

Introduction to Political Science and American Government

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Quotes

A nation that hates politics will not long survive as a democracy. -
E. J. Dionne

What is Political Science?

Politics is "Who gets what, when and how?" It is the resolution of peaceful conflict or rare and scarce things.

- Who — parties, individuals, citizens, institutions
- What — money, distribution, rights, symbolism
- Where and How — congressional legislation, court, executive order, voting

There are three kinds of statements to be made in Political Science

- Descriptive — True / False — things that can be perceived — "It is snowing"
- Evaluative — Good / Bad — normative, defines morals — "It is good that there are 100 senators"
- Explanatory — Cause / Effect — why do people vote the way they do? Ways to relate variables. — "Trump was elected with help of foreign interference"

It is important to differentiate cause from correlation. Post hoc ergo propter hoc — After this, therefore because of this. It was winter, now it is spring. Therefore winter caused spring.

Democracy can adapt. Policy that affects a majority can only be enacted with support from that majority.

On Reading Sources

Argument - A set of proposition to lead us to a conclusion.

1. Consider the source
2. Lay out the argument
3. Find evidence and claims to support propositions
4. Evaluate the conclusion
5. Consider the consequences or purpose

On Power and Authority

Suppose people-entities A and B .

| | | | |
|--|--------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Power | In Authority | "An" Authority | Influence-Persuasion |
|  | | | |

- Power: A creates a threat to force B to conform to what A wants. Either by taking benefits or imposing punishment.
- In Authority: Power is possibly given to A to threaten B into doing what A wants.
- "An" Authority: A suggest B to take some form of action because it benefits B , only because B looks up to A .
- Influence-Persuasion: A wants something so A persuades B to conform for the self interest of B .

Authority is an assignment of resources of power given to a holder when needed. It does not promise control, only access or opportunity to power.

On Defining Democracy

See James Madison's Federalist Paper 10.

"Democracy" has its roots from the Greek words $dēmos$ and $-kratia$, meaning "the people" and "power / rule" respectively. The democracy we know isn't the Athenian democracy originally idealized, it's actually a Republic. Athenian democracy is centered around what's popular, and participation. That is to say, Athenian democracy requires more than just voting on ideas, it requires deliberation and constant confliction. People who follow this belief are Popular Democrats.

Elite Democrats are the proposed solution by James Madison. He argued that humans are, by nature, private and passionate. By forming groups, we try to impose our beliefs guided by emotion and passion - self interest. Elite Democrats are to be committed to formality and compromise for the perceived greater good of everyone affected.

On the Articles of Confederation

The Articles of Confederation gave sovereignty (supreme power and authority to govern itself) to each of the thirteen new states,

with limited central control. The central government had power to "declare war, appoint military officers, sign treaties, make alliances, appoint foreign ambassadors, and manage relations with Indians." - Digital History.

This short and concise list of powers let citizen deference decrease, and led to Shae's Rebellion. The rebellion became a form of demonstration (though not intentionally) of the weaknesses each state had when government was small. It became apparent that the colonies needed to be united under a more powerful central government, which led to the current constitution.

The current constitution had some primary goals. One, limit the direct influence of the population in policy. Though undemocratic (by definition of democracy) this prevented low-information citizens from influencing policy for anything other than the public's good and wellness. Second, the central government needed a single form of currency, power to tax and coin money, and create new laws deemed necessary and helpful.

Creating a New Constitution

Possible ruling systems:

1. Toryism

Also known as European Conservatism, was generally ruled as a monarchy with a strict hierarchy. Citizens were born into positions of superiority or inferiority. Superiors had an obligation to influence policy for the benefit of inferiors, and inferiors had the obligation to abide.

2. Classical Republicanism

Based on true democracy, Classical Republicanism required active participation in creating agreements for the public good. This meant setting aside personal wants to determine what was best for the public.