

## Chapter 8: Political Parties

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

*After studying this chapter, students should be able to:*

1. Understand the roles of the party-in-the-electorate, the party as an organization, and the party-in-government.
2. Examine how political parties in a democracy serve as key linkage institutions to translate inputs from the public into outputs from the policymakers.
3. Describe Anthony Downs' *rational-choice theory* as a working model of the relationship among citizens, parties, and policy.
4. Trace the historical development of the American two-party system.
5. Describe what is meant by *party eras*, *critical elections*, and *party realignment*.
6. Examine the significance of *divided government* and explain how the recent pattern of divided government may explain party *dealignment*.
7. Differentiate between the ideology or party philosophy of the Democratic and Republican parties.
8. Explain how electoral rules such as the "winner-take-all" plurality system have helped to maintain a two-party system in the United States.
9. Evaluate the impact of third parties on American politics and the American party system.
10. Describe the consequences or effects of the American two-party system as contrasted with a multi-party system.
11. Understand the significance of the weak and decentralized character of the American party system.