I. The 2008 election proved that race, gender, age and religious affiliation were important factors; do race, gender and religion matter in American politics? YES!
   a. ETHNOCENTRISM- selective perception based on background, attitudes and biases; is very common

II. A LAND OF DIVERSITY
   a. U.S. is different than most all other countries in that we have a very diverse background and have been more open to accepting people from around the world
   b. Many people want to come here because of the land of opportunity and the promise of religious, political and economic freedom
   c. Many characteristics differentiate us from each other
   d. POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION – process by which parents and others teach children about political values, beliefs and attitudes
   e. DEMOGRAPHY- study of population characteristics
   f. POLITICAL PREDISPOSITIONS- predictive political behavior based on values, beliefs and attitudes
   g. REIFORCING CLEAVAGES –social and economic differences reinforce the beliefs, attitudes and values; make political conflict more polarized
   h. CROSS-CUTTING CLEAVAGES- social and economic differences actually pull people in different directions; religion and wealth; people have multiple allegiances
   i. GEOGRAPHY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY
      i. Geographic isolation from the major world powers early on helps explain American politics
      ii. Two oceans have isolated the U.S. and prevented many attacks on our soil as compared to Poland;
might have changed the Constitution; buffer from foreign attack.

1. Tocqueville believed that the US had no great wars after the War of 1812 due to 2 oceans between the US and other developed countries.

iii. Geographic size (large) allows the population to move outward which diffuses religion, social class and national origin

iv. U.S. had a MANIFEST DESTINY to spread from Atlantic to Pacific

v. Abundant natural resources

vi. All this have fostered a belief that the U.S. is different from the world; AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

vii. Geography also helps explain our diversity

j. REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

i. Geography in the U.S. does NOT define an ethnic or religious division

ii. The most distinct regional section in the U.S. is the South, but it is becoming less distinct

iii. Until the ‘70s the “solid South” voted Democratic; the political alignment has changed to where the African Americans are overwhelmingly Democratic and the South is Republican

iv. Sun Belt is growing more rapidly than any other area of the country; more Republican

k. STATE AND LOCAL IDENTITY

i. People have a local identity and a state identity; New Hampshire and Iowa

ii. California stands out; 1 out of 8 live there

l. WHERE WE LIVE

i. 4/5 live in urban areas; URBANIZATION during the early 20th century
ii. Movement to the suburbs for many reasons; “white flight”

iii. As people have moved from the cities, problems have become more difficult; review table 5-2 on page 123

III. WHO WE ARE; define ourselves outside the geography

a. RACE AND ETHNICITY- RACE – personal characteristics determined by genetic inheritance; ETHNICITY- social division based on national origin, religion and language; many times within the same race

   i. Most race and ethnic issues in the U.S. focus on African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans and Hispanics

   ii. IDENTITY POLITICS- favoring political candidates because of democographics such as gender, race, ethnicity and religion

b. NATIVE AMERICANS

   i. Important in certain regions and states like NM, SD, OK

   ii. Average rate of poverty of 26%; higher than African Americans and Hispanics; persistent problem

c. AFRICAN AMERICANS

   i. Came against their will versus other immigrants

   ii. 13th Amendment ended slavery in the 1860s

   iii. More vulnerable economically than white population

   iv. Median net worth of African Americans is less than 1/10 of whites

   v. Disproportionate education versus whites

   vi. African American population younger (31) than whites (37.8); higher unemployment

   vii. Have had little political power until after WWII; came to see Democrats as the party of civil rights; have become much more important politically
viii. Review figure 5-2 on median net worth of households by race on page 126
ix. Review the success of Obama on page 127
d. HISPANICS
   i. Common language but different countries in Latin America based on heritage
   ii. Disproportionately Democrat voting bloc
   iii. Liberal domestic agenda; health care, crime reduction, drug control
   iv. Both major parties are cultivating Hispanic candidates
e. ASIAN AMERICANS
   i. Significant differences in culture, language and political experience
   ii. Differences in sub-groups
   iii. Have done relatively well in economic and educational areas; income well above the median
f. THE TIES OF ETHNICITY
   i. Except Native Americans and descendants of slaves, all are immigrants
   ii. 2 major waves; 17.3MM in 1900-24 and second is now
   iii. Pose political and social challenges
g. RELIGION
   i. Source of violence worldwide, especially when dealing with sovereignty or territorial disputes
   ii. Jews have been target of religious discrimination and persecution
   iii. We were founded on religious freedom and liberty; no national church in Constitution; Federalist #51
   iv. Religion is VERY important in American politics
v. Religion is a catalyst for political change; Black southern churches; MLK
vi. FUNDAMENTALISTS; conservative Christians, have been a strong conservative political force recently
vii. Americans tend to take their religion more seriously than other parts of the world
viii. Certain religions are concentrated in a few states; Utah, Rhode Island is mostly Catholic
ix. Recently Protestants voted more Republican while Catholics and Jews voted more Democratic
x. Religion is a CROSS-CUTTING CLEAVAGE in American politics

h. GENDER
i. For most of U.S. history, politics has been men’s business
ii. 19th Amendment in 1920 granted suffrage to women
iii. Women have chosen to work within established party lines and will not cross-over if they do not conform to their ideology; Sarah Palin
iv. Few women in the higher branches of government; Congress or White House; state legislatures are much higher percentage
v. EMILY has aggressively promoted female candidates
vi. There is some GENDER GAP (primarily voting Democratic) in female voting
vii. Women’s movement seeks equal opportunity, education, jobs and respect in male-dominated system; more compassionate and against guns, death penalty
viii. Women in US have tended to vote less often than their European counterparts.
ix. Work on family issues
x. Serious income inequalities

i. SEXUAL ORIENTATION
   i. Precise number of LGBTQ is unclear; 10% or possibly lower
   ii. Backlash against LGBTQ in 1996 was the passage of the Defense of Marriage Act
   iii. Political agenda includes fighting discrimination; “don’t ask, don’t tell”; hate crimes, eliminating restrictions and adding benefits
   iv. “Civil union” status; intensively divisive issue; Conservative groups versus liberal groups; courts have been drawn in- Supreme Court is crucial
   v. 2015 Obergefell v. Hodges; legalizes same sex marriage

j. FAMILY STRUCTURE
   i. Over past ½ century, no real typical American family
   ii. Marriage no longer essential to define family
   iii. Now marrying is coming later in life
   iv. Birthrates have been falling for decades
   v. Divorce has doubled since 1950

k. EDUCATION
   i. Differences in education affect economic well-being and political participation
   ii. One of the most important variables in predicting political participation
   iii. Most Americans are educated in public institutions; high school and college

l. WEALTH AND INCOME
   i. U.S. is a wealthy nation, but the unequal distribution of wealth creates political challenges
   ii. Wealth can create aristocracy and Jefferson sought to break up PRIMOGENITURE – eldest son inheritance
iii. Economic differences lead to conflict; Federalist #10;

iv. The definition of poverty itself can be political

v. Income is related to participation in politics; the people in the most need tend to be the least involved politically

vi. In the U.S., greater wealth and higher income is associated with the Republicans; lower taxes

m. OCCUPATION

i. GDP rose, adjusted for inflation from 1960-2007 over 460%

ii. Move from agricultural to industrial nation

iii. Now we are in “postindustrial” page 139

iv. White-collar sector has grown significantly over past ½ century

v. Men hold most blue-collar jobs while women face the “glass ceiling”

n. SOCIAL CLASS

i. While the U.S. does not have distinct social classes (bourgeoisie and proletariat like Marx), we do have social classes deemed SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS (SES) based on occupation, income and education

ii. Most believe they are in the middle-class; highly subjective;

iii. People define themselves as middle-class because of the American dream of upward mobility

o. AGE

i. Review figure 5-9 on page 141; we are the “graying of America”

ii. Older adults are more politically aware than younger adults making them a strong political force; AARP
iii. LIFESTYLE EFFECTS; earlier on in adult age, more conservative; as they need more services become more liberal

iv. GENERATIONAL EFFECTS; lived through an experience that made them more politically aware; Great Depression or WWII; baby boomers in the Vietnam War

IV. UNITY IN A LAND OF DIVERSITY
   a. Strong sense of national unity through the diversity is remarkable
   b. Economic and social mobility has unified much of U.S.
   c. Known as the “melting pot”
   d. Education and age are especially important predictors of citizen engagement and participation