

Citizen U Presents:
Ark of Power:
An Appraisal of American Government and Politics
AP U.S. Government and Politics Curriculum
2 Teachers
2019

Big Ideas in U.S. Government and Politics

- 1. CONSTITUTIONALISM:** *The U.S. Constitution establishes a system of checks and balances among branches of government and allocates power between federal and state governments. This system is based on the rule of law that seeks to balance majority rules with minority rights.*
- 2. LIBERTY AND ORDER:** *Governmental laws and policies balancing order and liberty are based on the U.S. Constitution and have been interpreted over time.*
- 3. CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN A REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY:** *Popular sovereignty, individualism, and republicanism are important considerations of U.S. laws and policy-making and assume citizens will engage and participate.*
- 4. COMPETING POLICY-MAKING INTERESTS:** *Multiple actors and institutions interact to produce and implement possible policies.*
- 5. METHODS OF POLITICAL ANALYSIS:** *Using various types of analyses, political scientists measure how U.S. political behavior, attitudes, and ideologies are shaped by a number of factors over time.*

Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs

American political beliefs are shaped by founding ideals, core values, and the changing demographics of the citizenry. The beliefs about government, politics, and the individual's role in the political system influence the creation of ideological trends that span decades impacting public policies.

- How are American political beliefs formed and how do they evolve over time?
- How do political ideology and core values influence government policy making?

BIG IDEA: Methods of political analysis

- 4.1 Explain the relationship between core beliefs of U.S. citizens and attitudes about the role of government.**

Our revolutionary spirit, what some have called our “national character,” is rooted in ideas and practices that predate not only our own time but also the American war for independence. A government “of the people, by the people and for the people” is more than a Lincoln cliché. The first three words to our national constitution, “we the people,” is our Siren Song. Irresistibly, popular sovereignty defines our representative democracy. Even though we have always valued diversity here, we have ultimately agreed that our political systems have the goal to protect our freedoms, to promote the general welfare and to keep us safe. In this unit we will explore how these shared political beliefs, values and norms are preserved, processed and protected. We will discover that **citizens’ beliefs about government are shaped by the intersection of demographics, political culture, and dynamic social change.**

Political systems built on coercive force, all too common in history, have not been welcomed in America. Autochthonous to our government is a political system built upon the consent of the people. This cultural norm has dictated United States public policy for over two hundred years. The unique American political culture goes a long way to explain the successes of our political institutions. Political culture, as it has been commonly applied, is defined as “the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place.” Political culture, the core American beliefs, values and norms, provide the invisible glue that holds our system of government together.

Remarkably this common political culture evidenced itself quite early in our history. A French tourist, Alexis de Tocqueville, objectively published his observations after traveling here in 1831. His book, *American Democracy*, continues to shed light on America’s unique core beliefs, values and norms both then and now. Impressed by America’s “manners and customs” here are a few excerpts from his seminal book:

I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers; in her fertile fields and boundless prairies; in her rich mines and her vast world commerce, and it was not there. Not until I went to the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great...

There is not a country in the world where man takes possession of the future more confidently, or feels with more pride that his intelligence makes him master of the universe, which he can reshape to his liking. It’s movement of mind that can only be compared to the one that brought about the discovery of the New World three centuries ago. In fact one could say that America is being discovered a second time.

Town meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they bring it within the people’s reach, they teach men how to use and how to enjoy it. A nation may establish a free government, but without municipal institutions it cannot have the spirit of liberty.

In 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville observed key cultural components that defined the relationship between citizen and state. Many political scientists, even today, try to document and systematize our shared political culture. This is important for many reasons. Perhaps George Will put it best when writing *Statecraft as Soul Craft* (1983):

Most politicians flee from political labels like 'liberal' and 'conservative' because the labels may circumscribe their political constituencies. But labels are reasonable; because a reasonable person's political judgments are not random. The familiar clusters of ideas manifest congruence and affinities that express political temperaments as well as political philosophies. Political ideas cluster; people cluster, politically.

And what political clusters still are evident today? For this we turn to the work of political scientist William C. Mitchell. Here is his list of American beliefs, values and norms. How well do they define your relationships with both government and your neighbor?

- *Political action should be minimized, and allocations of values should be dependent chiefly on private action.*
- *Political power is tangible and limited in quantity, and tends to be evil.*
- *To be legitimate, political authority and power must be rational and legal.*
- *The duties of citizenship are distinct from the more general duties of social life.*
- *Americans exhibit ambivalent attitudes toward compromise.*
- *Public office is a public trust, and political action should be taken only in the public interest.*
- *Politics tends to be thought of as a game.*
- *Political interpretations and assessments tend to be moralistic.*
- *Political problems can be resolved by intelligence, good will, and hard work.*

Although strict conformity to America's unique political culture as observed by de Tocqueville, or the common beliefs, values and norms listed by Mitchell can be challenged, we can all agree that certain commitments here transcend time and space. Yes we can debate the degree to which we believe in individualism, equality of opportunity, free enterprise, the rule of law and the limits of government. Clearly our political outlook is impacted by differing demographics, dissimilar cultural backgrounds and differing exposure to dynamic social change. Yet "we the people" continue to advocate for our personal freedoms, for the continuation of the general welfare and for our collective security. Before there are any successful governing institutions, there are shared political beliefs.

4.2 Explain how cultural factors influence political attitudes and socialization.

Learning to think politically is a process known as political socialization. The transmission of political culture and attitudes is best explained by looking at a number of attenuating factors. According to most political scientists, demographics jumpstart our engagement in the political process. Certain demographic characteristics have a profound influence on our political attitudes. They are gender, age, religion, race, education, occupation, economic status and region. Together, along with parental influences, we have a seemingly inherent political bent. These political dispositions align to certain labels used in our democratic system to simplify and organize the citizenry. Political scientists have traditionally used a political spectrum to simplify and provide clarity to the consequences of our civic opinions.

The left side of the political spectrum is reserved for liberals. The Democratic Party represents liberals in our government. Liberals tend to look forward. Rather than relying upon old ideas, they favor policy experimentation. This attitude affects their values. They oppose government intervention when it comes to private choices. For instance, liberals push the Democratic Party to maintain a women's right to choose an abortion. Liberals do, however, advocate government intervention when it comes to the economy. Often liberal Democrats are characterized as "the tax and spend" party. Democrats favor policies that redistribute wealth across the economic base. On the left side of the political spectrum you find liberals who are supported by the Democratic Party.

The right side of the political spectrum is reserved for conservatives. The Republican Party represents conservatives in our government. Conservatives tend to look back. They are fond of the glory days of the past. Conservatives tend to hold traditional moral values. They approve of government intervention when upholding these values. For instance, conservatives push the Republican Party to advocate against abortion, drug use and sexual promiscuity. They do not, however, welcome government interference in private

business affairs. Conservatives speak loudly about market forces and the free flow of capital. Republican policies support small business and lower taxes. On the right side of the political spectrum you find conservatives who are supported by the Republican Party.

Family, more than anything else, influences our politics. Yet political scientists point to certain demographics that impact our political beliefs, values and norms. Here is what political science tells us about the influence of these demographics:

Gender: Men tend to be more conservative and therefore supporters of the Republican Party. Women, on the other hand, are more liberal and side with Democrats.

Age: The rule of thumb here is the older you are the more likely you are to be conservative.

Religion: Few demographic characteristics are as telling as this. Citizens who faithfully practice their religion tend to be more conservative. Protestantism is the most conservative religion. Base Republicans tend to be active Protestants. Often labeled “The Conservative Right,” these faithful Republican voters are called evangelicals. Catholics, despite their conservative views on social issues, lean left on the political spectrum. Slim majorities of Catholics still vote for the Democratic Party. Jews historically have overwhelmingly supported liberal Democrats. The irreligious, those with no religious affiliation, can be found on the left side of the spectrum with other Democrats.

Race: Caucasians as a group are most often found on the right side of the political spectrum. African-Americans are the most reliable sub-group on the left. Ninety percent of all African-Americans vote Democratic. Pacific Rim citizens, due to their religious and family traditions, tend to the right and the Republican Party.

Education: The more educated you are the more likely you are to be conservative. The one exception would be those citizens holding graduate degrees. Statistically college graduates narrowly vote Republican. Those with less education narrowly vote Democratic.

Occupation: Education influences this demographic characteristic more than any other. Those occupations requiring more education tend to lean more to the conservative side. White-collar jobs lean Republican while blue-collar jobs tend to be more Democratic. This means labor unions, a smaller and smaller percentage of our total workforce, are reliable voters on the left.

Economic status: The Republican Party and its values tend to appeal to the middle class. The Democratic Party champions lower classes. The wealthy are more split in their political allegiances. Determining the political persuasion of the wealthy depends upon other leading demographic ingredients.

Region: Democrats do better in urban environments while Republicans win more in suburban and rural areas. Liberal Democrats dominate the Northeast. The South is **SOLIDLY** conservative and Republican. The West coast now leans strongly liberal though the Plains are clearly conservative. Many of the fiercest political battleground states now reside in the Midwest.

But what if certain demographic characteristics contradict each other? For instance, where on the spectrum would I be if my religion pushed me right but my race pushed me left? These demographic tensions are called crosscutting cleavages. There are no easy rules when it comes to reconciling cross cutting cleavages on the political spectrum. Certain demographic characteristics, however, have greater influence. These would be religion, race and education. Crosscutting cleavages remind us that labels can help us understand our politics but they are not absolutely determinative. In the end your political views are a by-product not

only of demographic characteristics but life experiences that are truly unique. It has been said that zip code is destiny. Though not completely accurate it is a helpful starting point when trying to understand American government and politics.

Many today write about the influence of globalization, Thomas Friedman and Joseph Stiglitz are but two patron saints in this growing field of study. Though many varying and differing conclusions can be drawn from these studies, one thing is clearly evident. American political, social and cultural values have spread globally with both positive and negative results.

Thomas Friedman has best described the roots of this globalization:

Today's era of globalization, which replaced the Cold War, is a similar international system, with its own unique attributes.

To begin with, the globalization system, unlike the Cold War system, is not static, but a dynamic ongoing process: globalization involves the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before—in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before, and in a way that is also producing a powerful backlash from those brutalized or left behind by this new system.

The driving idea behind globalization is free-market capitalism—the more you let market forces rule and the more you open your economy to free trade and competition, the more efficient and flourishing your economy will be. Globalization means the spread of free-market capitalism to virtually every country in the world. Globalization also has its own set of economic rules—rules that revolve around opening, deregulating and privatizing your economy.

Unlike the Cold War system, globalization has its own dominant culture, which is why it tends to be homogenizing. In previous eras this sort of cultural homogenization happened on a regional scale—the Hellenization of the Near East and the Mediterranean world under the Greeks, the Turkification of Central Asia, North Africa, Europe and the Middle East by the Ottomans, or the Russification of Eastern and Central Europe and parts of Eurasia under the Soviets. Culturally speaking, globalization is largely, though not entirely, the spread of Americanization—from Big Macs to iMacs to Mickey Mouse—on a global scale.

Globalization has its own defining technologies: computerization, miniaturization, digitization, satellite communications, fiber optics and the Internet. And these technologies helped to create the defining perspective of globalization. If the defining perspective of the Cold War world was "division," the defining perspective of globalization is "integration." The symbol of the Cold War system was a wall, which divided everyone. The symbol of the globalization system is a World Wide Web, which unites everyone. The defining document of the Cold War system was "The Treaty." The defining document of the globalization system is "The Deal."

This globalization has transformed our world in ways we are still trying to figure out. Forces have been unleashed that carry far reaching consequences. Positively the world has grown smaller. Democratic ideals have spread. Equal justice for all is not merely a novelty of the West anymore. Religious toleration is challenging age-old authority structures across the planet. Gender issues are being raised far and wide.

Environmental concerns now unite us. Millions are being raised out of poverty and joining the largest middle-class ever to be seen. Communication, collaboration and innovation are being shared with unprecedented speed. Conformity to pop culture is now available to the 1 in 5 in the world holding a smart phone. You can now super-size your fries in virtually every city of the world. Globalization, or Americanization as some prefer, has changed the relationship of all 21st century people groups. Yet for some this has not been all positive. Indeed it is not.

Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher nicknamed globalization TINA, “There Is No Alternative.” That may be but the forces of globalization have also unleashed new and perilous tensions that pose insoluble questions both at home and abroad. Certain authoritarian regimes have chosen to fight back. Regional wars now litter the planet. Potent acts of terrorism paralyze freedom of thought and movement. Immigrants, refugees and other displaced people carry with them new beliefs, values and norms. Assimilating internationals have challenged regional governments in ways never before seen. American hegemony, although advanced by globalization, has also been challenged in new ways.

So too has globalization brought challenge here at home. The civil religion of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants that characterized much of American history is being challenged by new ethnic and generational attitudes brought about by globalization. American broad shoulders now feel the weight of new and diverse value systems. Immigration has become an issue that perplexes the better angels of our nature. American political, social and cultural values have been extended due to 21st century globalization. At both home and abroad this has seen positive and negative results.

Political socialization is our civic classroom. The way we think politically is a kin to making that morning smoothie. Our core political beliefs, values and norms are a combination of a number of ingredients. Certain attitudes appear to be inherent to us all. Yet our unique demographics, life experiences and generational attitudes combine to flavor our political sentiments. Globalization as well has both influenced and been influenced by our political ideals. Political socialization helps us not only explain where we fall on the political spectrum but also whom we side with in that next upcoming election.

BIG IDEA: Methods of political analysis

4.3 Describe the elements of a scientific poll.

The vitality of any democratic system is measured by its political efficacy. To what extent are its citizens involved? And to what extent does the government represent the wishes of its constituents? High levels of political efficacy usually result in high levels of political participation. When participation lags, governments must ask themselves: “Are we adequately representing the people?” To answer this question and others like them it becomes readily apparent that measuring public opinion is of vital importance to a healthy democracy. Various mediums are responsible for collecting and reporting public opinion but not all are created equal.

In a representative democracy it is essential to know what the people are thinking. In a political system where sovereignty resides in the people elected officials must determine public opinion before enacting public policy. **Public opinion is measured through scientific polling, and the results of public opinion polls influence government.** A liberal democracy, like ours, demands nothing less. But can public opinion polls be trusted? Which polls should elected officials rely upon to influence public policy?

Public opinion polls can take on many different forms. Opinion polls track what “we the people” are thinking. Via exit polls, they measure how and why we have voted. Measuring who and what we “like” permeates everything we now do.

Political data is culled from scientifically collected public opinion polls. Public opinion polls measure what “we the people” think at any given point. Yet not all polls are accurate measurements of public opinion. There are certain cautionary steps we should take before accepting the validity of a public opinion poll. Accurate polls are unbiased. Poll samples need to be random. A sufficient sample size is also required. Perhaps most important is the margin of error. What is the range of results one could expect if an infinite number were included in the poll? A +/- 4 margin of error is considered acceptable. The way questions are worded in a poll is also important. Not unlike ideological labels public opinion polls provide the political process an important short cut. They can be used improperly. Push polls, for instance, do not measure opinion but rather attempt to shape opinion. Push polls are considered unethical.

4.4 Explain the quality and credibility of claims based on public opinion data

In a representative government like ours it is absolutely necessary to know what the people want. First label and group together like-minded citizens. Then collect opinions on the issues. Taken together these short cuts enable our elected officials to properly represent the citizenry. When done properly our political efficacy is strong. More importantly it demonstrates that our democracy works.

The most fundamental question to any democracy has been and will always be, “What did you know and when did you know it?” At the heart of democracy is an informed citizenry. The prospect of self-government, the definition of democracy itself, does not rest on fixed institutions but ultimately on human choices. One hopes our choices are based upon facts and not fictions. A strong democracy obliges a robust truth business. A bull market in knowledge acquisition is not only for the top 1%.

There is no shortage of bull in today’s democratic marketplace. Our public square appears to be dominated by all sorts of viral videos. Characters have trumped character. Demagoguery is now seen as prerequisite for public office. The modern information age ironically finds its citizens misinformed. A close examination of our democracy reveals that we have an epistemology problem. The lack of what we know and when we know it would seem to endanger our polity. Recent polls suggest that the American citizen trusts less and holds little confidence in our government. Invariably this impacts our elections and policy debates.

A notable political scientist has written,

“[Democratic] government...cannot be worked successfully...unless there is an independent, expert organization for making the unseen facts intelligible to those who have to make the decisions.” Or in other words, a free and independent press is essential. If an elite media is no longer an option then perhaps the responsibility is ours. Each and every citizen must collaborate together, as best as they can, to create pictures and images that simplify the great issues facing our society.”

For many these pictures arrive at our doorstep in the form of valid public opinion polls. We count on an objective media to inform us. But in its absence, we count on each other to build coalitions of opinion makers to influence our political decision makers. Public opinion polls today influence our political process more than ever before. The single greatest check on our elite institutions like Congress, the Presidency and the Courts is not structural in nature. Rather public opinion today serves as the greatest check on government actions at each level.

Media plays an important role in the dissemination of poll results. Often the media reports on our political process like a horse race. As a scorekeeper, media spends more time telling the citizenry who is ahead rather than what issues matter most. Popularity has become more important than party platforms. In this way the relationship between polling and elections has grown symbiotic. Polls both push and pull. Their reliability and veracity go along way in explaining electoral outcomes.

Whether or not we realize it or appreciate it, this kind of sounds like what the word democracy expected in the first place. In many ways public opinion polls are like holding an election each and every day that they are taken. Let your opinions be known and watch your government react.

BIG IDEA: Competing policy-making interests

4.5 Explain how the ideologies of the two major parties shape policy disputes.

Believe it or not Americans are not divided on everything. The extreme partisan rift that appears to characterize our political system today does not quite tell the whole story. We all share, to some extent, an agreed upon political culture. American political culture is comprised of a set of collective values. We all at least have heard of or are committed to some concept of an American Dream. Autonomous achievement is valued here. Success is a derivative of hard work, not some sort of government hand out. We value egalitarianism, equality. No one class of persons is deserving of dignity over another. The freedom to make our own decisions combined with the assurance of being treated equally is at the bedrock of American society. These values make up our unique American political culture. But do not confuse them with our distinct set of political ideologies. Culturally we have much in common. It is our ideologies that separate us.

The experts tell us, at least those calling themselves political scientists, that both well thought out and heartfelt ideologies should not be trivialized or downplayed. In the highly influential book *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) the authors posited the following claim: “Ideologies have for different individuals, different degrees of appeal, a matter that depends upon the individual’s needs and the degree to which these needs are being satisfied or frustrated.” What we both believe and perceive to be true matters, in fact it matters a lot. Our political ideology is not rooted in random experience and/or psychology. Rather, our political views reflect in no small way our individual essence.

John T. Jost, notable political psychologist, has asserted that “ideology” is a shared system of beliefs “about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved.” Jost suggested that ideology “offers a sense of certainty, predictability, and control; a sense of safety, security, and reassurance; and a sense of identity, belongingness, and shared reality.” It is the “how” we achieve this that separates us politically. Ideologies are less malleable. Ideological rigidity makes it difficult to compromise. Ideology is what often makes our political process a zero sum game. Our two major political parties, Democrats and Republicans, represent our different political ideologies.

The Democratic Party is generally influenced by liberal ideology. Liberals value change. They are open to different experiences. Political scientists have found liberals to view society to be more like a caring family. Thus the role of government is to assure greater fairness, equality and moral justice. Liberals often see government as the solution, the adult in the room, to help solve societal ills. The Democratic Party offers those who hold to a liberal ideology a home, candidates to vote for, and a promise of a government that will fight for these ideals.

The Republican Party, conversely, is generally influenced by conservative ideology. Conservatives value stability. They put an emphasis on maintaining traditions. Conservatives generally support the status quo. Change for change sake is silly. Government is seen less as a solution and more as a problem. Conservatives characterize government not as a loving parent but more as an authoritarian obstruction to free markets. The Republican Party offers those who hold to a conservative ideology a home, candidates to vote for, and a promise of a government that will fight for these ideals.

When assessing American culture there is much that we can agree on. This is not the case when assessing our political ideologies. Rooted in a political system that values independence, free speech, and freedom to believe and worship without government interference, our ideological divisions should not come as a surprise. Nor should we imagine it should be any different. In no small way it has been our ideological differences that have from the very beginning defined America's greatest quality. We are made up of a dynamic population of free thinkers who act in concert with like-minded individuals to achieve the type of society that they want to live in. It is the freedom to act upon our respective ideologies that make our political institutions strong. The ideologies of our two major parties shape our political disputes. Such divisions should not be derided but applauded. **Widely held political ideologies shape policy debates and choices in American policies.**

4.6 Explain how U.S. political culture (e.g. values, attitudes, and beliefs) influences the formation, goals, and implementation of public policy over time.

Widely held political values shape the policy choices available in American politics. The relationship between principles of freedom and individualism and the range of economic and domestic policies illustrate how political culture influences public policy formation. Seymour M. Lipset in his book *American Exceptionalism: A Double Edged Sword* (1996) pointed out that

...The nation's ideology can be described in five words: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism and laissez-faire. The revolutionary ideology which became the American Creed is liberalism in its eighteenth and nineteenth century meanings, as distinct from conservative Toryism, statist communitarianism, mercantilism and noblesse oblige dominant in monarchical, state-church-formed cultures.

Our Creed imposes strict limits on policy makers. Though elites play a disproportionate role in the policy making process, they are held in check by the forces of our Creed. Hierarchical, authoritarian, collectivist and statist values known worldwide have found little refuge here. Therefore American policy choices and actions tend to derive from the bottom up. Here the people rule. American *exceptionalism*, guided as some believe by Providence, serves as an underlying cultural leviathan dictating the scope and reach of public policy.

This tension between individual liberty and government efforts to promote stability and order is reflected in the most salient of our policy debates. For instance debates over immigration have been greatly impacted by American cultural imperatives. American *exceptionalism* imposes an agreed conformity to certain "manners and customs." Despite being a nation of immigrants a certain level of nativism has always been close to the surface in American political life. Immigrants challenge our perceived homogenous culture. Multi-cultural tensions, it is argued, provoke divisive tendencies. As a touchstone debate, immigration policy impacts families, neighborhoods, belief systems, work places and wages. Yet today's policy makers face significant immigrant questions with few answers. What to do about undocumented immigrants? Is border security a national security issue? How many short-term work visas and Green Cards should be issued each year? Comprehensive immigration reform, an attempt to answer these pressing questions, has proven to be allusive. Our President has chosen to address some of these issues through unilateral action, through the use of

Executive Orders. State and local governments have chosen to act on their own. And interpreting and applying past practice to new and unprecedented institutional tensions have involved the Supreme Court.

Another issue that has been greatly influenced in our time by these cultural imperatives is government surveillance when fighting “the war on terror.” Recent acts of terror, suicide bombings and domestic violence in the name of ideology rekindles the tension between individual freedom and the state’s obligation to keep its people secure. Intrusive government intelligence gathering challenges basic civil liberties it is argued. Typically individual rights carry the day in these debates. Yet police powers tend to expand as people confront their fears and insecurities. The fundamental question at our founding still presses our political consciousness – “we need a stronger central government but how strong?” Our political culture both facilitates and impedes the implementation of public policy.

Legislation and policy debates encouraging certain behaviors among citizens and businesses reflect a tension between belief that success depends on the individual versus a belief that government should promote fairness and inclusion. Early in our political history our government, it was assumed, held to a laissez-faire attitude. At best, governments served as a referee to private choices. This attitude may not have ever been quite true. History would suggest that a government made up of elites couldn’t help itself but to pick winners and losers in policy debates. Privileged classes were certainly helped first. But progressive politics, first championed by local players, challenged the status quo. Common voices demanded more attention. Government was called upon to lend a hand to those who were in the greatest need. Beyond a focus on liberty and due process, institutions of government were given mandates to assure equal protection.

This progressivism can be seen as a natural evolution of early populist movements. Government now is seen as more than a referee. Government is an agent of social engineering. First seen in public policies that challenged corporate monopolies and economic inequalities, today progressive policies pervade all aspects of human life. Government policies regulate private business decisions, hiring practices and wage structures. Government has also taken on a greater responsibility for its most needy citizens. Yet debates continue to rage over just how to do this.

With respect to public welfare conservative voices appeared to win the debate with the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996. This “welfare reform” put limits and timetables on how much help governments would provide to our poorest citizens. Advocates of American *exceptionalism* argued that self-reliance was bedrock to our unique culture. Any policy that eroded such a value challenged our future strength as a nation. Alternatively, progressive voices have proposed the Dream Act, a policy that would grant conditional residency to certain undocumented immigrants. Culture warriors cry such a policy would challenge our fundamental commitment to the rule of law.

Of course when American political culture is stretched and challenged by new and outside forces our debate grows more and more partisan. Less and less seems to get resolved. Culture wars have grown more and more common in this global environment. Multiculturalism is a battle cry for many in our political arena. This helps explain why the formation, goals and implementation of public policy “isn’t beanbag.”

4.7 Describe different political ideologies on the role of government in regulating the marketplace.

The range of political ideologies held by citizens frames and constrains public policy debates. No policy receives greater attention than when governments get involved in making economic decisions. The business of America is, after all, business.

Liberals, represented by Democrats, actively support government regulation of the market. Big government policies ultimately grew out of economic crises. Economic depressions demanded bold answers. The single greatest example of a time when bold answers were given was during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Democratic president Franklin Roosevelt promised the nation a New Deal. With it came an unprecedented economic policy agenda. Fiscal policy turned to higher taxes and significant higher spending. Balanced budgets were replaced by Keynesian theories that advocated for government debt. The Federal Reserve centralized monetary policy during this time of crisis. Money supply was tightened and interest rates increased. Liberals favor economic experimentation. Typically liberals look to government to help the under dog. Whereas they favor increasing the inheritance tax they actively pursue an increase in the minimum wage. Liberals favor an active government in the economy.

Conservatives, represented by Republicans, advocate for less government regulation of the market. Traditionally Americans preferred a government with a laissez faire economic policy. Self-reliance, rugged individualism and entrepreneurship have been the backbone of American prosperity according to conservatives. Government should stay out of business affairs if at all possible. Of course at times even conservatives see the need for some government regulation. At times a referee is needed to keep private enterprise fair. Safety nets for the disadvantaged are to be expected. Nevertheless, Republicans prefer supply side policies. This typically calls for lowering marginal tax rates. Therefore conservatives favor fiscal policies that reduce both taxes and government spending. Monetary policy, as well, should keep interest rates lower. Conservative economic policy supports lowering inheritance taxes. It is also argued that raising the minimum wage hurts economic growth. Conservatives favor less government regulation of the marketplace.

Libertarian voices are characterized by a desire for little or no government regulation of the market. Whereas conservatives talk of laissez faire ideals, libertarians demand such policies. Libertarians see no need for government intervention in the economy. They oppose most regulations. Market forces are to be trusted. Governments, they argue, are to be held at an arms distance. Though libertarians can be found across the political spectrum most would agree that government solutions to economic problems should be met with skepticism. Libertarian policies would result in a smaller government with fewer taxes. Government bailouts would end. The government should balance its budget. Libertarians favor little or no regulation of the marketplace.

Despite our political culture's shared commitment to fair and honest trade and equal opportunity, the role of government in the economy is one of our most contested debates. The marketplace of ideas is often mired in economic policy disputes. Advocacy groups can be found across the political spectrum. Markets look to government for stability and certainty. Public policy ideas have economic consequences. American political beliefs not only affect who governs us but what we have in our pocketbooks as well.

4.8 Explain how political ideologies vary on the government's role in regulating the marketplace.

Pocket-book issues move and mobilize voters perhaps greater than any other issue. The marketplace of ideas is often stuck on marketplace agendas. We follow stock markets, home prices and grocery bills with much more zeal than many social issues. Some say it is because we are governed by the "golden rule," he with the gold rules. Ideological differences on marketplace regulation are based on different theoretical support, including Keynesian and supply-side perspectives on monetary and fiscal policies. Liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans, differ greatly when it comes to economic policy.

Liberals, represented by Democrats, actively support government regulation of the market. Big government policies ultimately grew out of economic crises. Economic depressions demanded bold answers. The single greatest example of a time when bold answers were given was during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Democratic president Franklin Roosevelt promised the nation a New Deal. With it came an unprecedented economic policy agenda. Fiscal policy turned to higher taxes and significant higher spending. Balanced budgets were replaced by Keynesian theories that advocated for government debt. The Federal Reserve centralized monetary policy during this time of crisis. Money supply was tightened and interest rates increased. Liberals favor economic experimentation. Typically liberals look to government to help the under dog. Whereas they favor increasing the inheritance tax they actively pursue an increase in the minimum wage. Liberals favor an active government in the economy.

Attempts to raise the minimum wage are an example of a marketplace issue that has mobilized liberals. Higher wages, setting minimum standards-of-living and providing for the less privileged has often characterized the economic policy goals of the Democratic Party. To varying degrees they have been successful, but it is never easy.

Conservatives, represented by Republicans, advocate for less government regulation of the market. Traditionally Americans preferred a government with a laissez faire economic policy. Self-reliance, rugged individualism and entrepreneurship have been the backbone of American prosperity according to conservatives. Government should stay out of business affairs if at all possible. Of course at times even conservatives see the need for some government regulation. At times a referee is needed to keep private enterprise fair. Safety nets for the disadvantaged are to be expected. Nevertheless, Republicans prefer supply side policies. This typically calls for lowering marginal tax rates. Therefore conservatives favor fiscal policies that reduce both taxes and government spending. Monetary policy, as well, should keep interest rates lower. Conservative economic policy supports lowering inheritance taxes. It is also argued that raising the minimum wage hurts economic growth. Conservatives favor less government regulation of the marketplace.

Attempts to reform the inheritance tax are an example of a marketplace issue that has mobilized conservatives. Lowering taxes, protecting small businesses from excessive regulation and protecting estates from abusive death taxes has often characterized the economic policy goals of the Republican Party. To varying degrees they have been successful, but it is never easy.

Despite our political culture's shared commitment to fair and honest trade and equal opportunity, the role of government in the economy is one of our most contested debates. The marketplace of ideas is often mired in economic policy disputes. Advocacy groups can be found across the political spectrum. Markets look to government for stability and certainty. Public policy ideas have economic consequences. American political beliefs not only affect who governs us but what we have in our pocketbooks as well.

4.9 Explain how political ideologies vary on the role of government in addressing social issues.

"We the people" form and act upon our political beliefs in a variety of ways. Our demographic inheritance plays an important part in our political socialization. Gender, ethnicity, religious heritage, region and socio-economic status go a long way in explaining why we think about politics the way that we do. Zip code helps to dictate our destiny. Yet there are other factors. Life experiences provide cleavages to what would otherwise be expected political opinions. Certain topics mobilize our attention. We galvanize around hot button issues. Nevertheless we should not underestimate the role played by influential heuristics.

Frugal in nature, heuristics provide “all the information that is required” by way of a short cut. Heuristic devices allow relatively uninformed individuals to act both rationally and confidently. They are political cues that inform our political beliefs. Heuristics help us participate in the political process without having to exert too much effort. Heuristics come in a variety of forms. We take our cues from trusted leaders and elites. Polls help us sort out what to think and believe. Most importantly, however, we find political short cuts in the labels that we use. Political labels serve as short cuts for every day citizens. Party identification continues to be one of the most important factors in determining our political behavior. In this section we will look at the major political labels and explain briefly what each suggests inside the political arena.

Conservative ideologies have differing views on the role of government in addressing social issues. The Republican Party represents conservatives in our government. Conservatives tend to look back. They are fond of the glory days of the past. Conservatives tend to hold traditional moral values. They approve of government intervention when upholding these values. For instance, conservatives push the Republican Party to advocate against abortion, drug use and sexual promiscuity. They do not, however, welcome government interference in private business affairs. Conservatives speak loudly about market forces and the free flow of capital. Republican policies support small business and lower taxes. The role of government should be limited. On the right side of the political spectrum you find conservatives who are supported by the Republican Party.

Liberal ideologies have differing views on the role of government in addressing social issues. The Democratic Party represents liberals in our government. Liberals tend to look forward. Rather than relying upon old ideas, they favor policy experimentation. This attitude affects their values. They oppose government intervention when it comes to private choices. For instance, liberals push the Democratic Party to maintain a women’s right to choose an abortion and to approve of same sex marriage. Liberals do, however, advocate government intervention when it comes to the economy. Often liberal Democrats are characterized as “the tax and spend” party. Liberals encourage a robust and active government to address societal injustices. Democrats favor policies that redistribute wealth across the economic base.

Communitarian ideologies have differing views on the role of government in addressing social issues. Those who espouse communitarianism share a kinship with Chartists and Democratic Socialists. Relatively small in number, communitarians stress our social connection over individual liberty. Communitarians stress civil society as the ultimate end of government. Emboldened to preserve a healthy society communitarian governments are called upon to protect an egalitarian public sphere. Often this involves the absence of private property and the elimination of elite privileges. Necessitating big government, communitarianism usually requires reconciling the tensions between dominion and subordination. The state or community possesses dominion over all while the individual subordinates self-interest to the public good. No major political party serves as a perfect home to communitarians.

Libertarian ideologies have differing views on the role of government in addressing social issues. Libertarian political beliefs can be seen in stark contrast to communitarians. Whereas communitarians prioritize equality, the primary objective of libertarians is individual freedom. The best way to maximize freedom is to minimize government intervention. Their party platform would say, “No one is forced to sacrifice his or her values for the benefit of others.” Laissez-faire capitalism is preferred. Libertarians generally advocate for a minimalist state. Everyday citizens are empowered to make the primary decisions in life for themselves. In this way they act like market conservatives when speaking of their economics and liberals when they advocate for the legalization of marijuana. No major political party serves as a perfect home to libertarians.

4.10 Explain how different ideologies impact policy on social issues.

Policy trends concerning the level of government involvement in social issues reflect the success of conservative and liberal perspectives. Both the Republicans and Democrats, respectively, have built broad coalitions that attract large groups of both advocates and voters. As an effective heuristic, Republicans attract conservatives while Democrats attract liberals. Our political institutions, made up of primarily conservatives and liberals, reinforce these types. Furthermore cues from elites in the media and elsewhere also strengthen the efficacy of these political ideologies and labels. Polls do the same. Though political beliefs in the United States take on many different forms, issues and ideas the vast majority of our citizens can be categorized as either conservatives or liberals, Republicans or Democrats.

Conservative ideology, as championed by the Republican Party, has found policy success when advocating for such social issues as pro-life, law and order, school improvements and welfare reform. Conservatives have found the Supreme Court to be an ally in their attempts to limit a women's choice to have an abortion. In such cases as *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) the U.S. Supreme Court upheld certain state policies that legislated certain abortion restrictions unless they imposed "an undue burden" on women. School choice and voucher programs have been upheld in court cases like *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (2002). Policy-making is complex. There are winners and losers. At certain times conservatives find themselves on the winning side.

But then again liberals win also. Liberal ideology, as championed by the Democratic Party, has found policy success when advocating for such social issues as environmentalism, same-sex marriage, LGBT rights and neutralizing the War on Drugs. In the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) a plurality of justices ruled in favor of the constitutionality of differing state recognitions concerning marriage. In particular, the court recognized the legitimacy of same-sex marriage. Policy-making is never beanbag. Our ideological differences make certain that for every issue there are organized groups arguing both for and against. Liberals can often find reasons to be optimistic. Many of their cherished social issues have found advocates both at the national level and at the state level.

Our revolutionary spirit, what some have called our "national character," is rooted in ideas and practices that predate not only our own time but also the American war for independence. A government "of the people, by the people and for the people" is more than a Lincoln cliché. The first three words to our national constitution, "we the people," is our Siren Song. Irresistibly, popular sovereignty defines our representative democracy. Even though we have always valued diversity here, we have ultimately agreed that our political systems have the goal to protect our freedoms, to promote the general welfare and to keep us safe. In this unit we explored how these shared political beliefs, values and norms are preserved, processed and protected. We discovered that **citizens' beliefs about government are shaped by the intersection of demographics, political culture, and dynamic social change. Widely held political ideologies shape policy debates and choices in American politics.**