**Electoral Exploitation**

- Advantages small states over large states because it allocates votes on Senate and House seats
- "General ticket" allocates electoral votes entirely to the winner of the state, with nothing for loser
- Republicans had a 3.5-point advantage due to efficient vote distribution
- Not intended to be undemocratic, but has become an element of the Frankenstate

**Senate**

- Equal representation for all states, which did not use to have drastically different populations
- Republicans had a 5.0-point advantage in 2020
- Filibuster renders it ineffective w/o compromise

**House of Representatives**

- House districts are drawn by state legislators who tend to be loyal to their party's interest
- The '08-'11 REDMAP program and Tea Party electoral success led to outsize Republican power in state legislatures
- Used power to draw gerrymandered maps leading to a 2.1-point advantage

**Democratic Backsliding**

- Lack of consequences for financial elite after 2008 crisis due to political ties
- Massive wealth inequality
- Restriction of immigration and voting rights
- Passing of stricter voting laws based off suspicion of election fraud
- Electoral mistrust leading to January 6th riots in front of Capitol

**Racial Influences**

- Racism is continuous in far-right reactionary movements, but reasons and politics change
- Starting in the 1920s, the use of racial reactionism in populist movements is a response to an increasingly liberal society
- Populists like Barnett in the 1960s and Trump show continuity through nostalgia of a white status-quo

**Historical Influences**

- In American politics, there has been a suspicion of elites since its founding
- Populists starting from McCarthy influenced conservatives from the 1950s onward
- Trump took Reagan's anti-big government stance further by instilling suspicion of US federal institutions, like the CDC and DOJ

**Economic Influences**

- Trends of economic stagnation & inequality, leading to economic and political dissatisfaction with ineffective status quo
  - Worsened by 2008 Financial Crisis
  - Flat real incomes, automated and outsourced jobs, and massive wealth inequality
- Economic uncertainty leads to support for populist candidates as a form of economic protectionism

**The modern United States has seen devolution towards a 'Frankenstate' fueled by abuse of electoral institutions. Politically, this trend is driven by populism, which has elements of economic, racial, and historical nostalgia.**

1) Are the 2008 financial crisis and trends of economic stagnation and inequality significant causes of modern American populism?
2) To what extent is populism under the movement that elected Trump continuous with far-right populist movements in American history?
3) Is there any historical relationship between the rise of President Reagan and the rise of President Trump?
4) How has the modern Republican Party taken advantage of outdated electoral institutions to gain political power?

**Recommended Literature:**

- "The Social and Political Costs of the Financial Crisis, 10 Years Later" - Harvard Business Review
- Breaking the Two-Party Doom Loop: The Case for Multiparty Democracy in America - Lee Drutman
- "A History of American Reactionary Movements: From the Klan to Donald Trump" - Christopher Sebastian Parkman
- The Age of Reform - Richard Hofstadter