CHAPTER 1

**The Democratic Republic**

**Learning Outcomes**

The five learning outcomes below are designed to help improve students’ understanding of this chapter.

**LO 1.1:** Define the terms *politics*, *government, order, liberty, authority,* and *legitimacy*.

**LO 1.2:** Distinguish the major features of direct democracy and representative democracy, and describe majoritarianism, elite theory, and pluralism.

**LO 1.3:** Summarize the conflicts that can occur between the values of liberty and order, and between those of liberty and equality.

**LO 1.4:** Discuss conservatism, liberalism, and other popular American ideological positions.

**LO 1.5:** Explain how a changing American population and other social trends may affect the future of our nation.

# Summary Overview

Politics is the process by which people decide which members of society receive certain benefits or privileges and which members do not. It is the struggle over power or influence within institutions or organizations that can grant benefits or privileges. Government is an institution within which decisions are made that resolve conflicts and allocate benefits and privileges. It is the predominant institution within society because it has the ultimate decision-making authority.

Two fundamental political values are order, which includes security against violence, and liberty, the greatest freedom of the individual consistent with the freedom of other individuals. To be effective, government authority must be backed by legitimacy. Many of our terms for describing forms of government came from the ancient Greeks. In a direct democracy, such as in ancient Athens, the people themselves make the important political decisions. The United States is a democratic republic, also called a representative democracy, in which the people elect representatives to make the decisions. Some states provide a modern interpretation of direct democracy for their citizens. In these states, representative democracy is supplemented by initiative and/or referendum. An initiative is the process by which voters can directly propose a law or constitutional amendment. In a referendum, a law or constitutional amendment is proposed by the legislature and referred to the voters for ballot approval or disapproval. In addition, some states provide for a recall process where citizens may vote to remove an elected official before the end of his or her elected term.

Theories of American democracy include majoritarianism, in which the government does what the majority wants; elite theory, in which the real power lies with one or more elite groups; and pluralism, in which organized interest groups contend for power. Fundamental American values include liberty and order, but also equality, and property rights. Not all of these values are fully compatible. The value of order often competes with civil liberties, and economic equality competes with property rights. Popular political ideologies can be arrayed from left (liberal) to right (conservative). We can also analyze economic liberalism and conservatism separately from cultural liberalism and conservatism.

Although all four ideologies are popular, voters are more likely to describe themselves as conservative rather than liberal. The conservative movement has been successful in assigning a pejorative connotation to the term liberal in recent decades. As a result, many liberal politicians prefer to describe themselves as a progressive instead. The term *progressive* dates back to the years before World War I, when it was used to describe advocates of reform in both major parties.

The demographic face of America is changing as citizens age and become more diverse. Like other economically advanced nations, the U.S. birthrate is falling and citizens are living longer. Today, 17 percent of the U.S. population is 65 or older and that number is expected to rise significantly by 2050. In addition, there is a change in the ethnic composition of America’s citizenry. Latinos now are the largest minority group in the nation. The percentage of the population that identify as Latino and Asian is expected to continue to rise in the coming years. By 2050, non-Hispanic whites will no longer be a majority of the U.S. population at the current rate of change.

While death rates are falling around the world, the death rates for white women age 35 to 39 living in rural areas rose by 48 percent in the U.S between 1990 and 2014. White men living in rural areas are also in trouble. This catastrophe does not appear to affect whites who have college degrees or live in large urban areas. The increased mortality is driven primarily from excessive drug and alcohol in combination with suicide. Despite the attention to deaths in minority communities, death rates have fallen among African Americans and Latinos.

Democracy requires that citizens remain vigilant by staying informed about government activities in areas such as healthcare delivery and entitlement programs. Entitlements are federal benefits that are available to citizens if certain requirements are met. Examples include monthly Social Security checks and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. There are several ways to become an informed citizen, such as seeking out quality sources of information from a wide variety of reputable media and research organizations. In addition, there are a multitude of political blogs that provide a variety of viewpoints and opportunities for expression. In order to learn more about how government works, citizens should become familiar with the activities of local legislative bodies, including city councils and school boards.

# Chapter Outline

**I. Politics and Government**

A. Government Is Everywhere

B. Why is Government Necessary?

C. Limiting Government Power

D. Authority and Legitimacy

**II. Democracy and Other Forms of Government**

A. Types of Government

B. Direct Democracy as a Model

C. The Dangers of Direct Democracy

D. A Democratic Republic

E. What Kind of Democracy Do We Have?

**III. Fundamental Values**

A. Liberty Versus Order

B. Liberty Versus Equality

C. The Proper Size of Government

**IV. Political Ideologies**

A. Conservatism

B. Liberalism

C. The Traditional Political Spectrum

D. Problems with the Traditional Political Spectrum

E. A Four-Cornered Ideological Grid

F. One Nation, Divided

**V. The Changing Face of America**

A. The End of the Population Explosion

B. Ethnic Change in America

C. Are We Better Off?

# Teaching Tools

**MindTap Activity**

The following activities for the MindTap in this chapter can be used either in the classroom or assigned as homework.

* Watch and Consider: The Democratic Republic

Watch a brief video and consider the federal minimum wage in regard to economic equality and economic freedom.

* Focus Activities: The Democratic Republic

Examine topics related to understanding the United States as a Democratic Republic.

* Wrap It Up Quiz

Test your understanding of the facts, themes, and concepts covered in the chapter.

* Adaptive Test Prep

Create customized practice quizzes to prepare for your exam.

**Learning Outcome 1.1:** Define the terms *politics*, *government, order, liberty, authority,* and *legitimacy*.

**Critical Thinking Question:**

How does politics affect the allocation of government benefits such as Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program?

Why is government necessary? Can you think of recent circumstances around the world where governments have failed when multiple groups were competing for power? What were the consequences for the citizens of those states in crisis?

**Lecture Launcher:**

Ask students to freely associate with the term *liberty.* When might the claim of liberty for one citizen infringe on the liberty of another?

Benjamin Franklin once wrote, “They who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety.” How does his sentiment apply to today?

**In-Class Activity:**

Working in pairs, ask students to list authority figures that they have had contact with in the past (e.g. police, teachers, politicians). Once they have created a list, each pair should identify the source of each figure’s authority (tradition, legal/rational, charismatic). Each pair should report their findings to the class and discuss.

Working in pairs at the end of the class period without notes, ask students to rank the importance of student-authored definitions of order, liberty, authority and legitimacy in a democracy. Then ask two sets of pairs to compare answers, each pair arguing the ranking with the other pair.

**Learning Outcome 1.2:** Distinguish the major features of direct democracy and representative democracy, and describe majoritarianism, elite theory, and pluralism.

**Critical Thinking Question:**

Is the adoption of modifications to supplement representative democracy by some states, such as initiative, referendum and recall, a positive development for citizen empowerment, or do these mechanisms undermine the efficient workings of government?

Does the power in our American democracy reside with the people, political elites or with powerful interest groups? Defend your position.

**Lecture Launcher:**

In the 1790s in the United States, only free white males were able to vote and in some states, they had to be property owners as well. Women in many states did not receive the right to vote until 1920 and the right to vote was not secured in all states by African Americans until the 1960s. Today, universal suffrage is the rule. How many people in this room would have been eligible to vote using the property standard in 1790? In 1920? In 1965? The extension of suffrage, as it is termed, is an interesting American historical development. We will talk more about this when we get to the chapter on civil rights.

**In-Class Activity:**

Ask students in pairs or as an individual take-home assignment to design a Venn diagram (sometimes referred to as a mind-map) that demonstrates the power structure in the American political system based on their understanding of majoritarianism, elite theory and pluralism with American Government as the center. *Note: There are now Venn diagram apps for mobile devices and it is possible to assign this as digital assignment that can be shared in a learning management system as a jpg or tiff file. It is also possible for students to manually create the diagram and then scan it, and upload it to a LMS system.*

Briefly define the non-democratic types of government as defined in the text. Ask students to form small groups and create a chart with the headings {totalitarian, authoritarian, aristocracy, theocracy, and oligarchy}. Using smart phones, laptops, classroom computers, and tablets, ask the small groups to conduct a webquest to find states that may exhibit the qualities described in the text of these governing types. After students have identified and argued whether certain states qualify, ask the groups to report their findings so the class can argue the merits of chart inclusion and positioning.

**Learning Outcome 1.3:** Summarize the conflicts that can occur between the values of liberty and order, and between those of liberty and equality.

**Critical Thinking Question:**

Americans tend to value civil liberty more than the people of most other democratic nations. Americans, in particular, prize the freedom of speech. In Germany, it is illegal to display the Nazi symbol—the swastika. Do you believe that such restrictions are warranted? Why or why not?

Confession rates are high in Japan, leading to a 99.8% conviction rate. How does Japanese criminal procedures differ from those in the United States? Is it important for the accused to be allowed to consult a lawyer? Why or why not? Should the amount of time a citizen is held by law enforcement be limited? Why or why not?

**Lecture Launcher:**

The Declaration of Independence states, “All men are created equal.” The proper meaning of equality has been disputed by Americans since the Revolution. Much of American history is the story of the changing meaning of the word “equality.” What does equality mean to you? What is the government’s responsibility in achieving equality for all citizens?

**In-Class Activity:**

Assign four teams the concepts of liberty, order, liberty and equality. Have the teams work on arguments in defense of their concepts between class periods and then stage brief liberty-order and liberty-equality debates in class.

**Learning Outcome 1.4:** Discuss conservatism, liberalism, and other popular American ideological positions.

**Critical Thinking Question:**

How do conservatives differ from liberals in their view of the role of government in society? Are there similarities between conservatives and liberals? Why has the term progressive re-emerged as a political label?

Without question, the rich have gotten richer in our lifetimes. Since 1983, the top 1 percent of households have seen an 82 percent increase in net wealth. The bottom 60 percent saw a net 14 percent decrease. Is this healthy for a democracy? Why or why not?

**Lecture Launcher:**

What do the terms liberal and conservative mean to you in terms of their economic ideology? Which group champions the working-class and which the wealthy? Has your understanding of where these ideologies stand on economic policy been muddied by the most recent presidential election cycle?

**In-Class Activity:**

In pairs, make a table outlining your understanding of the positions of conservatives, liberals and libertarians on the issues of Obamacare, climate change, marriage equality, immigration, and entitlement programs. Discuss your findings with the class or in an online forum.

Show students the webpage: <http://money.cnn.com/2016/04/18/pf/taxes/how-are-tax-dollars-spent/>

then discuss the breakdown of expenditure of the average households’ tax payments by the federal government. Discuss the allocation of tax dollars to various government functions. Debate the necessity of these functions and who should fund, via tax dollars, what share of the burden.

Share the link in class to the federal tax receipt calculator at the National Priorities Project to see to the penny how the money was spent for individual student taxpayers. If a student does not yet pay taxes, suggest he/she make a guess about family annual income and plug in that number. The direct link to the website is: <https://www.nationalpriorities.org/interactive-data/taxday/>. The federal government comes up short each year to cover these programs. After reviewing this data, should the wealthy be taxed at a higher rate to cover the programs and services or should average taxpayers see a hike in their tax bills?

**Learning Outcome 1.5:** Explain how a changing American population and other social trends may affect the future of our nation.

**Critical Thinking Question:**

Why is demographic change important for American politics?

**Lecture Launcher:**

The 2015-2016 election cycle saw a surprising shift away from the traditional two-party debate on the size of government to a fight over the question of who benefits from big government. Trump supporters had no problem with supporting programs like Medicare and Social Security that benefited older, mostly white voters. They opposed programs such as President Obama’s healthcare plan that were seen as primarily benefiting poorer Americans in general and minority group members in particular. Did the election settle this debate? Why or why not?

**In-Class Activity:**

Using demographic information from this chapter on the changing face of America, ask students to form small groups and with rudimentary art supplies, create a picture of America’s social society in the year 2050. Ask each group to share their work with the class and discuss the differences in the visions of the various groups.

Using the Real Clear Politics interactive map, show the 2016 presidential election outcome and discuss the states that tipped red or blue in the final outcome. Discuss the new swing states (Georgia, Arizona and Maine) and explain why demographic shifts put those states in play. Ask students to create their own maps based on state polls and demographic information to predict what the map will look like in 2020.

The link to the interactive map is: <http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2016/president/2016_elections_electoral_college_map.html>.

# Discussion Assignments

**Discussion:** Rule of Law and the Constitution

**Instructions:**

One way that the rule of law is upheld in the U.S. is through office holders abiding by the Constitution. However, some would argue that President Obama’s executive order relaxing enforcement of immigration laws as they pertain to persons between the ages 16 and 31 violates the rule of law.

Create a post arguing whether you agree or disagree that the decision by President Obama violates the Constitution. Respond to at least one of your classmates.

\*Implementation is to be determined by the instructor\*

# Key Terms

**Authoritarianism**: A type of regime in which only the government itself is fully controlled by the ruler. Social and economic institutions exist that are not under the government’s control.

**Authority**: The right and power of a government or other entity to enforce its decisions.

**Bill of Rights**: The first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

**Capitalism**: An economic system characterized by the private ownership of wealth-creating assets, free markets, and freedom of contract.

**Civil Liberties**: Those personal freedoms, including freedom of religion and freedom of speech, that are protected for all individuals. Civil liberties set forth restrain the government from taking certain actions against individuals.

**Conservatism**: A set of beliefs that includes a limited role for the national government in helping individuals, support for traditional ideals and life choices, and a cautious response to change.

**Conservative Movement**: An American movement in the 1950s that provided a comprehensive ideological framework for conservative politics.

**Democracy**: A system of government in which political authority is vested in the people. The term is derived from the Greek words *demos* (“the people”) and *kratos* (“authority”).

**Democratic Republic**: A republic in which representatives elected by the people make and enforce laws and policies; may retain the monarchy in a ceremonial role.

**Direct Democracy**: A system of government in which political decisions are made by the people directly, rather than by their elected representatives; probably attained most easily in small political communities.

**Elite Theory**: A perspective holding that society is ruled by a small number of people who hold the ultimate power to further their self-interests.

**Equality**: As a political value, the idea that all people are of equal worth.

**Government**: The preeminent institution within society in which decisions are made that resolve conflicts and allocate benefits and privileges. It is unique because it has the ultimate authority for making these decisions.

**Hispanic**: A term used by the federal government to describe someone who can claim a heritage from a Spanish speaking country.

**Ideology**: A comprehensive set of beliefs about the nature of people and about the role of an institution or government.

**Initiative**: A procedure by which voters can petition to vote on a law or a constitutional amendment.

**Institution**: An ongoing organization that performs certain functions for society.

**Latino**: An alternate word for *Hispanic*, now more widely used. The feminine is *Latina*.

**Legislature**: A governmental body primarily responsible for the making of laws.

**Legitimacy**: Popular acceptance of the right and power of a government or other entity to exercise authority.

**Liberalism**: A set of beliefs that includes the advocacy of positive government action to improve the welfare of individuals, support for civil rights, and tolerance for political and social change.

**Libertarianism**: A political ideology based on skepticism or opposition toward most government activities.

**Liberty**: The greatest freedom of the individual that is consistent with the freedom of other individuals in the society.

**Limited Government**: A government with powers that are limited either through a written document or through widely shared beliefs.

**Majoritarianism**: A political theory holding that, in a democracy, the government ought to do what the majority of the people want.

**Majority Rule**: A basic principle of democracy asserting that the greatest number of citizens in any political unit should select officials and determine policies.

**Order**: A state of peace and security. Maintaining order by protecting members of society from violence and criminal activity is one of the oldest purposes of government.

**Pluralism**: A theory that views politics as a conflict among interest groups. Political decision-making is characterized by compromise and accommodation.

**Political Culture**: A patterned set of ideas, values, and ways of thinking about government and politics that characterize a people.

**Political Socialization**: The process by which political beliefs and values are transmitted to new immigrants and to our children. The family and the educational system are the most important sources of the political socialization process.

**Politics**: The process of resolving conflicts and deciding “who gets what, when, and how.” More specifically, politics is the struggle over power or influence within organizations or informal groups that can grant benefits or privileges.

**Popular Sovereignty**: The concept that ultimate political authority is based on the will of the people.

**Progressive**: A popular alternative to the term *liberal*.

**Property**: Anything that is or may be subject to ownership. As conceived by the political philosopher John Locke, the right to property is a natural right superior to human law (laws made by government).

**Recall**: A procedure allowing the people to vote to dismiss an elected official from state office before his or her term has expired.

**Referendum**: An electoral device whereby legislative or constitutional measures are referred by the legislature to the voters for approval or disapproval.

**Representative Democracy**: A form of government in which representatives elected by the people make and enforce laws and policies; may retain the monarchy in a ceremonial role.

**Republic**: A form of government in which sovereign power rests with the people, rather than with a king or a monarch.

**Socialism**: A political ideology based on strong support for economic and social equality. Socialists traditionally envisioned a society in which major businesses were taken over by the government or by employee cooperatives.

**Total Fertility Rate**: A statistic that measures the average number of children that women in a given group are expected to have over the course of a lifetime.

**Totalitarian Regime**: A form of government that controls all aspects of the political, social, and economic life of a nation.

**Universal Suffrage**: The right of all adults to vote for their government representatives.

**Working Class:** Traditionally, individuals or families in which the head of the household was employed in manual or unskilled labor. Currently, often defined as those with no more than a high school diploma.

**Web Links**

To find out more about conservative politics in the United States, try <https://www.facebook.com/nationalreview>. You’ll see posts by the staff of *National Review*, a conservative magazine.

To learn more about liberal politics, visit [twitter.com/thenation](https://twitter.com/thenation). You’ll see tweets by the staff of *The Nation*, a liberal publication.

The Internet is a good place to learn about political science as a profession. Try visiting the site of the American Political Science Association at <http://www.apsanet.org/>.

**Instructor Resources**

Fukuyama, Francis. *The Origins of Political Order: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux Giroux, 2015. Fukuyama, a well-known political theorist, analyzes what makes modern governments successful – and how they can fail.

Judis, John B. *The Populist Explosion: How the Great Recession Transformed American and European Politics.* New York: Columbia Global Reports, 2016. Judis, a seasoned political journalist, argues that economic stresses have led to a worldwide growth in conservative nationalism, represented in the United States by Donald Trump.

Tierney, John J., Jr. *Conceived in Liberty: The American Worldview in Theory and Practice*. Piscataway, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2016. Tierney, a professor at the Institute of World Politics in Washington, D.C., contends that liberty is the foundational American value, from which other values flow.

**Media Resources**

*American Feud: A History of Conservatives and Liberals*—Directed by Richard Hall, this 2008 documentary explores popular American ideologies through interviews with leading political commentators.

*The Other Side of Immigration*—This highly acclaimed 2010 documentary seeks to understand why so many Mexicans wish to come to the United States by interviewing both immigrants and those who are left behind in Mexico.