

# Political Science 17.20

## Introduction to American Politics

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**Political Geography**  
Lecture 20 (April 25, 2013)

# Outline

**1** Geography Matters

**2** Geography Misleads

## 1 Geography Matters

## 2 Geography Misleads

# Tobler's First Law of Geography

“Everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things.”—W. F. Tobler

- **Segregation**: similar people **forced** to live together (e.g., black ghettos)
- **Homophily**: people **choose** to live near others like themselves (e.g., hipsters in Williamsburg)
- **Socialization**: people **become** more similar to those around them (e.g., Southerner moves north and loses drawl)

# Political Implications of Tobler's Law

- Different kinds of people (voters) are not distributed evenly across space.
- Different areas have different political leanings.
- The political effects of geography are greatest **single-member district plurality** (SMDP) systems

# Example: Leftists Cluster in Cities

Across industrial societies. . .

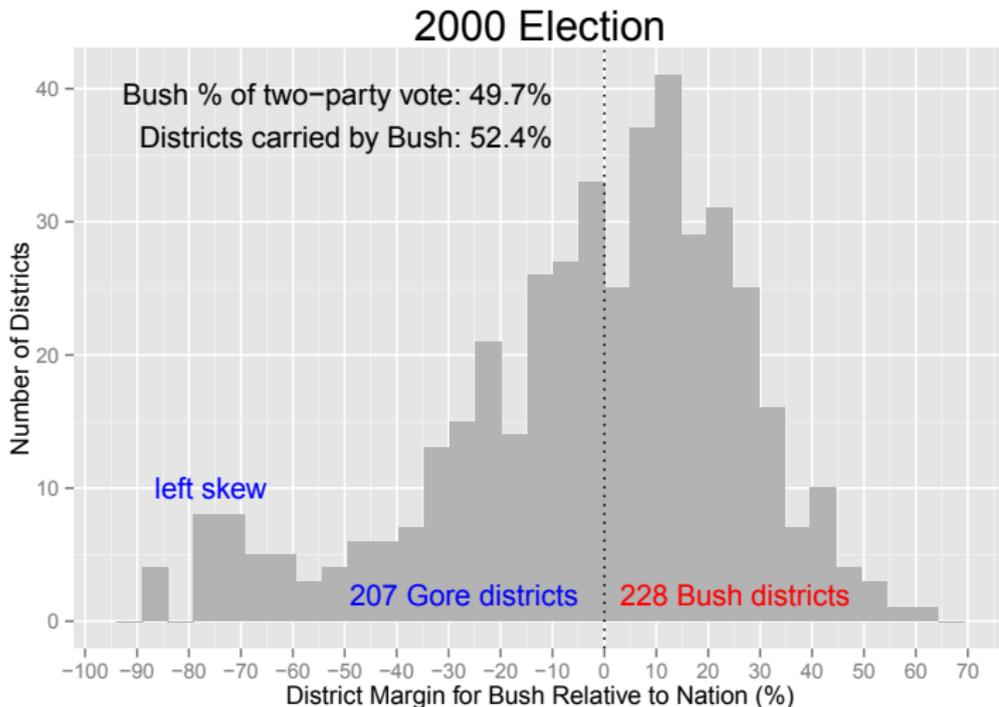
- Industrial working class concentrated in urban areas  
→ **economic liberalism** (socialism)
  - Highly educated professionals attracted to urban culture  
→ **social liberalism** (secular cosmopolitanism)
- ⇒ Liberals (US Democrats) are highly concentrated in cities.
- Also true of conservative-leaning groups (wealthy white suburbs, Mormon Utah), but less extreme.

# 2012: Obama (Blue) vs. Romney (Red)

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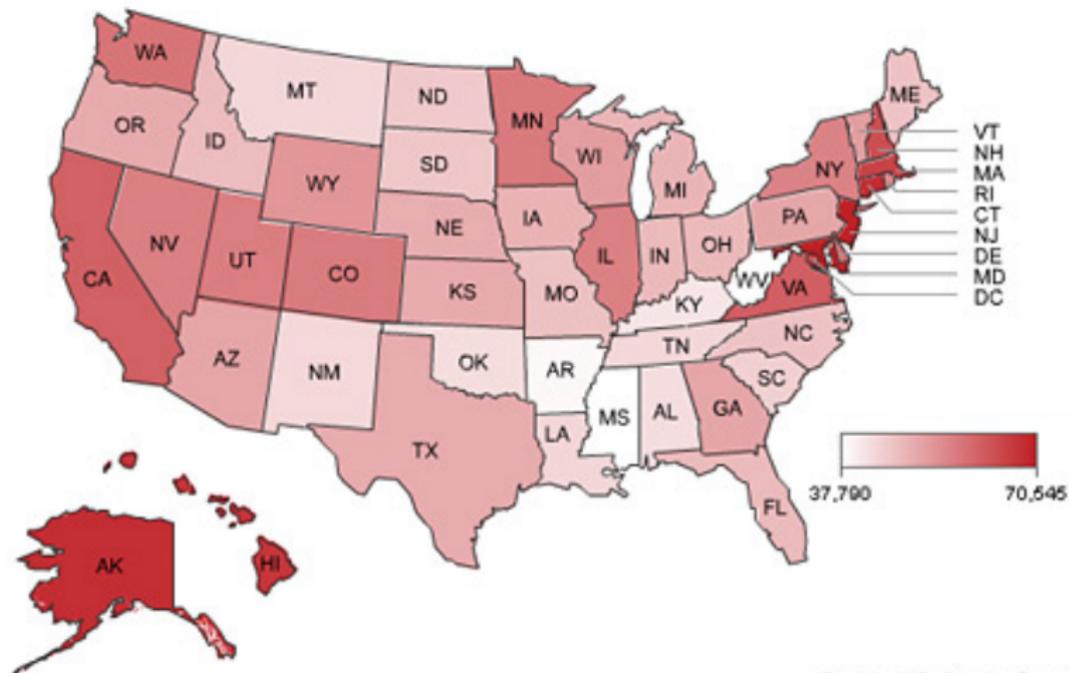
To see a map illustrating the 2012 Presidential Election Results by County, go to:  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2012nationwidecountymapshadedbypercentagewon.svg>.

# Electoral Bias: Democrats Are Inefficiently Distributed





# Median Income, by State



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

1 Geography Matters

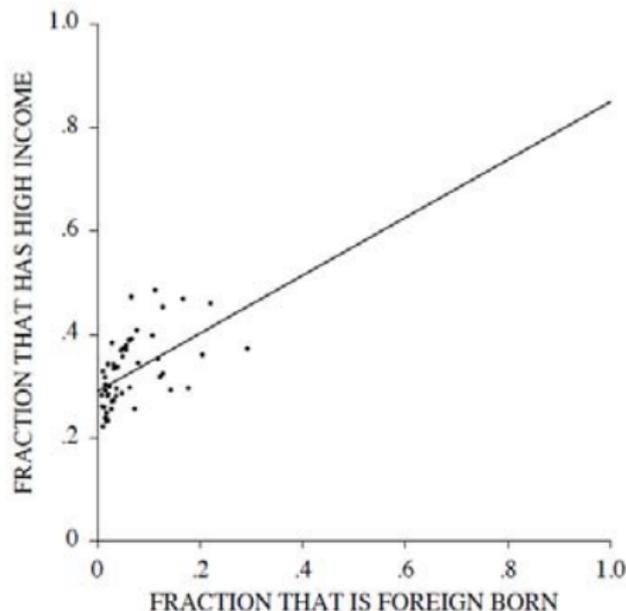
2 Geography Misleads

# The Ecological Fallacy

The “**ecological fallacy**”: inferring relationships (correlations) among individuals from relationships among geographic units.

# The Ecological Fallacy: Immigration and Income

% Immigrant  $\times$  % Wealthy, by State



- Correlation across states: +0.52
- Correlation across people: -0.05
- How can this be?

# Income and Republicanism: Individuals vs. States

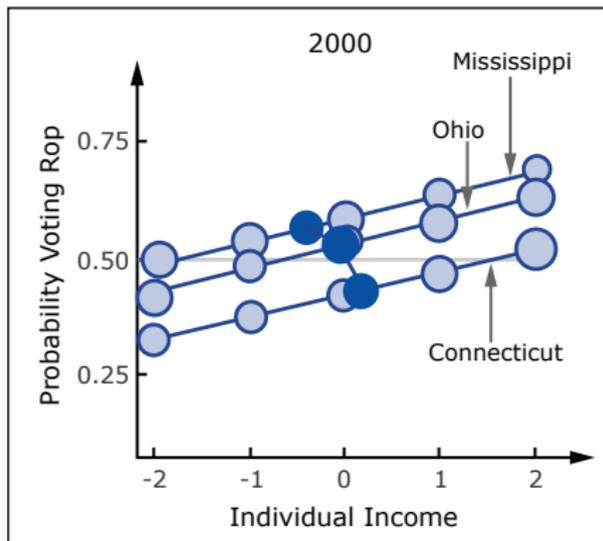


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- Richer **states** vote more Democratic (solid dots)
  - cultural differences
- Richer **people** vote more Republican (hollow dots)
  - economic differences
- Income **variation** is much greater within states than across, so national relationship is positive.

# Income and Republicanism: State Context Matters

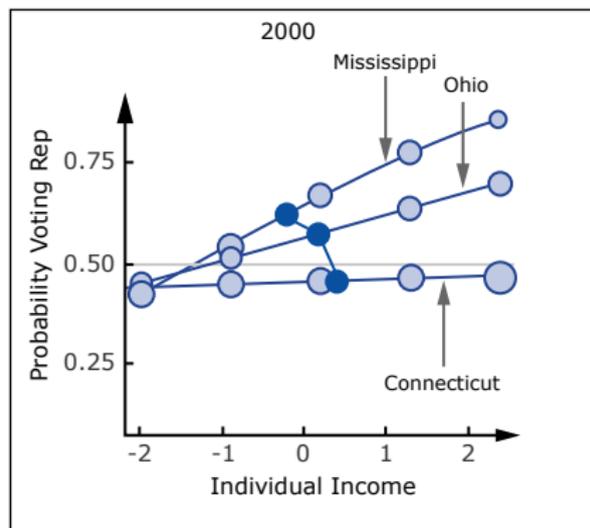


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- Income matters more in rich states than in poor states.
- It is the rich whose voting differs across states, not the poor, probably because the cultural/religious attitudes of the rich vary more (homophily?)

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