Electoral Systems

- electoral systems affects values one wishes to promote and interests that will be advanced
  - institution affects interests of parties
- tensions of values
  - proportionality v. decisiveness
  - accountability v. representation
  - local v. national interests
  - ethnic v. unified identities and interests
- 3 Types of systems
  - First-past-the-post (FPTP)
  - Proportional Representation (PR)
  - Mixed Systems: alternative and single-transferable vote
FPTP

- Also called “winner take all,” Westminster, or majority-plurality system
- Whoever wins the most votes (plurality) wins the election

Advantages of FPTP

- Simple system
- Decisive: government that wins can rule without coalition, in most cases
- encourages fewer parties (UK, US) but not always (India, Canada)
- encourages centrist parties to form v. extremist parties in order to “get past the post”
- accountable: single-member districts allow people to select candidates

Problems with FPTP

- disproportionate: If multiple parties run, victor may have low percentage of votes, reducing legitimacy
- unrepresentative: geographically dispersed but popular parties may never gain office v. geographically concentrated but less popular parties
  - 1983 British election:
    - centrist Labour party members split and form Social Democratic Party, which allies with Liberal Party
    - win 26% of votes but gain only 3.6% of the seats in the House of Commons
- exclusive: minority parties –ideology, identity, or interest – have poor chance of winning seats
Two-Round System

- FPTP with requirement that candidate win 50% plus 1 of votes
- Reduces harm to democratic legitimacy, but may exaggerate real level of support

France

- Presidential Elections
  - If no candidate wins 50% plus 1, top two candidates go to second round
- National Assembly elections:
  - majority-plurality TRS: 1st round: candidates who receive 12.5% go on to second round:
    - plurality vote winner wins 2nd round

- 2002 presidential elections:
  - Chirac’s plurality is 19.9% on first round with 16 candidates
  - 2nd round results in overwhelming victory over 2nd ranked Le Pen (16.9%)
  - multiple parties can divide FPTP presidential election
  - TRS allows president to have stronger mandate

- 2002 legislative elections
  - in 1st round, Union for the Presidential Majority (UMP) has only 33% of vote and Socialist Party (SP) only 24%
    - 33% goes to smaller parties and candidates
  - in 2nd round, UMP gains almost 50% and SP gains over a 3rd; other parties gain only 10%
Proportional Representation

- seats are accorded based on percentage of vote received
- multiple sub-systems for allocating seats

Advantages of PR

- more representative: political power is proportionate to vote
- allows minority parties to gain seats
- views of local and ethnic groups represented

Problems with PR

- some system reduce accountability of candidate to voter (List PR)
- extremist parties may gain influence
- may produce indecisive coalition governments

List PR

South Africa

- Voters choose a party which has a list of candidates
- Number of candidates depends on percentage of the vote
- Order of the candidates on the list influences which candidate reaches office (closed list)
- Party leaders have great deal of control (“democratic centralism”)
- Open list systems – most of European List PR – allow voters to reorder candidates on the list, generating accountability
Multi-member proportional (MMP)

- MMP provides greater accountability of candidates to voters
- Germany lower house (Bundestag) elections
  - First vote (Erststimme) goes to a candidate in 328 single-member constituency
  - Second vote (Zweitstimme) is for state (Laender)-level party list (16 Laender)
  - Candidates can run on both tickets
  - Proportion of Lander voter determines Bundestag seats
  - Parties that win 5% of national vote seated proportionately in Bundestag
  - If Erststimme seats to a party exceed Zweitstimme seats, then party gets “surplus” and Bundestag expands
- Multiple parties represented in Germany
- Governments must form coalitions
- Number of parties ranges around 4
**Semi-PR**
- parallel system of FPTP and PR

**Japan**
- Hosokawa Morihiro, first non-LDP PM in 1993, produces reforms to electoral law in 1994
  - Parallel PR/Single-Member District
    - 300 seats in SMDs
    - 200 seats from PR in 7 blocs ranging in number of districts within each bloc
    - candidate can run for both, meaning some SMD losers gain office via PR
- Junichiro Koizumi; elected in April 2001;
  - Nov 2003 elections led to LDP one vote shy of majority, down from prior vote
  - Koizumi re-elected by Diet as PM with 281 votes out of 479 (58.6%)
  - LDP allied with New Komeito party to win PM-ship
  - Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) gained 186 votes with aid of Social Democratic Party

**Advantages**
- allows for accountability with representation
- allows minority parties to take part

**Disadvantages**
- Semi-PR may be confusing for voters and parties
- Two classes of candidates creates different interests
- Extremist parties may still emerge
- Smaller parties under-represented v. pure PR
Alternative Vote
- only in Australia, Nauru, Fiji
- single-member district
- rank-order candidates (preferential voting)
- if candidate wins 50% plus 1, wins
- if none, then candidate with lowest # of first preferences eliminated, and the 2\textsuperscript{nd} preferences on ballots for the candidate are re-allocated as first preference
- most plurality candidates win; only 5.3% of seats on average (1980-96) go to non-plurality first-round candidate