

Guided Conversation March 2 2020

Conversation leader: Regan FALCON

The Democratic primary taking place in the U.S. March 3rd is “Super Tuesday” when 13 more states will hold primary elections. This week I would like to discuss how the primary election process works in the U.S. and the pros and cons of this unique system.

Reading #1: What are primaries and caucuses and how do they work?

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-51273719>

Reading #2: How to Win the Democratic Nomination, and Why It Could Get Complicated

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/22/us/politics/democratic-primary-dnc-superdelegates.html?searchResultPosition=1>

Discussion questions:

1. Have you been following the primary elections in the U.S.? What are your opinions of the candidates? Have you watched any of the debates?
2. Primary elections happen at different times in different states. What are the pros and cons of this system? Does it give people more time to get to know the candidates? Does it give too much power to certain states?
3. How does the American election and campaign system compare to France and other countries?
4. What is the difference between a primary election and a caucus?
5. What is the difference between plurality and majority?
6. Should a candidate who doesn't do well in early primary drop out of the race? What are the pros and cons of continuing their campaign?
7. What are “Superdelegates”? What are their role in the nominating process? Do they give the party establishment too much control?
8. Four years ago, the Republican Party also had a hard time choosing a candidate through the primary election system. Is this a sign that the system no longer works?
9. Many people in America think it is time to get rid of the two party system to make room for a third or fourth party. France for example has multiple political parties. How would this change the primary elections and campaigns? Do you think having more than 2 parties would allow for a better representation of the people in a general election?

Vocabulary:

Wonkier - The last question at Wednesday night's Democratic debate covered much wonkier territory...

Rift- It exposed a rift over what could become an extremely relevant topic.

Pundits - Every year pundits imagine such a scenario.

Rigged - Some of Mr. Sander's supporters claimed that superdelegates were responsible for having “rigged” the nomination system...

Coalesce - Voters may begin to coalesce around a single candidate...