



Political Culture, Participation, and Institutions

In this lesson:

- Political Ideology
- Political Socialization
- Public Opinion and Polling
- Voting and Participation

Political Ideology

- **Whole set of values and beliefs about purpose and scope of government**
- **The groups in the General Political Spectrum from Left to Right:**
 - Communism
 - Socialism
 - Progressivism
 - Liberalism
 - Conservatism
 - Far right
 - Alternative right
 - Facism
- **Economic Regulation/Control of Economy:**
 - **Left: want less market freedom, more government regulation, pro labor (workers)**
 - Liberalism: higher taxes, pro union, more business and environmental regulations, regulate Wall Street
 - Socialism: Democratic control of workplace, worker ownership of the means of production, seizure of private property (factories)
 - **Right: want more market freedom, less government regulation, pro ownership**
 - Conservatism: lower taxes, pro corporation, favor private enterprise solutions, remove government regulations
 - Fascism: Merging of corporation and state, control of economy and government by big business
- **Social Freedom:**
 - **Left: want more independent freedom, less government regulation, less emphasis on tradition**
 - Liberalism: legalize gay marriage, pro-choice with limits, decriminalize marijuana, allow flag burning, “secular values”, pro immigration
 - Socialism: tax payer funded health care, abolish borders, free college, legalize drug use, legalize prostitution



- **Right: want less individual freedom, more government regulation, and more emphasis on tradition**
 - Conservatism: preserve traditional marriage, pro-life, tough on crime, some speech restrictions, “judeo-christian values”, limit immigration
 - Facism: return to male dominate household, criminalize non traditional sex and gender practices, imprison/deport minority
- **Liberals: “The Left”, “Left Wing”, progressive, Democratic, Blue States**
 - Believe
 - Equality
 - Political and social reform
 - Government regulation on economy
 - Expand help for poor, minorities, women
 - Abortion rights
 - Higher taxes on right
 - Oppose
 - Increase in military spending and involvement
 - Cutting welfare spending programs
- **Conservatives: “The Right”, “The Right Wing”, traditional, Republican, Red States**
 - Believe:
 - Liberty
 - Expansion of military
 - Free Market solutions to economic problems
 - Less government regulation of business/lower taxes
 - Religious issues tradition
 - Oppose
 - More money to welfare programs
 - Obamacare/national health care
- **Moderates/Independents:**
 - **Most Americans identify as a mix of Liberal and Conservative**
- **Leftists**
 - political/social revolution
 - Basic needs met for all
 - Replace market based economy
- **Libertarians:**
 - Far right on economic issues
 - Far left on social issues

Political Socialization:

- **Process by which one develops political opinions**
- **American Democratic Values:**



- **Majority Rule:** democracy functions through an idea of “majority rule”
- **Minority Rights:** those not in the majority should be protected
- **Equality:** every person is treated equally under the law & political processes
- **Private Property:** what is yours is yours under the law/capitalism
- **Individual Freedom:** every person has civil liberties and is protected
- **Compromise:** different people/interests can combine to form policy addressing all
- **Limited Government:** the government is restricted through will of people and law
- **Forces of Political Socialization**
 - **Family (THE MOST IMPORTANT)**
 - Kids mimic parent’s views
 - 60% of adults carry same party ID as parents
 - Weekly Reader Poll: children answer as parents would
 - **School and College:**
 - Teach American values of democracy, equality, love of country, pledge
 - College = more liberal/open-minded
 - No significant effect on party ID from BA
 - More years in higher education - more liberal voters
 - **Media**
 - Informs public about issues
 - Sets political agenda (focus on certain issues)
 - Biased media = public use to confirm their beliefs
 - **Religion**
 - More often people go to church - more likely to vote
 - Evangelical Christians - conservative Republicans
 - Catholics - moderates
 - Jews - liberal Democrats
 - **Race & Ethnicity**
 - Shapes our basic understanding of political events based on historical/modern events
 - African Americans - democrats
 - Latinos - little more liberal
 - Asian Americans - little more conservative
 - Whites - most conservative
 - **Gender**
 - Gender Gap = women (liberal); men (conservative)
 - Women favor more welfare, closing wage gap, addressing women’s health issues, maintain abortion rights
 - **Age**



- Younger = more liberal and less likely to vote
- Older = more conservative and more likely to vote
- **Geography/Location**
 - Northeast/West Coast = liberal
 - South = conservative
 - Urban = liberal
 - Rural = conservative
- **Recent Events**
 - Events create positive/negative voter attributes
 - Watergate - distrust in government
 - 9/11 attacks - increases patriotism
 - Iraq War - anti war sentiment

Public Opinion and Polling:

- **Public Opinion:** how people think or feel about certain things (issues, candidates, etc.)
- How polls should be set up in order to properly gauge public opinion:
 - **Sample:** subset of population selected to predict opinion of whole group
 - **Timing:** polls are most accurate right before election
 - **Phrasing of questions:** ask neutral questions
 - **Random sampling:** every person has the same chance of being selected
 - **Stratified sampling:** groups specifically chosen to accurately represent groups
 - **Contacting Respondents:** best way - random digit dialing
- **Types of Political Polls:**
 - **Push poll:** “fake polls” - act like polls to hurt opposing candidate by planting idea
 - **Tracking poll:** daily poll to measure impact of short term campaign developments
 - **Exit poll:** conducted as voters leave; measure actual voters and turnout, used to predict results
- **Problems with polling:**
 - **Margin of Error:** + or - % points that show inaccuracy of polling
 - **Sampling Error:** accuracy depends on quality of sample
 - **Limited Respondent Options Intensity :** Yes or No questions that can't measure passion of opinion of if person will vote
 - **Lack of Respondent Knowledge:** polls don't really work with issues when people surveyed don't know about them

Voting and Participation:

- **Political Efficacy:**



- **High Efficacy: the belief that you can influence government and that your vote matters; likely to participate**
- **Low Efficacy: belief that you don't have any impact; unlikely to participate**
- **Popular ways to politicize:**
 - Voting (most common and easiest)
 - Form interest groups
 - Contact public officials
 - Campaigning
 - Donating
 - Running for office
- **Expansion of Voting**
 - **Suffrage: right to vote, determined by law**
 - U.S. Trends
 - Suffrage has been expanded as restrictive requirements have been eliminated
 - Authority over suffrage has transferred from the states to the federal government
- **Low Voter turnout**
 - **Voting in the U.S. has decreased compared with other nations (50% or less)**
 - If election is considered important = higher turnout
 - Still, presidential election have more voter turnout (more than 50%) than others
 - Reasons for low turnout
 - Failure to mobilize voters
 - No perceived difference between candidates/parties
 - Mistrust of government
 - apathy/low political efficacy
 - Tuesday Elections
 - Registration & voter ID laws (Motor Voter Laws)