

Government Basics & Federalism

Read chapters 1 & 4

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

Origins of the state

Force theory

physical or military force to establish sovereignty

Evolutionary theory

government came from family political structures

Divine Right theory

governments are chosen by God

Social Contract theory

developed by John Locke

government is an agreement between rulers and subjects

basis for Declaration of Independence

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

Government Systems

Unitary System

all government functions centralized at national level

Confederate System

all government functions decentralized to the local level

Federal System

power is divided among national, state, and local government

alternative to unitary or confederate systems
How is the division of powers decided in the U.S.?
expressed powers
 directly stated in the Constitution
 collect taxes, coin money, declare war, etc.
implied powers
 Article 1, Section 8
 elastic clause
 “necessary and proper”
inherent powers
 immigration, foreign affairs, etc.
state government powers
 reserved by the 10th amendment
 14th amendment
 extends civil rights/liberties to state governments
concurrent powers
 simultaneously at multiple levels of government
 tax collection
denied powers
 torture, ex post facto laws, bill of attainder

Government Types

Anarchy

the absence of government

Autocracy

one ruler has absolute control of all aspects of society

totalitarian dictatorship

North Korea – Kim Jung-un

absolute monarchy

France – Louis XIV – “Sun King”

Constitutional Monarchy

ruler selected by heredity but limited by constitution/legislature

Great Britain today

Theocracy

when leaders of government and religion are the same

laws of religion and government are same

Iran – ayatollahs

Oligarchy

small group of leaders exercise power

Soviet Union – Politburo

Direct Democracy

all citizens vote on all decisions made by the government

Ancient Athens, some small towns today

Representative democracy

Republic

people elect others to make decisions

Parliamentary – legislature elects executive

Presidential – people elect executive

How do democracies work?

individual liberty

majority rule with minority rights

free elections

political parties