

PLS 140
Introduction to
Comparative Politics

Week 9, Lecture 2:
Electoral systems

Recap

- Legislatures, their functions, and types

Plan for today

- Electoral systems:
 - District
 - Proportional representation
 - Hybrid
- Representation

Electoral systems

- District:
 - Single-member district
 - Multi-member district
- Proportional representation:
 - Open-list proportional representation
- Hybrid:
 - Alternative vote
 - Single transferable vote

District systems

- Single-member district:
 - *Electoral system in which voters choose a candidate and the winner is elected by the most votes earned or through winning a runoff vote*
 - First-past-the-post (plurality rule):
 - *Electoral system in which the candidate with the highest number of votes is elected, regardless of whether a majority has been attained*
- Runoff (majority rule):
 - *Electoral system in which the top candidates after a first round of voting compete in one or more additional rounds of voting until a candidate receives a majority*

District systems

- Multi-member district:
 - *Electoral system in which electoral districts have more than one representative*

What district system is this?

- In elections to the British House of Commons, the candidate supported by the plurality of voters in a constituency wins the election.
- In elections to the French National Assembly (lower chamber of Parliament), a second round of voting is held if no candidate in a constituency receives the majority of the votes.

What district system is this?

- In elections to the US House of Representatives, the candidate supported by the plurality of voters in a district wins the election.
- In most elections to the US Senate, the candidate supported by the plurality of voters in a district wins the election.
- In the US Senate elections in Georgia, a runoff between the top two candidates occurs if none of them wins the majority.
- In elections to the Arizona House of Representatives, each electoral district elects two representatives.

Proportional representation systems

- (Party-list) proportional representation:
 - *Electoral system in which voters choose a preferred party and seats are allocated to parties according to the percentage of the vote the party wins*
- Open-list proportional representation:
 - *Electoral system in which voters choose a candidate but votes are aggregated by political party to determine the allocation of seats across parties*

What PR system is this?

- In elections to the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, voters choose individual candidates, but those candidates' votes are combined together with the other members of their party, and then seats are allocated based on the parties' performance.
- In elections to Kazakhstan's Mazhilis, seats are allocated in one country-wide multi-member constituency via party lists.

What PR system is this?

- In elections to South Africa's National Assembly (lower chamber of Parliament), seats are allocated in ten multi-member constituencies via party lists.
- In elections to Russia's State Duma, half of the seats are elected in single-member constituencies and the other half via party lists.

District vs. PR systems



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTMXaXc7dNc>

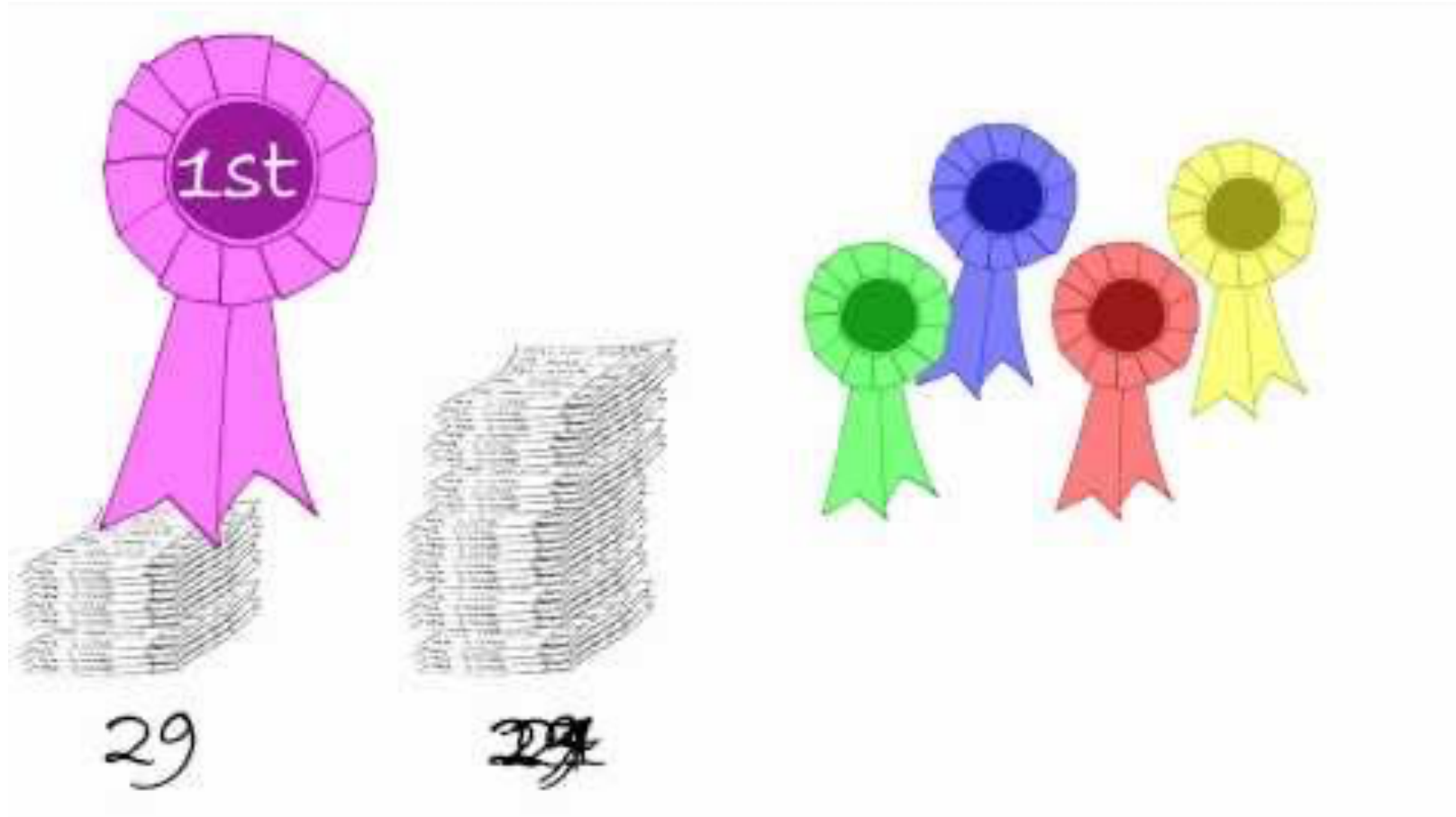
Hybrid systems

- Alternative vote
- Single transferable vote

Hybrid systems

- Alternative vote:
 - *Voting system in which voters rank candidates and the votes of low-ranking candidates are reallocated until a winner is determined*

Alternative vote



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FstA45lxgFs>

Hybrid systems

- Single transferable vote:
 - *Electoral system in which voters rank candidates and the winners' surplus votes are reallocated to other, lower-ranking candidates until a slate of representatives is chosen*

Single transferable vote



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P38Y4VG1Ibo>

What hybrid system is this?

- In elections to the Australian Senate (upper chamber of Parliament), each voter has a single vote that is initially allocated to their most preferred candidate. If that candidate obtains the number of votes required to win a seat, the vote is transferred to other candidates.
- In elections to the Australian House of Representatives (lower chamber of Parliament), each voter ranks candidates and the votes of low-ranking candidates are reallocated until a winner is determined.

Representation

- Apportionment
- Districting
- Gerrymandering
- Malapportionment

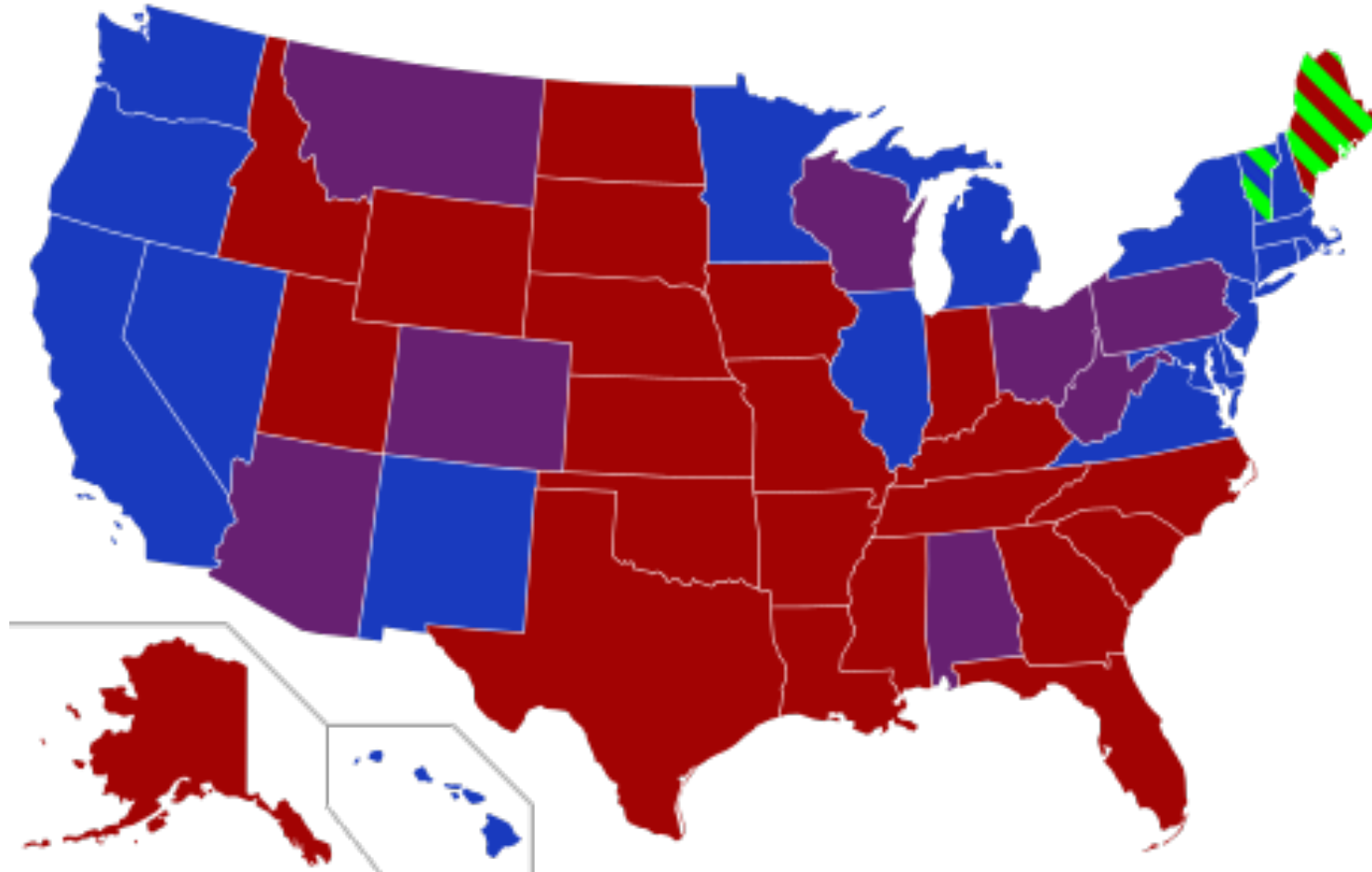
Representation

- Apportionment:
 - *The process by which legislative seats are distributed among electoral districts*
- Districting:
 - *The process by which electoral districts are created for elections*

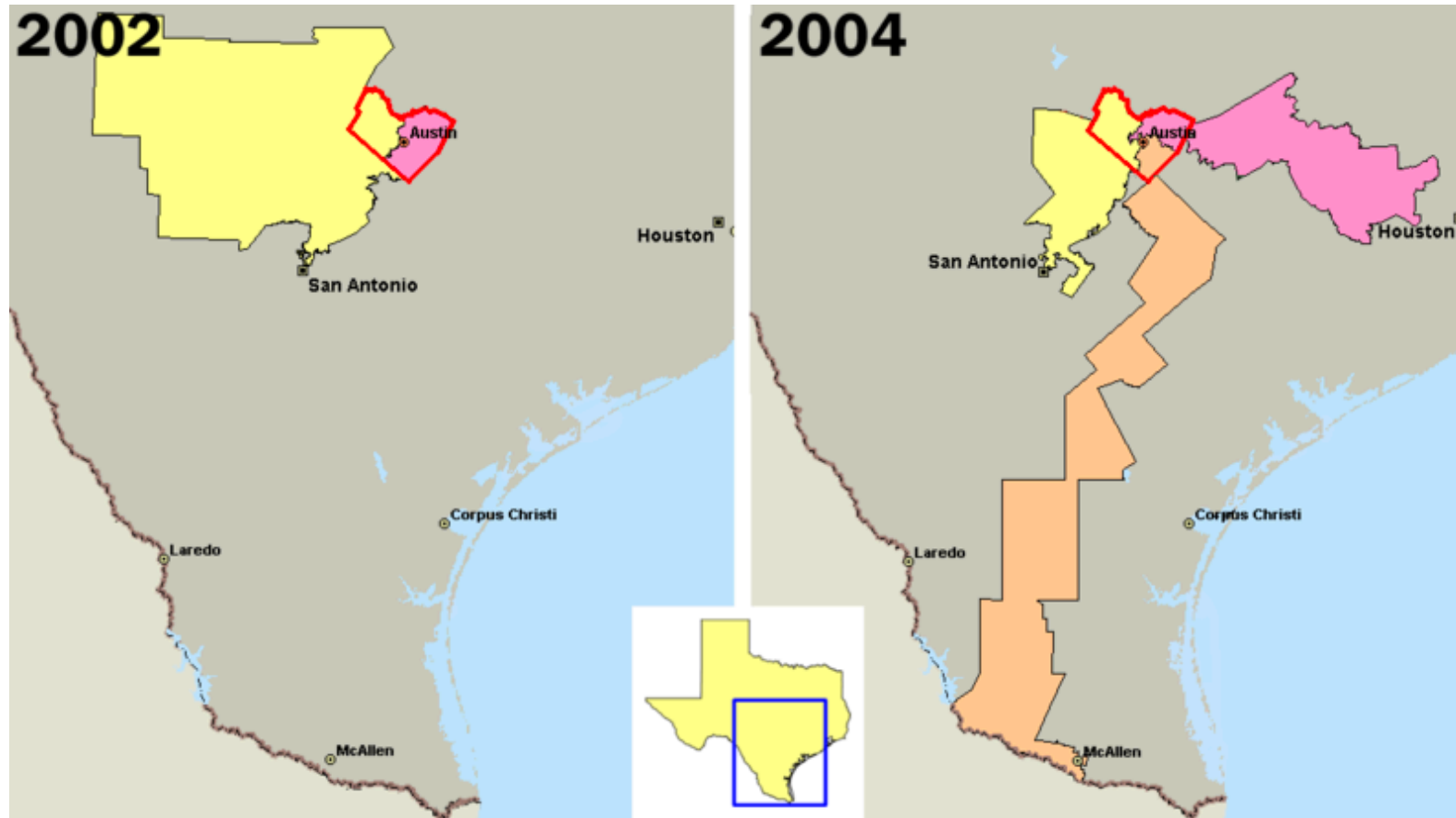
Representation

- Malapportionment:
 - *Apportionment in which voters are unequally represented in a legislature*
- Gerrymandering:
 - *Creation of districts to achieve a desired political result*

Gerrymandering or malapportionment?



Gerrymandering or malapportionment?



Importance of electoral systems

- Representation —> who is represented in government
- Party systems —> who controls government and how they behave:
 - Duverger's law

Takeaways

- District, proportional representation, and hybrid electoral systems and the political ramifications of their adoption