



Lesson Plan: THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATING SYSTEM

HANDOUT KEY

Key Terms

Nomination – *the official endorsement of a candidate by a party*

National party convention – *held in the summer before the general election, where the candidate is chosen by the delegates selected during the primaries and caucuses and the party platform is adopted*

Primary – *a preliminary election, in this case of delegates that are usually pledged to vote for particular candidates at party nominating conventions, first held in 1912, now over 40 states will hold them with about 75% of delegates being chosen this way, state laws determine when they are held, parties establish rules for how delegates are allocated*

Open primary – *open to all, regardless of party affiliation*

Closed primary – *open only to those registered as party members*

Caucus – *the original method by which most delegates to the nominating conventions were selected, now much less popular, formerly run by party bosses, now consists of meetings open to voters registered with each party where candidates are discussed and delegates are selected to go to larger caucuses and ultimately to the national conventions*

Iowa Caucus – *traditionally the first caucus and first event in the primary season, thus much media attention is given to it*

New Hampshire Primary – *traditionally the first primary, receives a great deal of media attention*

Frontloading – *states holding their primaries and caucuses earlier and earlier to capitalize on disproportionate attention paid to early primaries and caucuses*

Super Tuesday – *the Tuesday in early March when a number of Southern states have held their primaries together in order to balance the importance of earlier events in Northern states, this year there will be several “super Tuesdays”*

Delegate – *voting representative to party nominating convention where the candidate for president is chosen, usually pledged to a particular candidate*

Superdelegates – *party leaders, such as elected officials, who are given seats at a nominating convention*

Proportional System – *system used in Democratic primaries and some Republican primaries whereby candidates are allocated the same proportion of a state’s delegates as they received votes*

Winner-take-all System – *system used in some Republican primaries whereby the candidate to receive the most votes in a state receives all of that state’s delegates*

Key Questions

1. *Look at the 2004 schedule of primaries and answer the following questions about it. (Available at: <http://www.fec.gov/pages/2004pdates.htm>.)*
 - a. When does the primary season begin and end?
January 13, June 8
 - b. Which events are first?
DC Primary January 13, Iowa Caucus January 19, New Hampshire Primary January 27
 - c. Are there groups of states holding their primaries on the same days? Explain.
Yes, this year there will be several “super primaries.”
February 3: Arizona, Delaware, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and North Dakota
March 2: California, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington
March 9 (original Super Tuesday): Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas
 - d. When is your state holding its primaries or caucuses?
Answers vary according to your state.
 - e. How does the schedule differ from previous presidential primary years?
The DC Primary is the first event. More states have moved their primaries up. There is more than one “super primary.”
2. Explain the nomination process in your state. Does your state hold primaries or caucuses or both? How are delegates to the national conventions allocated in your state? Is there anything unique about the process in your state?
Answers will vary. Students may consult their state websites or other materials provided by state election officials.
3. What traditionally happens during the nominating process for a party that has a sitting president up for reelection, as is the case this year?
The incumbent is usually easily re-nominated, often by 100% of the convention delegates.