

# 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>
<b>Government by one</b>	<b>Monarchy</b>	<b>Totalitarian</b>
<b>Government by a few</b>	<b>Aristocracy</b>	<b>Oligarchy</b>
<b>Government by many</b>	<b>Citizenry</b>	<b>Democracy</b>

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 <sup>c</sup>
Adults who are high school grads	25% <sup>a</sup>	52.3%	84.1% <sup>d</sup>
Adults who are college grads	5% <sup>a</sup>	10.7%	25.6% <sup>d</sup>
Households with phones	46%	87%	94.2% <sup>c</sup>
Households with televisions	0%	95%	98.2% <sup>c</sup>
Households with cable TV	0%	4%	67.5% <sup>c</sup>
Households with computers	n/a	n/a	51% <sup>d</sup>
Women in labor force	29%	38%	60% <sup>d</sup>
Own their own home	46%	63%	66.9% <sup>e</sup>
Annual airline passengers	7 million	170 million	635.4 million <sup>c</sup>
Below poverty rate	39.7% <sup>b</sup>	12.6%	11.8% <sup>c</sup>
Divorce rate (per 1,000 people)	3.5	3.5	4.2 <sup>e</sup>
Children born out of wedlock	3.9%	16.7%	33% <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>1940 figure.<sup>b</sup>1949 figure.<sup>c</sup>1999 figure.<sup>d</sup>2000 figure.<sup>e</sup>1998 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)