

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

January 11, 2017

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.

January 13, 2017

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.