

LECTURE / DISCUSSION / DEBATE
POLITICAL PARTIES, SARTRE, AND RADICAL FREEDOM

Terms and concepts to know:

Political parties	Functions of political parties
Two-party system	Multi-party system
Single-party system	Electoral systems
Proportional representation	Simple Plurality
Electoral manipulation	Ballot form and access
Mass / government parties	Electoral / charismatic parties
Panebianco and “party transformation”	Sartre and “existentialism”

Study and discussion questions:

1. Heineman notes that since two-party systems tend to focus on getting large amounts of votes, “parties espousing particular, narrow positions are usually marginalized into third parties, although their ideas may eventually be appropriated by one or both of the major parties.” What ideas from today’s third parties do you think will eventually be adopted by the mainstream parties?
2. According to Alessandri, what constitutes an X-Risk (existential risk)? She quotes an author who identifies approximately 23 of them and notes that we started essentially with just one. How would an existentialist advise us to deal with these risks? What would you advise?
3. Heineman says that “[e]lectoral systems are not neutral.” Does our electoral system reflect attempts by the two major parties to weaken or eliminate smaller parties? Would you be willing to experiment with another system such as a multiparty system with proportional representation? What about adopting “instant run-off” balloting in place of plurality winner-take-all systems?
4. Heineman appears to have a bias against third-party challenges such as Ross Perot and the Reform Party (133) who he describes as “charismatic parties and leaders.” Do you share his fear? Why or why not?
5. Discuss the life and works of Jean-Paul Sartre. What was Sartre’s theory of the universe and human nature, and his diagnosis of what is wrong with us and his prescription for putting it right? What do you like or dislike about his philosophical position?
6. Do you agree with such Sartrian notions that the slave has more power than his master and that the principles of respect for the freedom of others, or nonpossessive love are an impossible ideal (objectification)?

Readings:

Heineman. *Political Science*, Chapter 10.

Stevenson. *Twelve Theories of Human Nature*, Chapter 11.

Video:

Sartre: Leading an Authentic Life.