

[August 19] - Political Science and the Study of Politics

- ❖ Politics:
 - **The process of resolving conflicts and deciding “who gets what” (Laswell)**
 - **Power** underlies politics
 - Definition of power? Modifying behavior
- ❖ The concerns of a political scientist
 - Patterns of events (elections, war, etc.)
- ❖ The 3 Goals of Political science
 - **Description**
 - **Prediction**
 - What causes or What is most likely to cause...?
 - #1 predictable cause for war? *Whether or not you're next to them!*
 - **Prescription**
- ❖ Research and Methodology
 - Like any other science, political scientists look to support their theories
 - **Methodologies**
 - Logic
 - Observation
 - Quantitative methods

[August 21] - American Politics and Political Culture

- ❖ So is POLS really a Science?
 - **John Lewis Gaddis**
 - Imagination vs replication
 - **5 Standards of Traditional Science**
 - **Parsimony** - laws of science, functions that determine behavior
 - Duverger's law - holds that plurality-rule elections structured within single-member districts tend to favor a two-party system.
 - Democratic peace theory - democracies tend not to go to war with other democracies
 - **Variables** - lots of ordinal, but not as many continuous
 - **Accounting for change**
 - **Commensurability**
 - **Objectivity**

[August 24] - American Gov't and Process

- ❖ **The US gov't and the American political process DO NOT work efficiently!**
- ❖ **The American political process DOES work as the Founders wanted it!**
- ❖ **What did the Founders Want?**
 - Feared tyranny = distrust of power
 - System of Gov't
 - Divided power
 - Competitive
 - Checks and balances, Federalism
 - Gov't is slow, piecemeal (irregularly), and balanced

❖ Types of Gov't

➤ Gov't is the formal structure that rules people

➤ **2 questions in order to classify:**

■ Who governs?

- Autocracy
- Oligarchy
- Democracy

■ How much gov't control is permitted?

- **Authoritarian** - individual rights don't matter; violence can be utilized; it's about what represents the states
- **Totalitarian** - there are no other institutions; it's ONLY the states; violent repressive system
- **Constitutional** - the powers/rights/responsibilities are laid out ahead of time
- *U.S. = CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY*

➤ **Reading: The 3 Political Cultures**

■ "Summation of persistent patterns of underlying political attitudes and characteristic responses to political concerns that is manifest in a particular political order"

- **Translation** - the values, beliefs, and attitudes the society has on gov't and politics.
- **Why is it important?**

1. Political systems are the product of the political cultures they serve and the more reflective the better to maintain themselves.
2. I would also argue it needs to be "organic"

• **The US has 3:**

- ◆ **Individualistic** - it serves a purpose; no more no less
- ◆ **Moralistic** - ethical backbone; utilize gov't in shaping society
- ◆ **Traditionalistic (--> conservative)** - wants to return to a different point in time; ruling class/group is more privileged; wants to exclude groups from participation

[August 26] - American Political Culture

❖ Liberty

➤ **Civil** - freedoms of action as long as they're not detrimental to others

➤ **Political** - participate, vote, hold office

❖ Political Equality

➤ Each vote is equal!

❖ Democracy

➤ We always define things by the rule, not by exception

❖ Pluralism?

➤ Thru the competition of ideas/groups, you'll get the best policies

➤ So as we get more groups/individuals involved in the process, we get more reflective and better policies

[August 28] - The Constitution: Myths of POLS and the Foundations that Built a Country

❖ The Proper Context

- Often referred to as a “Living Constitution”
 - Broad principles
 - Open to interpretations
- Constitutional Experts split on how much interpretation
- **Why interpretation is necessary:**
 - Technological changes - computer, electricity, etc.
 - Issues inconceivable to the Founders - (e.g. abortion)

❖ Myths of H.S. Social Studies / American Politics

- **Colonies never were a united group**
 - Only shared economic interests
- **Independence declared 1776...**
 - Gov. established in
 - 1787 - proposed Constitution
 - 1788 - enough states ratified
 - 1789 - all states ratified
- **Resolution and Declaration of Independence**
 - Not legally significant (only intellectually)
 - True significance?
 1. Natural rights
 2. Social Contract
- **Led to Creation of the Articles of Confederation**
 - Confederation = loose collection, sub-actors hold the majority of power
 - The primary purpose of the AoC - defeat the British
 - Reality the AoC had big problems!
 - Lack a central authority and 6 key powers
 1. Inability to negotiate a treaty
 2. Inability to draft or compel soldiers for military
 3. Inability to collect taxes/pay for the war
 4. Inability to regulate interstate/foreign commerce
 5. Inability to compel the states to pay their fair share of costs
 6. Inability to coin money
 - But...No AoC, No Constitution

[August 31] - The Constitution

- ❖ Approved on September 17, 1787
- ❖ Encompassed 5 Principles (The Madison Model)
 1. Popular sovereignty
 2. Republican Gov.
 3. Limited gov't
 4. Separation of Power
 5. Federal system
- ❖ Ratification of the Constitution
 - Public Unawareness