Presidential elections

- Explaining the vote: from individuals to aggregates
  - Under the psychology model the argument is that voters long time party identification could and often was offset by the short term factors of candidate likeability and issues
  - Moreover because presidential elections were high stimulus elections the short term factors were more important than in any other elections because voters knew about candidates and issues
  - An individual voter would start from either their Democratic or Republican leanings and then evaluate the nominees based on their personality or the issues
  - Over the post WWII period Democrats have held the normal vote advantage

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- Using this model we would explain the 1996 election as follows:
  - Clinton had an advantage going in by virtue of his being a Democrat
  - On the issues he had an advantage-abortion, economy, etc.
  - As a candidate he had lots of negatives but so did Senator Dole call that break even
  - Clinton won handily because of the above points—Democratic vote advantage, the issues and even or slightly ahead on personality
  - Using this model you can also classify elections as the following shows

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- Realigning elections — 1896-1932
  - Elections where the normal party vote changes
- Maintaining elections—1900, 1904, 08, 24, 28, 36, 40, 44, 48, 64,
  - Elections where normal vote is continued
- Deviating elections—1916, 20, 52, 56
  - Elections where the minor party wins due to issues and candidates—short term variables
- Reinstating elections—1920, 1960
  - Elections occurring only after a deviating election where majority party comes back into power
This system breaks down when you consider presidential and congressional elections together.
- Hard to explain much after 1964 which is realigning which deviating etc.
- Fiorina modifies this model by arguing that voters update their party preferences over time and that issues change party distributions.
- Example is if over time you notice that you favor Republican policies and vote increasingly for their candidates you will become a Republican.
- His interpretation of how voters choose is that in any presidential election voters retrospectively evaluate the performance of the President (or the current President’s nominated successor).

The 1996 election can be explained as follows:
- Clinton won because the
  - Economy was booming
  - No American troops were at war
  - President’s approval rating was high
- Withdraw some of these variables and the best explanatory variable over time is—the state of the economy
- Still this leaves the problem of why do American elections post WWII seem to result in divided government
  - One possible explanation is that of different strokes
  - The job of a representative differs from that of President

Other scholars have elaborated this model to add variables like peace and presidential popularity (as measured by job performance)
- The main variable is always how is the economy doing
- Add to this the question of peace and
- Presidential job approval and you get a model that says
- \[ PV = E_t + P_t + P_{Pt} + e \]
  - Where PV is the popular vote
  - \( E_t \) is the state of the economy before the election
  - \( P_t \) is the number of American troops at war
  - \( P_{Pt} \) is the presidents job approval before the election

Representatives are supposed to deal with the district—bring home bacon etc.
- Presidents are supposed to represent the nation
  - Free trade example
  - Clinton on NAFTA
- Thus it was argued Democrats dominated the House while Republicans won the presidency
- This worked well until 1994 when you got a Republican Congress
  - The counter is that the Republican house and Senate have continued to spend money at about + 8 percent per year
- Another account of divided government is that voters choose it as in the following graph
The argument is that if I want policy closer to me then

- I should vote for Clinton and a Republican House and/or Senate even though I am closer to both the Democratic Congress and Clinton
- Because the result of divided government will be policy closer to my position
- Assumption is valid under marginality argument
  - Only need about ten% of voters to be sophisticated this way in order for these results to be true

- I will now turn to some institutional features of primary elections that affect elections and policy

- The major characteristic of primaries are that the electorate differs from the November electorate

- This fact explains much about why candidates get stuck with April promises that do not play in November
  - Mondale in 1984
  - Bush in 1988

- The primary system of nominating presidents gives the ideological wings of both parties more say in the policy process