101 Objectives:

- History and intent of the Electoral College
- Selection of Electors
- Impact of the Electoral College in the US presidential election process
- Criticisms of the Electoral College
- Proposals for reforming the Electoral College
History of the US Electoral College:

• Established by the founding fathers at the 1787 Constitutional Convention
• Compromise between congressional selection and direct popular vote
• Reflects federalist nature of the US Constitution
Electoral Votes:

- Each of the 50 states is entitled to as many electoral votes as the sum of its representation in the US House and Senate. For example,
  - Florida: 27 House Representatives plus 2 Senators = 29 electoral votes
  - Ohio: 16 House Representatives plus 2 Senators = 18 electoral votes
  - Hawaii: 2 House Representatives plus 2 Senators = 4 electoral votes

- 435 House Representatives + 100 Senators + 3 District of Columbia electoral votes = **538 TOTAL ELECTORAL VOTES**
- To win, a candidate needs **270 electoral votes**
2016 Electoral Votes by State:

538 = Total Votes
270 = To Win
Electoral Process:

The electoral college process consists of the:

• Selection of the Electors
• Meeting of the Electors to vote for President and Vice President
• Counting of the electoral votes by the US Congress
• Declaration of the elected President and Vice President by the President of the US Senate
Selection of Electors:

The selection of Electors is notable because:

• The US Constitution contains few provisions relating to the qualifications of Electors

• Selection of a state’s Electors is done at the state level and varies from one state to another

• Electors are typically political party insiders

• All but two States use a winner-take-all electoral system
  
  – exceptions are Maine and Nebraska
General Election: Trump vs. Clinton

- Clinton (D): 47.3, +5.2
- Trump (R): 42.1

Poll Average

(Chart showing the poll average for Trump vs. Clinton from early 2016 to late 2016, with notable peaks and troughs.)
Restrictions on Electoral Votes:

There is no Constitutional or Federal law that requires Electors to vote according to the results of the popular vote in their states. Rather...

- State law regulates how electoral college votes are cast
- Electors are committed to vote for a party candidate in advance
- Occurrences of “faithless Electors” are rare
Popular vs. Electoral Vote:

It is possible in the US electoral system to win a majority of the popular vote and NOT win a majority of the electoral votes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Candidate 1</th>
<th>% Popular Vote</th>
<th>Electoral Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>Andrew Jackson</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Q. Adams</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Harris Crawford</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Clay</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Winner: Adams</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>Samuel J. Tilden</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rutherford B. Hayes</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Winner: Hayes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Grover Cleveland</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benjamin Harrison</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Winner: Harrison</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Albert Gore</td>
<td>48.4% (50,996,897)</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>George W. Bush</td>
<td>47.9% (50,456,002)</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Winner: George W. Bush</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Electoral College & Campaign Strategy:

Given that the contest for presidential Electors is won or lost on a winner-take-all statewide basis, campaign strategy targets **WINNING STATES**. In the 2016 election, the “swing or battleground states” that both the Clinton and Trump campaigns are targeting include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swing States</th>
<th># of Electoral votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine (one district)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL = 112**
Benefits of the Electoral College:

• Proponents of the Electoral College argue that it conveys political legitimacy in closely fought presidential elections for several reasons:
  - Certainty of outcome
  - Everyone’s President
  - Importance of swing states
  - Avoids run-off elections

• Protects against the tyranny of the majority

• Reinforces the federalist nature of American democracy
Benefits of the Electoral College:

Electoral College Map

Population Density Map
Criticisms of the Electoral College:

The Electoral College has long been criticized, for several reasons:

• Candidate who wins a majority of the popular vote may not become President
• Non-competitive states are largely ignored by candidates, thus, encouraging low voter turnout
• Diminishes third party influence and results in tactical voting
• Over-represents voters from small states, which have a minimum of 3 electoral votes
• Electors may vote for persons other than their party’s presidential candidate
• If there is no majority winner in the Electoral College, Congress selects the President and Vice President
Small State Bias:

Montana
Population: 1,032,949
1 Electoral Vote = 248,238 people

New York
Population: 19,795,791
1 Electoral Vote = 682,613 people
Proposals for Reform:

Many different proposals to alter the Presidential election process have been offered over the years, including:

- Eliminate Electors but still count electoral votes
- Select Electors based on proportionality rather than a winner-take-all system
- Select Electors by congressional districts with two Electors chosen at large in each state
- Direct popular vote
Thank you!