

Professor analyzes election results

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In response to the dramatic shift in political party of this year's midterm elections, Professor Emeritus of political science at the Eagleton Institute of Politics Gerald Pomper delivered a presentation Tuesday morning at the Rutgers Club on the College Avenue campus.

Pomper, who specializes in analyzing congressional elections, said he looked at exit polls, election results and the information he had collected over the years in his book series, "The Election of ..."

He also discussed American students' lack of enthusiasm in voting during off-presidential year elections, noting that the decrease in young voter turnout might have been a deciding factor in this year's congressional election results.

"Only 11 percent of people under 30 turned out to vote this election, as opposed to the 18 percent in the 2008 [presidential election]," Pomper said.

University Professor Emeritus of political science Gordon Schochet said he also saw more student activity in the 2008 presidential elections than he did this year.

"The enthusiasm that I saw here on campus and in other people reported across the country worked very hard of Obama," Schochet said.

He said President Barack Obama and his policy advisors are to blame for not informing their student supporters about what they are up to these days, isolating their biggest voter base.

"I think Obama was kind of seen as a superhero ... and the superhero has become a very important figure in the lives of the young people," Schochet said. "And part of what has happened is that the superhero turned into a Barbie doll."

University Professor Emeritus of economics Shanti Tangri said students should be more encouraged to engage in intellectual activities like voting.

"There is a lot of activity going on campus, which is very wonderful," Tangri said. "But still, you take any student ethnic organization and I don't think they participate in these intellectual activities as much as the University encourages."

The outcome of this year's election shows that Americans are ideologically conservative but liberal in spending, Pomper said.

"Most elections are retrospective," he said. "Voters vote on how good conditions are now ... they do not vote on policy,

but they vote on the past."

People are currently not satisfied with Obama's government, which shows people vote depending on how they feel at election time, Pomper said.

"The economy was crappy in 2000 and voters were angry at the people in power," he said. "The economy's crappy in 2010 and the voters are still angry with the people in power [but] now the people in charge are Democrats."

Americans are going to be in a policy deadlock in the future because Congress will not agree on any decisions, Pomper said.

"The president is of one party, two-thirds of the Congress is of another ... they don't like each other," he said. "The Republicans are divided, the Senate is a mess divided into a billion parts."

The future of American politics will involve a lot of shift in political parties, he said.

Pomper's presentation was met with positive response.

"He's very analytical, very thorough. I'd like to see more Gerry Pompers on the television," said Raymond Bodnar, president of the Retired Faculty Association and a University alumnus.

Schochet agreed that Pomper's presentation was well done but disagreed with Pomper's strictly technical approach toward the last two elections.

"I think he tends too much to look at the last two elections in a larger American context. I think there was something unique about the 2008 elections," Schochet said. "He acknowledges, but I don't think sufficiently emphasizes the fact that we elected a black president."

Tangri, who agreed with Pomper, said he wishes Pomper delved more into the nature of the American political system.

"I would have liked to have had the opportunity to discuss some issues further, including the nature of our system," Tangri said. "He tends to be a very realistic guy and tends to be much more focused on actual experience of the system. My interests tend to hold from policy to theory."

Both Tangri and Schochet mirrored Bodnar's high praise of Pomper.

"I think Pomper is one of the greatest teachers who was at Rutgers. He's one of the smartest, most intelligent, most insightful students of American politics that I've ever known," Schochet said. "I think [his presentation] was terrific."