions" and "political parties": are they the same thing? According to whom?

A. What is a "political party"? Here's one definition:

From William N. Chambers, "Party Development and the American Mainstream," in The American Party Systems: Stages of Political Development, ed. William Nisbet Chambers and Walter Dean Burnham (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 5-6:

"Stated broadly, a political party in the modern sense may be thought of as a relatively durable social formation which seeks offices or power in government, exhibits a structure or organization which links leaders at the centers of government to a significant popular following in the political arena and its local enclaves, and generates in-group perspectives or at least symbols of identification or loyalty. Y

"American parties have also appeared as units within party systems, with a competitive two-party system as the norm. Indeed, Y individual political parties cannot be fully understood except in terms of their place in a going party system. Most briefly, a competitive party system may be thought of as a pattern of interaction in which two or more political parties compete for office or power in government and for the support of the electorate, and must therefore take one another into account in their behavior in government and in election contests. This pattern of interaction, as compared with the fluidity of faction politics, is marked by durability and thus by relative predictability of consequences in both institutions and behavior. Such properties provide convenience for both political elites and the political public. A competitive two-party system may be defined as a system in which only two of the parties in the political arena generally have a significant chance of winning a preponderance of government offices and power."

B. Based on this definition, to what extent does Madison's definition of "faction" describe what political scientist Chambers describes as a "political party"?

1794 / 1795 FRENCH REVOLUTION

Jefferson / Hamilton!

WHO TO SIDE WITH - FRENCH vs. BRITISH

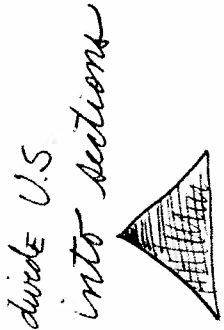
Make connections between people + PARTIES

- C. Based on this definition, how does Madison's distinction—of "factions" vs. "the public good"—resemble and/or differ from Chambers's description of a "party system"?

Federalists - III. Political parties and party systems in the U.S., 1790s-1840

1787

- A. The "first party system": Federalists vs. Republicans, beginning mid-1790s
 1. How did these "parties" come into existence (relation to events of the 1790s, role of newspapers, etc.)?
 2. Why it's hard to call this a "party system": neither "party" admitted the legitimacy of the other—each considered the other a "faction."



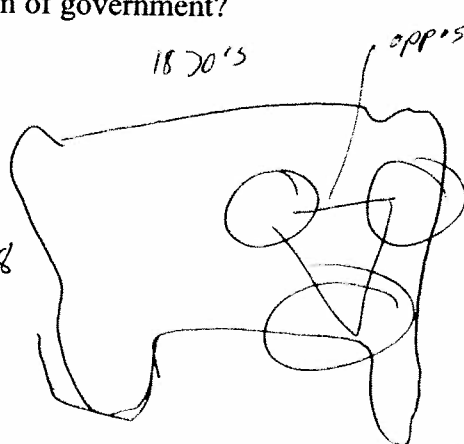
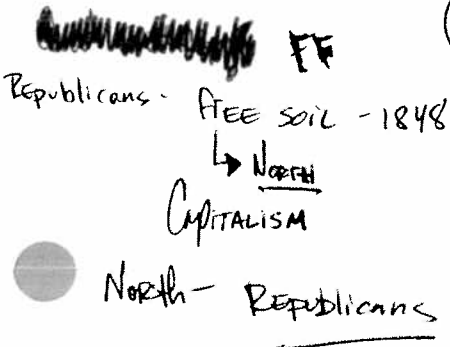
- B. The rise of the "second party system": Jacksonians and then Whigs, 1820s-30s
 1. Monroe's quest for unanimity, c. 1820
 2. The re-emergent problem of sectional division (Missouri Compromise)
 3. Martin Van Buren's idea of how to solve it—with a party and system
 4. Jacksonians mobilize in the electorate, in office, and in policy
 5. Whigs emerge as an anti-Jacksonian coalition → party system

- C. Key characteristics of party systems, from the 1830s on
 1. Acceptance of the opposition as legitimate (i.e., not a "faction")
 2. BUT: a two-party system as a mechanism for excluding other groups (defining them as outside the "mainstream")

IV. Subsequent party systems, as usually defined by historians & political scientists: (New party system emerges when there's a key shift in the electorate—regions, constituencies, etc.)

- A. "Third Party System," c. 1855-1896
- B. "Fourth Party System," c. 1896-1932
- C. "Fifth Party System," c. 1932-??? (Are we in another one now?)

V. The contemporary hearing questions: What relevance, if any, do the Federalists' objections have today? What advantages and disadvantages do political parties have in a democratic system of government?



1820's
opposition to Jackson
WHIGS!

1840-1854 -
Dem. vs. WHIGS

Don't want to SPLIT THE PARTY

1854 - Republicans.

Bibliography:

Some useful materials on the Constitution-making period and its aftermath

Jack Rakove's Pulitzer-Prize winning Original Meanings is a challenging read, but a great analysis of the key debates—in the Constitutional Convention and in the ratification debates—and some of the major issues (representation, the presidency, etc.). I've used chapter 4 heavily.

The four-volume Records of the Federal Convention of 1787, edited by Max Farrand, includes various transcripts of what happened at the framers' convention. Madison's journal is the best-known such document—but, as Farrand notes in his introduction, it wasn't the only record that was kept, and Madison edited it later in his life. So these four volumes intersperse several other records with Madison's. There's also an excellent index to subjects discussed, so that you and your students can see exactly when and how different delegates to the convention discussed specific issues.

www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/debates/debcont.htm: The Avalon Project, created at Yale University Law School, has put online the entire text of Madison's notes from the Constitutional Convention, as well as lots of other documents of the Constitution-making period. You can search Madison's notes by date (there's a calendar you can click on). It's a great website. Currently, however, it doesn't have an index to the Convention, as Farrand's Records do.

press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders: The Founders' Constitution, an online version of a five-volume set. You can click on any clause of the Constitution and find a variety of related documents—earlier material with which the framers may have been familiar; debates in the federal convention and state ratifying conventions; and material from roughly 1790 to 1830.

What Did the Constitution Mean to Early Americans?, edited by Edward Countryman (Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999), begins with a good introduction by Countryman that outlines major lines of historical scholarship on the Constitution, and ends with useful suggestions for further reading. The meat of the book consists of five excellent works of more recent scholarship:

- Isaac Kramnick, "The 'Great National Discussion': The Discourse of Politics in 1787" (1988)
- Stephen E. Patterson, "The Federalist Reaction to Shays's Rebellion" (1993)
- Gordon S. Wood, "The American Science of Politics," from Wood's 1969 The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787, the most important book before Rakove's
- Jan Lewis, "'Of Every Age Sex & Condition': The Representation of Women in the Constitution" (1995)
- Jack N. Rakove, "The Perils of Originalism," from Original Meanings (1996)

And one brand-new article: Woody Holton, "'Divide et Impera': Federalist 10 in a Wider Sphere," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd series, 62 (April 2005): 175-212.

Richard Hofstadter, The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970). An oldie but goodie, Hofstadter's book explains the shift from the framers' view of parties as illegitimate threats to the common good to the Van Burenite notion that a competitive party system itself served the public good.

Richard L. McCormick, The Party Period and Public Policy: American Politics from the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). A collection of essays by one of the eminent historians of American political parties, this book gives a sense of how scholars have approached political parties, as well as how parties and policy have been related to each other.

There are, of course, numerous books on the various major political parties and party systems. A search in a university library's online catalog for the names of parties, or for the terms political parties or party system, will turn up lots of works.

Political Parties: quotations from the eighteenth century.

Note: All of these appear in Richard Hofstadter's book, The Idea of a Party System (on your Unit III bibliography), chapter 1.

View #1: Parties as evils that can be avoided, abolished, or suppressed

Bolingbroke (British political thinker): "party is a political evil, and faction is the worst of all parties."

From Samuel Johnson's dictionary – definition of "faction"

(1) "a party in a state"

(2) "tumult, discord, dissension"

Jonathan Swift: "Party is the madness of the many, for the gain of a few."

Alexander Hamilton, Federalist 9: discusses "tempestuous waves of sedition and party rage," and describes the objective to "repress domestic faction and insurrection."

View #2: Parties as unavoidable in a free state, so check and limit them

David Hume (Scottish political thinker): "If separate interest be not checked, and be not directed to the public, we ought to look for nothing but faction, disorder, and tyranny from such a government. ... When men act in a faction, they are apt, without shame or remorse, to neglect all ties of honour and morality, in order to serve their party."

John Adams, late in life: solution to parties is "to control them" by "a government so mixed that factions may always be ruled."

Madison: see Federalist 10.

View #3: Parties as not a necessary evil, but a necessary good

Edmund Burke: "Party is a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interest upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed."

John Adams, 1779: "An opposition in Parliament, in a house of assembly, in a council, in Congress, is highly useful and necessary to balance individuals, and bodies, and interests against one another, and bring the truth to light and justice to prevail."