

TWO PARTIES:

- GOP (Grand Old Party) = the Republicans; Elephant (cartoonist Thomas Nast)
- The Democratic Party; Donkey

THE STAGES OF THE ELECTORAL RACE:

Primaries (or) Caucuses: election of each party's candidate state by state.

Super Tuesday: in February, a Caucus that is made is a series of ten states at the same moment

Swing states: strategic states whose votes count more than others and can fix the definitive result

Convention: each party chooses its official candidate, according to the results of primaries. The future vice-president (“running mate” at this stage of the race) is also officially named.

Election Day: on November 4th = Inauguration Day / Presidential pledge of allegiance: on January 20th, in Washington, on the steps of the Capitol; the President pledges allegiance on the Constitution, is sworn in and takes office.

“I do solemnly swear [or affirm] that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same: that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter”.

A COMPLEX AND SPECIFIC ORGANISATION:

Electoral Colleges / Grand electors: the US President is elected indirectly by the people, through electors of an electoral college. These electors virtually always vote in accordance with the popular vote of their state.

EVERY 4 YEAR, AN INTENSE AND EXPENSIVE COMPETITION :

The funds raised:

- Obama (> \$ 641 M); 87% through social networking (facebook, myspace, emails and website); refused the public financing (which was adopted in the 1970s, after the Watergate scandal)
- McCain (circa \$ 180 M) ; of which \$100M came from GOP; unable to compete with Obama's presence on TVs from early September 2008.

Lobbying : professional, ethnic and social organizations

Grass roots : popular lobbies, made of local volunteers; their members lobby through procedures like putting up posters, talking with pedestrians (with informational clipboards), raising money, organizing demonstrations...

Pollsters: people who work to make opinion polls; these polls are quite numerous, systematic and expensive.

THE PROBLEM OF ELECTIONS IN FLORIDA / 2000:

What problems happened in 2000?

- “butterfly ballots” and too complicated procedure
- many Afro-Americans were refused from the ballot lists
- suspicion of corruption on G.W. Bush's brother (Jeff Bush, Governor of Florida)

What results?

GW Bush won the election thanks to this “swing state”... Al Gore lost but had 300,000 more votes.

All voting machines which had been replaced in 2004, are today outdated; the new ones for 2008 cost \$30M.

THE AMERICAN POLITICAL MIND: FROM DEMOCRACY TO INDUSTRY?

Issues you have to think about and discuss on:

- Business or politics ?

- Politicians or celebrities / stars?

- Communicators or actors?

- Secular or religious-declared candidates?

- popular democracy or lobby-oligarchy?

THE RESULTS: select and argue your point...

Map	Your favorite image	Your favorite sentence / expression

Your websites of reference : (limited examples)

- www.cnn.com
- www.latimes.com
- www.nytimes.com
- www.bbc.co.uk
- www.france24.com/en