

# Introduction to Human Sciences

Political Science – Lecture 1

# Study of Politics

- Oxford English Dictionary: The science and art of government: the science dealing with the forms, organization and administration of a state, or part of one, and with the regulation of its relations with other states
- The definition narrows down the boundaries of the discipline as it limits itself to only Public Institutions and State Activities.
- Here the adage of “Science” has to be investigated into. The methods of investigation cannot be compared to Natural Sciences
- Rather It has to be understood that “Science” here implies an “academic tradition of the study of politics”

# Nature of Politics

- Not only
  - State and its functioning
  - Party Politics
- Essence of Politics
  - Disagreements and their reconciliation.
- Resolution through violence or dialogue / negotiation
- Political Neutrality
- Political Competition
  - Evidence of disagreement
  - Means to resolve disagreements.
- Single Party Governments do not indicate the end of conflict.
- National Interest as a unifying factor

# Nature of Politics II

- Politics is Universal, but Neutral
  - Political Method is not
- Political Activity as a means of accommodating diversity
- Inclusiveness of Political Institutions
- Political Activity at the root of the functioning of any government
- However, resolution of social and economic conflict does not necessarily mean an end to conflict in itself.

# Political Power

- Power at the core of resolution of any political conflict
- Power as the “capacity to affect another’s behavior by some form of sanction”
- Power can be exercised in both negative and positive fashion
- Power as a relationship?
- Can Political Power be measured?

# History of the Discipline

- Plato (428–348 BCE)
  - Republic, Statesman and Laws
- Propositions about
  - justice
  - political virtue
  - varieties of polity
- Timocracy, Oligarchy, Democracy, and Tyranny
- Oligarchy and Democracy,
  - Most common forms
- Aristotle's four fold classification - the Greek city states might be classified
  - “polity” or constitutional or “mixed” government  
(Best attainable form of government)
  - Combination of Oligarchy and Democracy, (because it reconciles virtue with stability)
  - Tyranny, is the worst.

# History of the Discipline II

- Renaissance political theory
- Machiavelli
  - Looked at legitimacy of regimes / leaders
  - Non-normative politics is unavoidable
  - survival-related, part of reality.
- “Value-free” orientation
- “A Prince who failed to employ problematic means when necessary to survival would be unable to do good when that was possible.”

# Hobbes and Locke

- State of Nature
  - Hobbes - chaotic,
  - Locke – not as abysmal
- Hobbes concluded that sovereign authority in a society is required if the deliverance of its members out of a disorderly and violent state of nature is to be secured.
- Locke suggests that minor inconveniences apart, individuals enter social contract to preserve life, liberty and property.
- Hobbes calls for
  - Powerful King (monarchic absolutism)
- Locke calls for
  - Conditional consent to government



# 19<sup>th</sup> Century

- Preoccupation with government and politics
- Hegel - history as the clash of opposites and the emergence of syntheses.
- In Marx
  - Hegelian dialectic became principle of class struggle
  - Ultimate transformation of human society
- Propositions about political phenomena (nature and explanation) came to be based on historical inductions rather than assumptions about human nature.

# Behavioral Revolution

- Behavioral Approach to understanding Politics (1930s)
- Graham Wallas and Arthur Bentley
  - Shift from descriptive, qualitative work to more quantitative analysis
- Shifting focus from Institutions to “Human Nature”
- Borrowing from Psychology and Sociology
- Can Politics be independent of the social system in which it operates?
- Quantitative analysis
- Charles Merriam and Harold Lasswell and the study of “Political Power”

# Institutional Variation in Democracies

- *Party-system*
  - Two-party vs. multi-party system
- *Electoral system*
  - Proportional vs. majoritarian
- *Legislative assembly*
  - Unicameral vs. bicameral
- *Government structure*
  - Unitarian vs. federalist
- *Central authority*
  - Parliamentarism vs. presidentialism
- *Court system*
  - Judicial review vs. judicial preview
- *Local government*
  - Weak vs. strong autonomy
- *Civil service*
  - Spoils recruitment vs. merit recruitment
- *Armed forces*
  - Professional vs. conscription
- *State-economy relation*
  - Liberal vs. corporatist

# Political Institutionalism

- Historical Institutionalism
- Rational-Choice Institutionalism
- Sociological Institutionalism