

Special Focus on Electoral Systems and Electoral Reform

- What is the difference between **electoral laws** and **electoral systems**? How should we classify electoral systems?
 - By outputs? (i.e., by **proportional** vs. **non-proportional** systems)
 - By their component parts? **District magnitude**, **Electoral formula** (**Categorical** versus **ordinal ballots**), **Ballot structure**
- Defining Representation
 - **Microcosm** conception
 - **Principal-agent** conception
- Types of Distortions
 - In non-proportional systems
 - **Malapportionment** and **gerrymandering**
 - In proportional systems
 - **Minimum electoral thresholds** and **party laws**

So what system do we have, anyway?: Single Member Plurality (SMP) or First Past the Post (FPTP)

- Understanding the pros and cons of SMP (class discussion)

Making Every Vote Count: British Columbia and the case of the Single Transferable Vote (STV)

- 3 basic values expressed in public hearings: fair election results through proportionality, effective local representation, greater voter choice
- “a basic principle of FPTP is local representation...citizens wishing to support a particular party must vote for the single candidate the party offers and not necessarily for the local candidate they may prefer.”
- “BC-STV is the only proportional system that allows independent candidates a real chance to be elected”?
- Selection phase (10), Learning phase (11), Public Hearings Phase (12), Deliberation Phase (13)

Farrell on STV

- What are some of the benefits of STV? Drawbacks?
- Where is it used? [Australia / Ireland / Malta / Cambridge, MA]
- How would its use change a system run by SMP?
- “If STV (and MMP are) apparently so popular among the scholars, why are they avoided by the politicians?”
- **DM** is greater than 1 [“Hare had proposed that the whole of the UK should be one vast constituency”]
- **BS** is ordinal [as many or as few as desired]
- **EF** = ‘droop quota’ [“the greater the number of seats to be filled, the lower the number of votes required”]
- “If a candidate is elected, the next count usually consists of the transfer of all surplus votes...to the remaining candidates based on the second-preference votes expressed by the electors”
- “the voter can opt to vote ‘above the line’, by making a ticket vote
- Criticism: requires coalition/minority govts.
- “Under SMP a voter can only vote for the one party candidate nominated. Under closed list systems, the voter cannot even vote for candidates: the rank ordering is determined by the party elite”

Other questions from Farrell's *Electoral Systems*

- What are some ways to distinguish electoral systems (degrees of ordinality, candidate-based versus party-based systems, according to the level of voter choice (173)
 - Candidate-based: more grassroots, internal party democracy
 - Party-based: candidates more likely to act as trustees rather than delegates
- do you agree that countries have to choose between proportional representation and strong/stable government? Three main arguments in support
 - Government longevity and accountability
 - Political party extremism
 - System complexity and voter confusion