

# GEOG 245: Geodemographics

## Political Redistricting and Gerrymandering

3 November 2016



## Announcements

- I will hand back the exams next Tuesday.
- Quiz sections next week in Savery 117 (the computer lab)

Exams are mostly graded, but not quite done so we will be handing back the exams in class on Tuesday.

## Plan for Today

- Another Look at Segregation in the US
- Redistricting
- Gerrymandering

## Another Look at Segregation in the US

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8yiYCHMAlM>

For those of you who watch Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, you may have already seen this, but a week and a half after we talked about segregation in class, John Oliver featured it in his show and does a great job of explaining how this is still an issue today. As such, I want to take the time to show it.

# Questions?

Does this raise any questions about segregation and what we talked about in class?

## Plan for Today

- Another Look at Segregation in the US
- Redistricting
- Gerrymandering

What is redistricting?

## What is redistricting?

- The process of drawing electoral district boundaries
- In the US, this is most commonly congressional districts

So what are congressional districts? (In the US, congress is divided into two houses: the senate and the house of representatives. The senate has two senators from each state. The house of representatives has representatives based on the population of the US).

So why do we redistrict?

## So why do we redistrict?

- In order to ensure that each representative to the House of Representatives has roughly the same number of constituents

So how do we determine that? (using census data)

So how often do we redistrict?

## So how often do we redistrict?

- Every 10 years (following the US census)
  - How long the process takes exactly, varies by state
    - Some states only have a single district and thus don't redistrict at the national congressional level, but may redistrict at smaller scales
    - Most recently: Washington's redistricting was signed into law in February 2012.

Following the 2010 census, each district is supposed to have on average 711,000 people.

Washington gained a seat after the 2010 census (as did some other western and southern states, while the northeast mostly lost seats)

## So how often do we redistrict?

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    - Most recently: Washington's redistricting was signed into law in February 2012.
- History:  
[http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/12/21/us/census-districts.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/12/21/us/census-districts.html?_r=0)

To see the history of how states have gained and lost votes, visit:

[http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/12/21/us/census-districts.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/12/21/us/census-districts.html?_r=0).

Looking at changing congressional seat numbers over time is a crude indicator of shifting population centers in the US.

Questions?

So how do we redistrict?

## So how do we redistrict?

- Depends on the state:
  - Some states have only one district: 7 states
  - State legislatures redraw boundaries: 31 states
    - Many have backup plans in case of gridlock
  - Advisory commissions redraw boundaries, legislatures approve boundaries: 6 states
  - Politician commissions redraw boundaries: 2 states
  - Independent commissions redraw boundaries: 4 states

States with only one district: Alaska, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Delaware, Vermont.

State legislatures: usually by a simple majority vote in both houses, though two states (Connecticut and Maine) require two-thirds majorities. Most states allow the governor to veto the decision (though 5 don't: Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina). Many have backup plans in case of gridlock such as the governor drawing the districts, the secretary of the state drawing the districts, backup commissions appointed by the legislature, commissions of other statewide elected officials, etc.

Advisory commissions: commissions redraw lines and recommend such 'solutions' to the legislature, but the legislatures are not necessarily required to adhere to these recommendations. (Iowa, Ohio, Virginia, New York, Rhode Island, Maine)

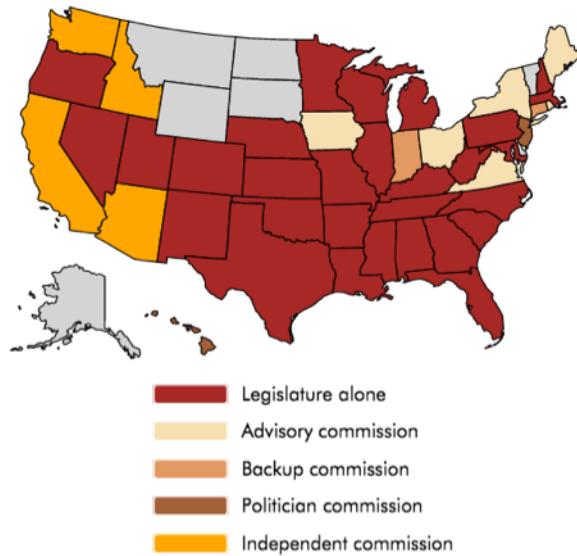
In New Jersey and Hawaii, a commission of appointed or elected politicians redraws the boundaries. (this is also used as a backup plan by a number of other states)

Independent commissions: (Washington, California, Idaho, Arizona) How the

commissions are assigned varies from state to state, but generally do not include legislatures or other elected officials

## Redistricting by state

Congressional districts



Who is on Washington's Independent Commission?

## Who is on Washington's Independent Commission?

- Five people (Four voting, one non-voting):
  - One registered voter appointed by the majority state senate leader
  - One registered voter appointed by the minority state senate leader
  - One registered voter appointed by the majority house of representatives leader
  - One registered voter appointed by the minority house of representatives leader
  - Non-Voting: One chair person appointed by the previous four (if they can't agree, appointed by the state supreme court)

The state legislature can amend the commission's maps by a two-thirds vote in both the senate and the house of representatives.

## Who has the power?

- Depends on the state:
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    - Many have backup plans in case of gridlock
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Who has control/power in each of these systems?

Questions?

## Plan for Today

- Another Look at Segregation in the US
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- Gerrymandering

What is gerrymandering?

## What is gerrymandering?

- The manipulation of electoral boundaries so as to favor one group over another

## Gerrymandering

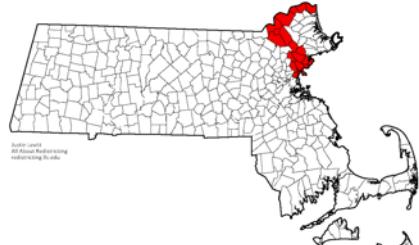


1812: Redrawing  
Massachusetts state senate  
election districts under the  
then governor Elbridge  
Gerry to benefit his  
political party

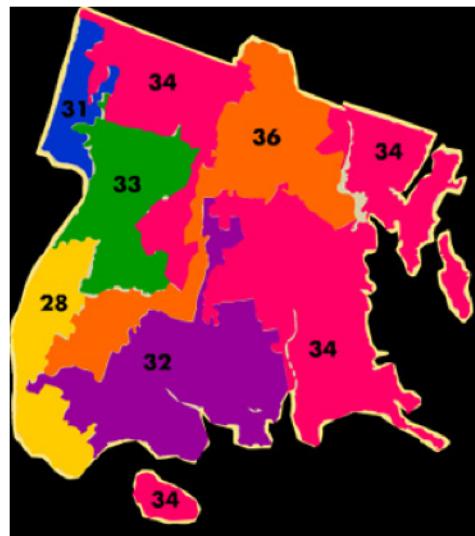
The term was first used by Boston Gazette:

Gerry's Salamander ->  
“Gerrymander”

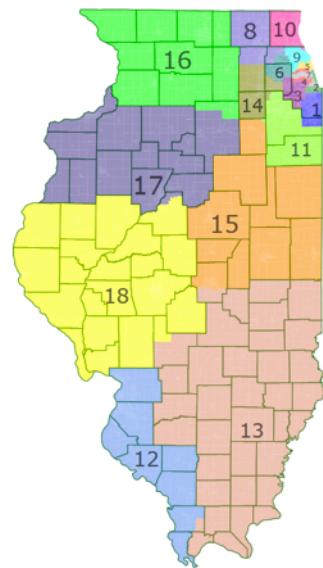
# Gerrymandering



## Gerrymandering in Brooklyn



## Gerrymandering in Chicago



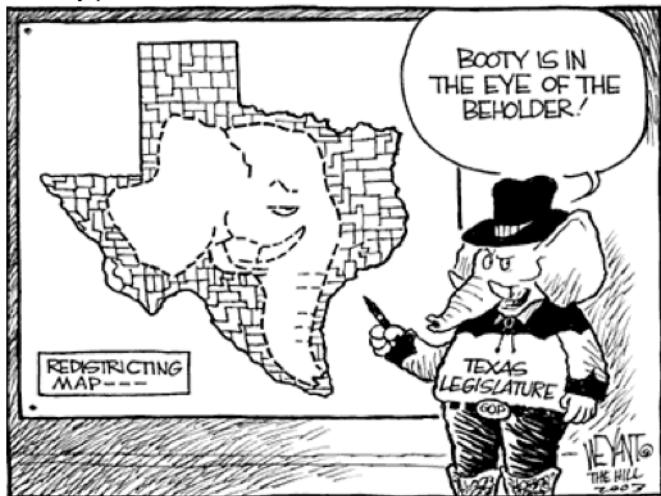
So what is the difference between gerrymandering and redistricting?

So what is the difference between gerrymandering and redistricting?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24yc5pOGn2Y>

This film clip does a great job of explaining the difference and shows more examples.

## Gerrymandering



Political Cartoon

So why gerrymander?

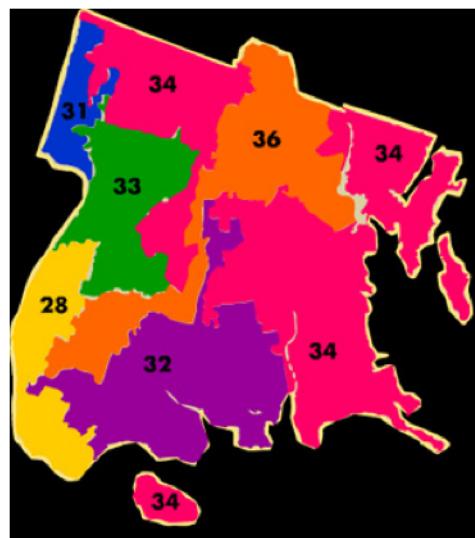
## So why gerrymander?

- To benefit a particular political party
- To protect a particular incumbent (or oust an incumbent)
- To give advantage to/disadvantage a particular group (interest group/racial group/ethnic group/age group/etc.)

What is an incumbent?

## Gerrymandering in Brooklyn

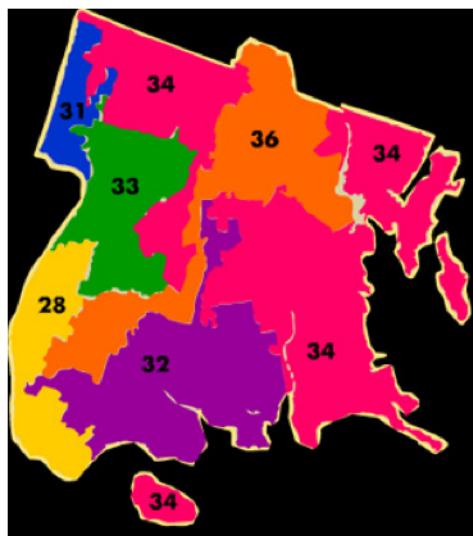
Gerrymandering done  
to protect incumbents



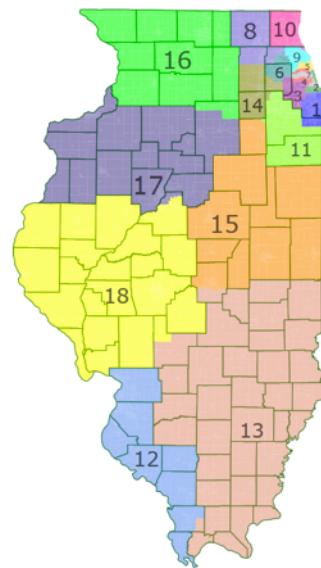
## Gerrymandering in Brooklyn

Gerrymandering done  
to protect incumbents

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9DYdm-Dw3o>

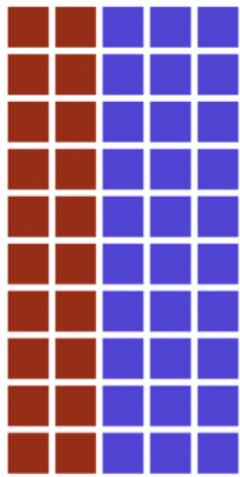


## Gerrymandering in Chicago



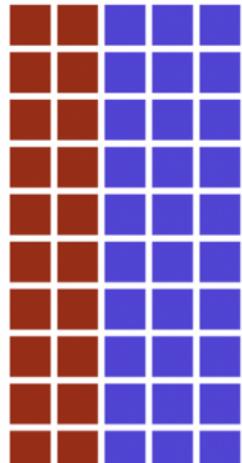
Gerrymandering done to  
concentrate the Hispanic population

50  
people

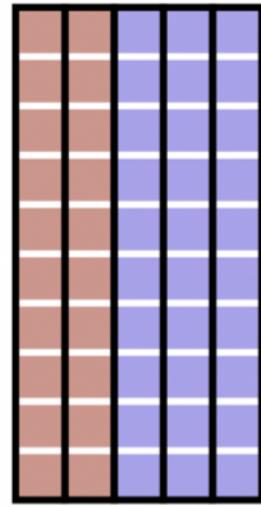


**60% blue,  
40% red**

50  
people



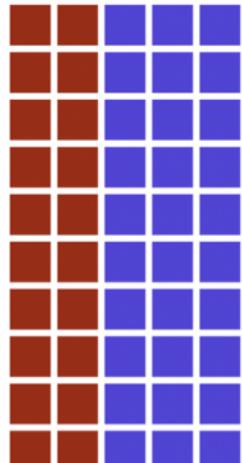
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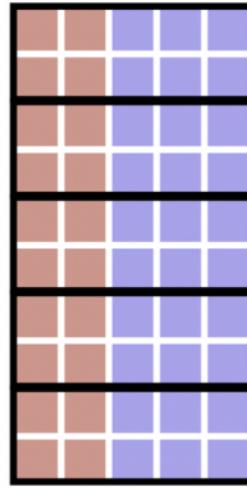
3 blue districts,  
2 red districts

**BLUE WINS**

50  
people



**60% blue,  
40% red**

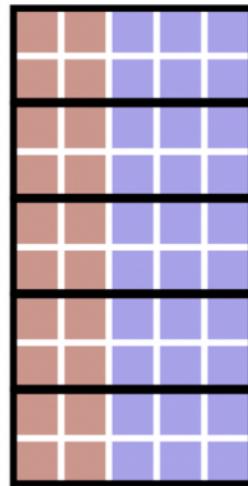


**5 blue districts,  
0 red districts**

**BLUE WINS**

Does anyone know what we call this?

Cracking: A method of gerrymandering in which a particular population is broken up and distributed amongst a number of districts in order to minimize their voting impact

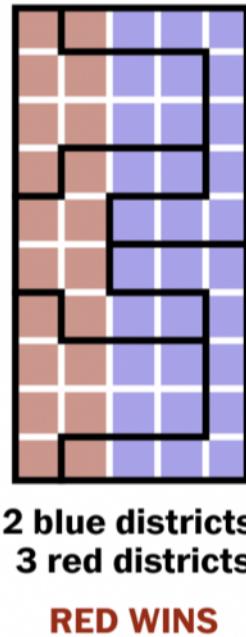
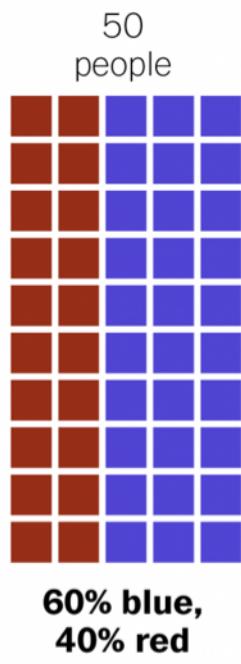


**5 blue districts,  
0 red districts**

**BLUE WINS**

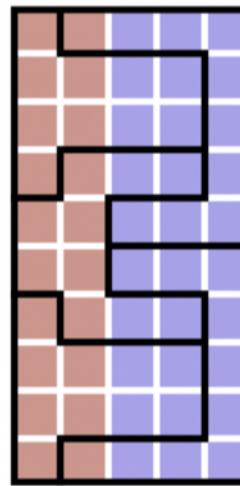
In this example, the red population is cracked between all 5 districts.

This is also sometimes called splintering.



And what is this called?

Packing: A method of gerrymandering in which a particular population is packed into a single district (or small number of districts) in order to maximize their voting impact in that district or to minimize their voting impact elsewhere



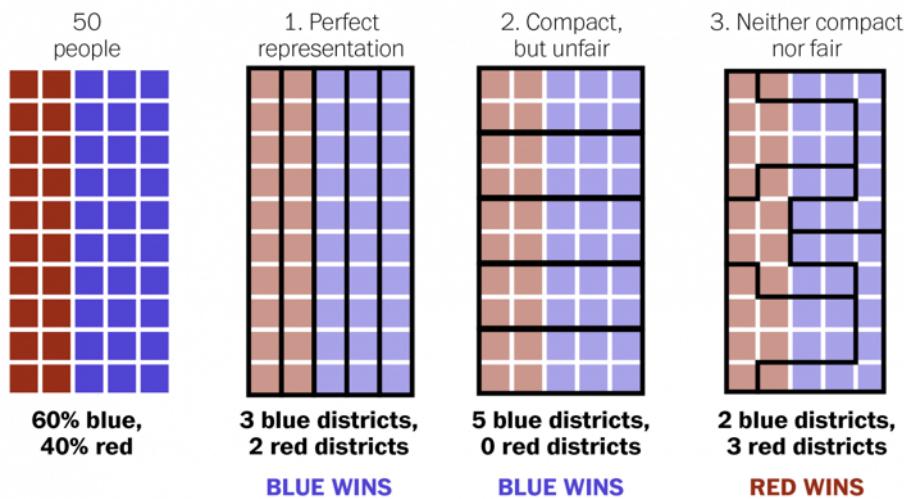
**2 blue districts,  
3 red districts**

**RED WINS**

In this case, Blue's impact is minimized by packing. This is also part of the argument for doing away with majority minority districts as there is a fine line between packing to increase impact and packing to decrease impact.

## Gerrymandering, explained

Three different ways to divide 50 people into five districts



WASHINGTONPOST.COM/WONKBLOG

Adapted from Stephen Nass

Notice that some of these are described as compact, but others aren't. What does that mean?

## Terms

- Racial Gerrymandering I: cracking and packing to attempt to dilute/weaken the minority vote
- Racial Gerrymandering II: cracking and packing to attempt to strengthen the minority vote (usually through the creation of majority-minority districts)

You sometimes see these terms, but in truth, they seem to be falling out of favor as the effect of majority-minority districts is called into question.

What are the rules?

## What are the rules?

- Equal Representation: same number of people per district
- Compactness: physical proximity of one part of the district with another
- Contiguity: must be an unbroken shape

Contiguity is the rule in many states, but not all.

## Gerrymandering Exercise

*	*	*	*	*
*		*	*	
			*	
				*

1. Divide the squares as evenly as possible
2. Divide the squares in order to give the shaded squares an advantage
3. Divide the squares in order to give the starred squares an advantage

I am going to pass out sample jurisdictions (5x5 squares) that need to be divided into five equal groups (of 5 each).

First, try to divide the groups as evenly as possible.

Second, try to divide the groups so that the shaded squares have the advantage.

Third, try to divide the groups so that the starred squares have the advantage.

Take a few minutes to draw groups on your own and then compare your drawings with the people sitting near you.

## Gerrymandering Exercise

*	*	*	*	*
*		*	*	
			*	
				*

Any surprises?

Challenges?

In section on Monday, you are going to be doing a much more realistic and in depth version of this.

Questions?

Is gerrymandering legal?

## Is gerrymandering legal?

- To a degree:

"It's kind of a Goldilocks problem. You must take race into account somewhat to comply with the Voting Rights Act, but if you take into account too much the racial considerations you can get in trouble as well. The question is how do you know when you've gotten it just right."

-Rick Hasen, Law Professor, UC Irvine

And that balance tends to fluctuate with the balance of the supreme court. The supreme court has on its docket now a case that will likely clarify its current threshold of what is allowable: *Bethune-Hill v. Virginia State Board of Elections*.

What strategies have been proposed to avoid gerrymandering?

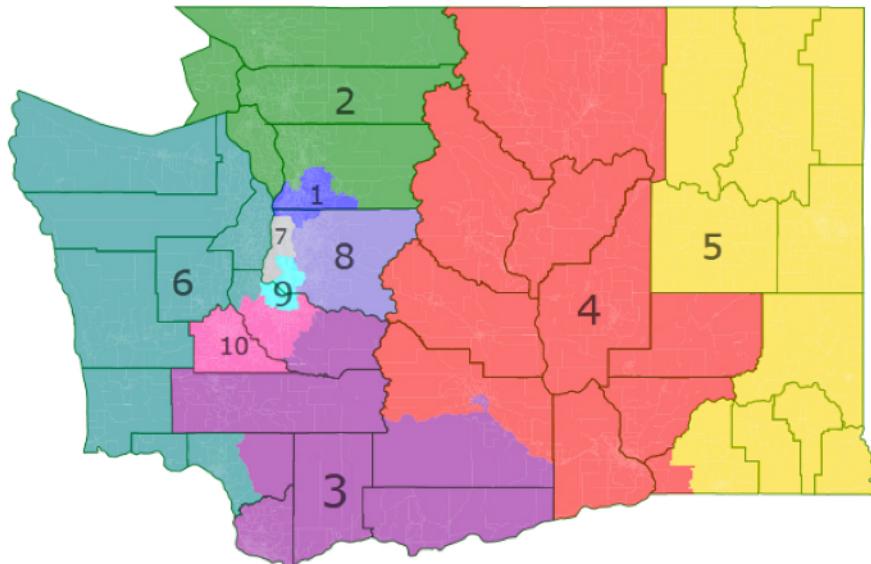
Take a few minutes to recall from the reading and talk to your neighbors

What strategies have been proposed to avoid gerrymandering?

- Independent Commissions
- Computerized Redistricting
- The Collapse of the Congressional District System

What do you think about computer produced redistricting models?

## Washington's districts:



Likely because Washington uses an independent commission, our districts are rather compact (most likely not gerrymandered) and tend to follow county lines where possible.

## An interesting case: Prisons

- New York State has received recent attention because it has a large prison population in some rural areas of upstate New York. While convicted felons cannot vote and those prisoners who can vote often continue to vote in their home communities (generally urban areas downstate), they count as part of the rural upstate population for the purposes of redistricting.

Why does this matter? Whose vote is being strengthened by this?