

## **American Political Ideologies and Beliefs**

What is politics?

- the struggle amongst groups to control or influence government
- political efficacy- how successful you are at politics

What is government?

- institution through which the state makes and enforces laws

Features of the state

- territory

- population

- government

- sovereignty

- nation – common language, history, religion, culture

- nation-state – when the boundaries of a nation and state coincide

Public Opinion

- the feelings of a large number of people on a certain issue

Political Opinion

- Public opinion on political issues

How is public opinion formed?

- Political Socialization

- the process by which people acquire their political beliefs & attitudes

- family

- school & community values

- peer groups

- socioeconomic status

- mass media

Political Spectrum

- Liberals = Left

- Emphasis: freedom, equality, fraternity, rights, progress, reform, internationalism

- Conservatives = Right

- Emphasis: authority, hierarchy, order, duty, tradition, reaction, nationalism

- Moderates = Middle

- Emphasis: compromise and combination of factors above

- Definitions and positions change depending on time and place

Measurement of Public Opinion

- Public opinion polls

- samples

- must be representative & random

- census tracts

- geographic areas based on U.S. census

- types of polls

- in person

- mail

- telephone
- internet
- problems with polls
  - biased samples
  - misuse of polls
  - reliability
  - wording of questions

## The Mass Media

- TV, Radio, Newspapers, Magazines, Internet, Movies, Books
  - gatekeeper
  - scorekeeper
  - watchdog

## Issues of Bias

- Selectivity
- Prominence
- Emotional Impact
- Competition
- Monopolies

## Propaganda

- media designed to encourage a particular point of view
  - glittering generalities
  - testimonials
  - name-calling/negative advertising
  - plain-folks
  - card-stacking
  - bandwagon effect
  - fallacy

- political campaigns will often stage media events to gather attention

## Interest Groups

- everyone falls into many different interest groups
- IG don't run candidates for office
- allow citizens to more effectively communicate with gov.
  - utilize numbers to gather power & influence
  - grassroots

## Types of interest groups

- business
  - MLB
- labor
  - NEA/AFT, UAW, AFL-CIO
- agriculture
  - farmer's associations
- professionals
  - ABA, AMA
- environmentalists

- Sierra Club, Greenpeace
- social causes
  - Ralph Nader – consumer safety
- governmental
  - military

How do interest groups influence policy?

- Lobbying & Lobbyists
  - access & influence are key traits

- Functions of lobbyists
  - Provide information
  - Draft bills
  - Provide election support
  - Media campaigns
    - letters & advertising
  - Court actions

- Lobbyists are very loosely regulated by government
  - only have to register as a lobbyist, no oversight

- Political Action Committees

- Interest groups use PAC's to funnel money to functions
    - 527 organization under the IRS

- Affiliated PAC's
    - AMA, ABA, etc

- Independent PAC's
    - not affiliated with organization, just general cause

- SuperPAC's
    - new structure that allows corporations to contribute
    - Citizens United v. FEC

- Strategies for gaining influence with money

- incumbents
    - provide financial support for immediate influence
  - elections
    - provide support for all legitimate sides
    - guarantees access after election