

Government: What It Is & Why We Need It

□ Governments

- Made up of individuals and institutions through which policies are made and affairs of state are conducted
- Actions are binding on its citizens
- Citizens
 - Members of the political community
 - Rights and obligations
- Politics
 - Study of who gets what, when, and how.

Functions of Government

- ❑ Establishing Justice
- ❑ Ensuring Domestic Tranquility
- ❑ Providing for the Common Defense
- ❑ Promoting the General Welfare
- ❑ Securing the Blessings of Liberty



Types of Government

	Whose Interests Are Represented	
<i>Rulers</i>	<i>The Ruled</i>	<i>The Rulers</i>
Government by one	Monarchy	Totalitarian
Government by a few	Aristocracy	Oligarchy
Government by many	Citizenry	Democracy

Source: Adapted from Albert B. Saye, Merritt B. Pound, and John F. Allums, *Principles of American Government*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1966): 9.

Roots of American Government

- Intellectual and Religious Development
 - Enlightenment: Philosophers and scientists such as Sir Isaac Newton questioned fate and divine right.
 - Reformation: Radical Protestants split from the Church of England.
 - Protestants and Puritans believed in the ability to speak directly to God.
 - Pilgrims: social contract/compact
 - Agreement between people and their government, signifying consent to be governed

Hobbes, Locke, and a Social Contract Theory of Government

- Argued that individuals were free and equal by natural right.
 - This required that all men and women give their consent to be governed.
 - **Hobbes** argued that man's natural state was war and without government life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short"; a struggle to survive. Therefore, there is a need for a single, strong ruler.
 - **Locke** was more optimistic. Government is necessary to preserve private property.
 - Need less centralized authority

American Political Culture

- Personal Liberty
- Equality
- Popular Consent
 - The idea that governments must draw their powers from the consent of the governed
- Majority Rule
 - Central premise of direct democracy in which only policies that collectively garner the support of a majority of voters will be made into law
- Popular Sovereignty
 - Right of the majority to govern themselves based on natural law (ethical principles that are part of nature and understood by reason)

American Political Culture

□ Civil Society

- Society is created when citizens are allowed to organize and express their views publicly as they engage in open debate about public policy.

□ Individualism



Changing Characteristics of the American People

- Size and Population
- Changing Demographics
 - Racial and Ethnic Composition
 - Immigration has changed the nation.
 - 1600-1800: Western Europeans / Africans
 - Gold Rush in 1848: Chinese
 - 1850s: Irish Catholics
 - 1880s to 1910s: Southeast Asians, Cubans, and Mexicans
 - 1900s: Eastern Europeans
 - Racial balance changing dramatically today.

Changing Characteristics of the American People

- Changes in Age Cohort Composition
 - No longer nation of young
 - Graying of America
 - Types of services and policies demanded from government change
 - Age profile
 - Baby Boomers (born in late 1940s-early 60s)
 - Generation X-ers (children of Boomers – late 60s-mid 70s) tougher economic times
 - Generation Y (born from 1977-1994)



Changing Characteristics of the American People

- Changes in Family and Family Size
 - Large families were norm and gender roles were clearly defined.
 - Industrialization and knowledge of birth control methods began to shrink family size.
 - 1949-49% said 4 or more children was an ideal family size.
 - 1997-only 8% favored large families.
 - Since 1970 the number of female-headed families has increased from 5.5 million to 12.8 million.



Men and Women in a Changing Society

TABLE 1.1 Men and Women in a Changing Society

	1970		2001	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Estimated life expectancy	67.1	74.1	74.34	80.01
% high school graduates	53	52	84.2	84
% of BAs awarded	56.6	43.4	43.7	56.3
% of MAs awarded	60	40	42.2	57.8
% of PhDs awarded	87	13	58	42
% of JDs awarded	95	5	56	44
Median earnings	\$26,760	\$14,232	\$40,257	\$25,551
Single parents	1.2 million	5.6 million	1.78 million	7.57 million

Sources: 1970 data: U.S. Census Bureau, *1996 Statistical Abstract of the United States*. U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census. 2001 data: *The World Factbook*; U.S. Census Bureau, *2001 Statistical Abstract of the United States*.

Ideology of the American Public

- Political Ideology
 - Coherent set of values and beliefs about the purpose and scope of government held by groups and individuals
- Conservative
 - Government is best that governs least; big government can only infringe on individual, personal and economic rights.
- Liberal
 - Favors extensive governmental involvement in the economy and the provision of social services; takes an activist role in protecting rights of women, elderly, minorities, and the environment.

Ideology of the American Public

□ Libertarians

- One who favors a free-market economy and no governmental interference in personal liberties.

□ Problems with Political Labels

- Can be misleading
- May not predict political opinions
- Often opinions are mixed; conservative on some issues, liberal on others
- Cut across ideological boundaries

TABLE 1.2 Liberal? Conservative? Libertarian? Chart Your Views on These Issues

	<i>Abortion Rights</i>	<i>Environmental Regulation</i>	<i>Gun Control Laws</i>	<i>Government Support of: Poor</i>	<i>School Vouchers</i>
Conservative	Oppose	Oppose	Oppose	Oppose	Favor
Liberal	Favor	Favor	Favor	Favor	Oppose
Libertarian	Favor	Oppose	Oppose	Oppose	Oppose

Current Attitudes Toward American Government

- Americans' views about and expectations of government affect the political system.
 - High expectations
 - Ignore the Good
 - Mistrust Politicians
 - Voter Apathy
- Redefining our Expectations



TABLE 1.4 How Americans Really Are Doing

	1945	1970	2002
Population	132 million	203 million	285 million
Life expectancy	65.9	70.8	75.4
Per capita income (1999 constant dollars)	\$6,367	\$12,816	\$21,181 ^c
Adults who are high school grads	25% ^a	52.3%	84.1% ^d
Adults who are college grads	5% ^a	10.7%	25.6% ^d
Households with phones	46%	87%	94.2% ^c
Households with televisions	0%	95%	98.2% ^c
Households with cable TV	0%	4%	67.5% ^c
Households with computers	n/a	n/a	51% ^d
Women in labor force	29%	38%	60% ^d
Own their own home	46%	63%	66.9% ^e
Annual airline passengers	7 million	170 million	635.4 million ^c
Below poverty rate	39.7% ^b	12.6%	11.8% ^c
Divorce rate (per 1,000 people)	3.5	3.5	4.2 ^e
Children born out of wedlock	3.9%	16.7%	33% ^c

^a1940 figure.^b1949 figure.^c1999 figure.^d2000 figure.^e1998 figure.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *2001 Statistical Abstract of the United States*.

Small Group Activity

- Make a list of TWENTY Problems / Issues facing America & Americans – political, economic, social.
- In the left-hand margin next to each problem, mark:
 - G – if the government has total responsibility for this problem
 - g – if the government should help in solving the problem
 - Leave blank – if the government should have no role in this problem / issue
(this will be graded)