

Important Terms/Vocabulary

Classical liberalism, which asserts the dignity of the individual and their rational ability to control their own destinies, is central to American political culture. It derives from Enlightenment thinkers

Political ideologies

An ideology is a consistent and integrated system of ideas, values, and beliefs about who should get what, when, and how. While many Americans avoid labeling, preferring to call themselves "moderates," two major ideologies are prominent in American politics:

1. *Modern conservatism* believes in free market capitalism, limited government, and individual self-reliance without government aid. Much of modern conservatism reflects values it shares with classic liberalism, discussed above. Unique conservative perspectives, different from classic liberalism, include pessimism about human nature, belief in the importance of strong law and order measures, and support for efforts to strengthen traditional institutions such as families and churches.

2. *Modern liberalism* believes in a strong government to provide economic security and protection for civil rights, yet it also believes in freedom from government intervention in social conduct. In its commitment to individual dignity, modern liberalism shares much with classic liberalism. It differs, however, in not viewing government as a negative force to be limited but instead favors government action to end discrimination, reduce poverty, provide medical care for all, educate all, and protect the environment. Modern liberalism supports free markets, but it endorses government actions to mitigate what it sees as hardships associated with capitalism. Modern liberals also believe that individual dignity and true equality of opportunity to some extent rest on government action to limit extreme inequalities of income.

There are, of course, other ideologies of importance in American politics. *Neo-conservatives* support liberal goals, but believe that liberal means (big government) are self-defeating. Neo-conservatives are typified by ex-liberals who later became Republicans. *Neo-liberals* support liberal means (big government), but believe social goals favored by liberals must defer to more important economic goals, such as federal industrial policy to promote growth. Neo-liberals include Clinton advisors who favored welfare reform and reduction of the deficit rather than national health care.

Political ideology - Important Terms

conservative A political ideology that, although changing in meaning, adheres to the following principles and practices: on economic matters, it does not favor government efforts to ensure that everyone has a job; on civil rights, does not favor strong federal action to desegregate schools and increase hiring opportunities for minorities; and on political conduct, does not favor tolerance toward protest demonstrations, legalizing marijuana, or protecting the rights of the accused.

elite People with a disproportionate amount of a valued resource.

gender gap Differences between the political views of men and women.

John Q. Public The average man or woman on the street, often portrayed by cartoonists as befuddled.

liberal A political ideology that, although changing in meaning, adheres to the following principles and practices: on economic matters, it favors government efforts to ensure that everyone has a job; on civil rights, it favors strong federal action to desegregate schools and increase hiring opportunities for minorities; and on political conduct, it favors tolerance toward protest demonstrations, legalizing marijuana, and protecting the rights of the accused.

libertarians And adherent of a political ideology that is conservative on economic matters and liberal on social ones. The ideology's goal is the creation of a small, weak government.

Middle America A phrase coined by Joseph Kraft in a 1968 newspaper column to refer to Americans who have moved out of poverty but who are not yet affluent and who cherish the traditional middle-class values.

new class People whose advantages stem not so much from their connections with business as from the growth of government.

norm A standard of right and proper conduct. Elites tend to state the norms by which issues should be settled.

partisanship Identification with a political party.

political elite A person who possesses a disproportionate share of political power.

political ideology A coherent and consistent set of beliefs about who ought to rule, what principles rulers ought to obey, and what policies rulers ought to pursue.

poll A survey of public opinion.

populists An adherent of a political ideology that is liberal on economic matters and conservative on social ones. It believes the government should reduce economic inequality but regulate personal conduct.

pure conservatism A political ideology that is conservative on both economic and personal conduct.

pure liberalism A political ideology that is liberal on both economic and personal conduct.

random sample A sample selected in such a way that any member of the population being surveyed (e.g., all adults or voters) has an equal chance of being selected.

religious tradition The values associated with the major religious denominations in America: Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. In general, Catholic families are somewhat more liberal on economic issues than white Protestant ones, while Jewish families are much more liberal on both economic and social issues than families of either Christian religion.

sampling error The difference between the results from two different samples of the same population. This difference in answers is not significant and its likely size can be computed mathematically. In general, the bigger the sample and the bigger the differences between the percentage of people giving one answer and the percentage giving another, the smaller the error.

silent majority A term referring to people, whatever their economic status, who uphold traditional values, especially against the counterculture of the 1960's.

1. Political Scientists have coined the phrase “the graying of America” to describe a specific shift in demographics. To what does this phrase refer, and how might this phenomenon have an impact on politics?
2. The mass media have a profound influence over what political information is conveyed to the American public. Since most people learn about politics through the news on television, their political knowledge is limited to whatever stories the media outlet chooses to report. At the same time, however, the content of the news is largely determined by ratings. The heads of media organizations contend that they are merely delivering the type of stories that Americans are most interested in. Who, then, is responsible for the decline in the quality of news reporting?
 - a. Discuss TWO characteristics of news coverage today that indicate a decline in quality.
 - b. Choose ONE side of this argument and defend your position.
3. Trust and confidence in government have declined in recent decades.
 - a. Explain how divided government has contributed to the decline in trust and confidence in government. Be sure to include a definition of divided government in your response.
 - b. Explain how the increased cost of election campaigns has contributed to the decline in trust and confidence in government.
 - c. Explain two specific consequences of the decline in trust and confidence in government for individual political behavior.