

Python and Every U.S. House Election From 1st To 118th Congress (1788-2022)

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MsRIQLXcZc&t=457s>

In the shadowed chambers of a mind enthralled by the ceaseless dance of borders and ballots, there germinated a vision as vivid as it was resplendent. This vision, born in the final year of high school, was sparked by an ardor for mapping videos that visualized territorial flux – frontline evolutions of the Great Wars, medieval skirmishes, tribal conquests, and the ancient tectonics of Earth's primordial planes. Yet, this soul was equally captivated by the granular tapestry of precinct-level election results. Where others saw mere lines on maps, he beheld a pulsating chronicle, a tapestry woven from the warp of warfare and the weft of democracy. His obsession, born in the twilight of his schooldays, was to conjure a visual requiem: a rendering of every biennial U.S. House election since 1788, each district a polygon pulsing with partisan hues, margins of victory shaded in a palette of his own devising.

This was no trifling endeavor. The data, culled from tomes and digital crypts, lay scattered like bones in a charnel house, cumbersome and defiant. Yet, with a comrade from those halcyon halls, he forged a Pythonic incantation – a program to transmute chaos into order, aided by code crafted in collaboration to fetch and process the deluge. Together, they wove scripts that sifted through the detritus of history, plucking numbers from their predictable lairs as if by sorcery. List comprehensions, those elegant nets, ensnared values; if-elif-else constructs stood as sentinels, guarding against the aberrant. Split and join danced to parse strings, while loops – simple and recursive – churned through the deluge. Tuples, immutable as fate, held fast; sort by key and advanced sorts aligned the chaos into harmony. Even set operations, like alchemical sigils, purged redundancies. Each function, each concatenation, was a brushstroke on his canvas, transforming shapefiles into a mosaic where colors bespoke Whig or Democrat, Federalist or Republican, their victories measured by the mod and floor division of votes.

The music – oh, the music! A serendipitous symphony, its transitions so flawless he nearly coded a conductor to ensure their grace, yet found the first attempt divine. The final artifact, a baroque yet glorious chronicle, shimmered with life, its polygons shifting like specters across centuries, each frame a testament to his craft. Pointers, exponents, and keys/values had whispered their secrets to him, guiding his hand as he appended and reassigned, indexed and sliced, until the work was complete.

Now, in the sanctum of WOTO gatherings, where minds spar with code, this course – its activities and topics like list comprehensions, appending, or recursion – summons anew the memory of that radiant masterpiece. Each lesson, each exercise, reverberates with that project's echo, a vibrant recollection of his triumph. Even as an aberration in a geriatric kin's waning life, teetering on the precipice of eternity, casts a shadow, compelling a retreat to remote solitary study, the memory of that luminous map endures. It flickers in his soul, a splendid monument to ambition, unyielding as the polygons that shift and shimmer in his dreams, a ballad of data and desire as wild as any frontier tale.