First Church

Today's sermon: "Tolerate thy neighbor, be he from a red state or a blue state."

© Original Artist
Electoral Geography is about . . .

• The Geography of Voting
  – The spatial pattern of votes
  – The spatial distribution of voter turnout
  – Location of/access to polling places
  – Location of voting resources

• Temporal factors
  – Voting hours
  – Time zones
  – Vote reporting
2008 Presidential Election: State-level Results
The 2008 Presidential Election

County by County Results
Red for McCain, Blue for Obama
2008 Election Results by County
2008 Presidential Election Results in New York State
Red States & Blue States

• Vernacular voting regions coined by the late Tim Russert during the 2000 presidential election.
• The terms refer to states whose residents predominantly vote for Republican and Democratic presidential candidates respectively.
• The terms have come to signify states whose voters tend to support conservative candidates/causes versus those who support liberal ones respectively.
California Proposition 8 (2008)

• Formally, the California Marriage Protection Act
• The proposal: Add a new provision to the California Constitution stating “only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California.”
• Results:
  – Yes: 52.24%
  – No: 47.76%
  – Total votes: 13,743,117
  – Percent voter turnout: 79.42%
Voting machines can be spatially allocated in such a way as to encourage long lines in some districts on election day, and short lines elsewhere. The longer the line, the greater the likelihood that voters will become frustrated and leave before voting.

Polling places can be conveniently located within districts or inconveniently located, thereby respectively encouraging or discouraging voter turnout.
Time Geography and Voting

Polls open and close at different times in different states, affecting ease of access to polls.

Parts of some states are in different time zones, so polls can open and close at different times in the same state.

For Presidential elections, there is no federal law that mandates common poll openings and closings, or that restricts the reporting of results until all votes are cast. As a result, media “call the election” (announce the winner) before polls have closed in many states, possibly affecting voter turnout.
The Geography of Representation

- Apportionment – allocation of seats to civil divisions commensurate to population.
- Districting – the drawing of voter district boundaries to reflect apportionment.
- Reapportionment – the re-allocation of seats following a census.
- Redistricting – the redrawing of voter district boundaries following reapportionment.
Apportionment is the allocation of seats in a representative governmental body based on population and/or concepts of equality.

The House of Representatives Model: allocation of seats to Congressional Districts drawn so as to contain roughly the same number of residents.

The Senate Model: allocation of seats to civil divisions based on the notion that they are equal regardless of their populations.
House Reapportionment From the 2010 Census

Northeastern states, such as Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and states in the Midwest continued to lose House seats, with gains coming in the South and West.

Change since 2000:
- **+4 seats**
- **+2 seats**
- **+1 seat**
- **No change**
- **-1 seat**
- **-2 seats**

**Bold numbers** indicate the state’s current number of House seats.

- Texas: **36**
- California: **53**
- New York: **27**
- Pennsylvania: **18**
- Ohio: **16**
- Illinois: **18**
- Missouri: **11**
- Florida: **27**

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau
Voter District Boundaries

**The Law:** One person, one vote (equal representation for all)

**The Challenge:** Make a map that divides an area into voter districts containing roughly the same number of people. (Examples: U.S. Congressional Districts, N.Y. State Assembly Districts; New York City Council Districts.

**The Steps:** (1) Collect accurate census data. (2) Use the data to create voter districts that comply with the law.
Three Approaches to Voter District Design

[60% of registered voters are Plums, 40% are Oranges]

(a) Dilution – Oranges are spread out so as to be a minority in each district.

(b) Proportional – Oranges awarded a majority in one district, giving them roughly proportional representation.

(c) Packing – Plums are concentrated in one district, giving Oranges a majority in the other two.
Gerrymandering is the purposeful drawing of voting district boundaries for partisan benefit.

Named after Elbridge Gerry -- signer of the Declaration of Independence; Governor of Massachusetts, 1812; Vice-President of the United States, 1813-14.

Originally applied to an oddly shaped voting district created in 1812 to help elect a candidate from Gerry’s political party.
1812 Political Cartoon satirizing the shape of a voting district in Essex County, MA.
Gerrymandering as Social Engineering

Suppose a governmental unit complies with the law and ends up with elected representatives who, to a significant extent, are racially or ethnically different than the people they represent. If so, does that violate “equal representation”? If so, is it legal to purposefully design districts that encourage election of representatives who look like the people they represent?

Can it therefore be legal to gerrymander?
4th Congressional District, Illinois
North Carolina’s 12th Congressional District