

**POLITICAL CULTURE AND LANDSCAPE;** Reviewing  
MLK day and the difficulty in creating the holiday  
as an intro

- I. DEFINING THE AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE
  - a. Major elements of our political culture are learned from family and peers
  - b. POLITICAL CULTURE- widely shared beliefs, values and norms citizens hold about their relation to government and one another
  - c. Some elements of our political culture such as liberty and fear of concentrated power have stayed constant over time
  - d. Other ideas such as SUFFRAGE have significantly changed
  - e. People coming together to appreciate each other's differences and discussion differing viewpoints improve the overall SOCIAL CAPITAL
  - f. American political culture concentrates on values such as liberty, equality, individualism, justice, the rule of law, patriotism, optimism and idealism
  - g. SHARED VALUES;
    - i. From enlightenment philosophies, the founders claimed that individuals have certain NATURAL RIGHTS – rights for all person's dignity and worth
    - ii. Economy was changing from mercantile system to free-market system
    - iii. LIBERTY- most revered value in American political culture; always been obsessed with liberty

- iv. EQUALITY- ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL
  - 1. POLITICAL EQUALITY- every citizen has a right to equal protection under the law and equal voting power.
  - 2. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY- in improving our economic status
- v. INDIVIDUALISM- the individual has both rights and responsibilities
  - 1. Policies that limit individual choice are controversial; legalized abortion and universal health care
- vi. RESPECT FOR THE COMMON PERSON- reverence for the common person helps explain ambivalence toward power, politics and government authority
- vii. DEMOCRATIC CONSENSUS- despite cultural and ethnic differences, we share a democratic consensus- a set of widely shared attitudes and beliefs about government and its functioning
  - 1. We believe in MAJORITY RULE through the election process
  - 2. Our institutions are based on the principles of representation and consent of the governed
  - 3. We believe in POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY- the ultimate power resides in the people
- viii. The Constitution, Bill of Rights and 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Amendments spell out many of the limits on what government can do
- ix. JUSTICE AND THE RULE OF LAW- government is based on a body of law applied EQUALLY and by just procedures
  - 1. “A government of laws, not men” Marshall 1803

2. To adhere to the rule of law, government should follow five rules:
  - a. GENERALITY- laws stated generally
  - b. PROSPECTIVITY- no punish the past
  - c. PUBLICITY- cannot be kept secret
  - d. AUTHORITY- made by legitimate power
  - e. DUE PROCESS- enforced impartially
- x. PATRIOTISM, OPTIMISM AND IDEALISM
  1. Terrorist attacks in 2001 created NATIONALISM- enduring sense of national identity
  2. We believe in the opportunity to improve ourselves without government interference
  3. We know the system is imperfect, but we still believe in government by the people
- h. WHERE WE LEARN THE AMERICAN POLITICAL
  - i. FAMILY- most important reference group
  - ii. PUBLIC SCHOOLS- saluting the flag; Pledge of Allegiance
  - iii. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
  - iv. CHURCHES, SYNAGOGUES AND MOSQUES
  - v. MASS MEDIA- children spend more time on TV and Internet
- i. THE AMERICAN DREAM- a complex set of ideals that holds that America is the land of opportunity
  - i. CAPITALISM- economic system based on private property and competitive markets
    1. Private property is cherished in the U.S.
    2. American Dream is more attainable for middle income persons in the U.S. than in Europe
  - ii. Still is somewhat unattainable due to gap between rich and poor

1. Katrina was excellent example of “two cities”

j. POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

i. THE INDUSTRIAL TRANSFORMATION-

1900 industrial capitalism and growth of corporations replaced agrarian society

1. Led to wealth in the hands of few- robber barons or tycoons

ii. THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE NEW DEAL

1. Unrestrained capitalism became the source of the Depression and people realized that government needed to be a force to improve the economy.

2. FDR and the New Deal started the road to progressivism and would lead to opportunity and social justice

3. Carried through by LBJ, Kennedy and other social movements

4. Today, government is involved deeply in regulations, antitrust laws, minimum wage laws and other laws that try to balance individual freedoms and social justice

II. POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ATTITUDES TOWARD GOVERNMENT

a. POLITICAL IDEOLOGY- consistent pattern of ideas and beliefs about political values and role of government; two major schools of political ideology; liberalism and conservatism; two lesser schools- socialism and libertarianism

b. Review table 4-3 on page 103 for ideological differences

c. LIBERALISM- originally limited government

i. Contemporary liberals- LIBERALISM- government can bring about justice and equality

of opportunity; believe in private property but believe that government intervention in the economy is necessary

- ii. Need for affirmative government
  - iii. Expanding civil rights
  - iv. Reducing the great inequalities of wealth
  - v. Critics say liberals rely too much on government, high taxes and larger bureaucracy to solve the nation's problems; will destroy individual initiative
  - vi. "Liberal" can have a negative political connotation
- d. CONSERVATISM- belief in private property rights, free enterprise and personal opportunity by having small, limited government; strong national defense
- i. Traditional conservatives are pro-business, favor tax cuts, and minimum regulations
  - ii. Opposed to New Deal programs, War on Poverty programs and affirmative action programs
  - iii. Social conservatives favor strong governmental action to protect children from pornography and drugs, anti-abortion, anti-same sex marriage and enact social controls- family values; strong religious foundation
- iv. CRITICISMS OF CONSERVATIVES-
- 1. More government when it serves their needs- social control
  - 2. At odds with labor unions and consumer activists and too much alliance with "big business"
  - 3. Too much wealth in a few and tax cuts will create budget deficits
  - 4. Conservatives don't acknowledge policies that deal with racism and sexism
- e. SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

- i. SOCIALISM- economic and governmental system based on public ownership of production and exchange
  - ii. Between capitalism and communism; Cuba is communistic; Sweden is socialistic in limited government ownership with democratic business ownership
  - iii. American socialists believe in a greatly expanded role for government and argue that it is compatible with democracy
    - 1. Nationalize certain industries
- f. LIBERTARIANISM- cherishes individual liberty and insists on very limited government
  - i. Oppose ALL government programs
  - ii. Oppose participation in U.N. and favor armed forces only if attacked
  - iii. Positions are RARELY timid
- g. A WORD OF CAUTION
  - i. Political labels have different meanings in different nations
    - 1. Liberal in Europe is right, where in U.S. it's left
  - ii. Ideology both causes events and is affected by them
    - 1. WWII versus Vietnam War
  - iii. Elections can cause ideologues to believe they have a MANDATE to change; Obama and Reagan

### III. POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

- a. Review the distribution of ideology in figure 4-1 on page 110
- b. In the U.S. most people are moderates
- c. Review figure 4-2 on page 110

- d. Both major parties target moderates in elections;  
“swing voters”
- e. Ideologies help simplify the complexities of political positions
- f. U.S. politics is more moderate than some foreign countries such as Germany and Sweden
- g. Republicans have become more conservative and Democrats have become more liberal over the years