# CONCEPTS

Absolutism

Abolutism is the theory of practice of absolute government, most commonly associated with an abosolute monarchy. Absolutism does not invest government with arbitrary power, unlike dictatorship.

Administration

It can be refer collectively to the senior personnel in the executive branch. More generally, it means the task of coordinating and executing policy. More narrowly, administration means dealing with information and maintaining control.

Anti-politics

It refers to a rejection of, and/or alienation from, conventional politicians and political processes, especially ’mainstream’ political parties and establish established representative mechanisms.

Anti-Semitism

Athenian democracy

It is characterized by the high level of citizen involvement in the affairs of the city-state.

Authoritarianism

It is a belief in, or practice of, government ‘from above’, in which authority is exercised regardless of popular consent. Authoritarianism is usually distinguished from totalitarianism. Authoritarianism seeks to exclude masses from politics rather than abolish civil society.

Authority

It can most simply be defined as ‘legitimate power’.

Autonomy

It literally means self-rule.

Bill of right

A bill of right is a constitutional document that specifies the rights and freedoms of the individual, and so defines the legal extent of civil liberty.

Bureaucracy

Literally,’rule by officials’. A pejorative term meaning pointless administrative routine. In the social sciences, it refers to phenomena as different as rule by non-elected officials, the process of public administration and a rational mode of organization.

Capitalism

It can be viewed as either an economic system or an ideology. etc.

Charisma

‘Gift of grace’.

Citizenship

It is a relationship between the individual and the state in which the two are bound together by reciprocal rights and duties.

Civil disobedience

It is law-breaking that is justified by reference to ‘higher’ religious, moral or political principles.

Civil liberty

It refers to a private sphere of existence that belongs to the citizen, not the state.

Civil society

It originally meanst a ‘political community’. Now, it is used to describe institutions that are ‘private’.

Class dealignment

It is the weakening of the relationship between social class and party support.

Coalition

It is a grouping of rivial political actors brought together either through the preception of common threat, or through a recognition that their goals cannot be achieved by working separately.

Collective security

It simply stated that aggression can best be resisted by united action taken by a number of states.

Colonialism

It’s the theory or practice of establishing control over a foreign territory and turning it into a ‘colony’. It’s usually distinguished by settlement and by economic domination.

Communism

# WHAT IS POLITICS?

Preview

For Aristotle, politics is the ‘master science’: that is nothing less than the activity through which human beings attempt to imporve their lives and create the Good society.

Defining politics

In its broadest sense, politics is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live. And it is better thought of as a search for conflict resolution than as its achievement, as not all conflicts are, or can be resolved.

Any attempt to clarify the meaning of ‘politics’ must nevertheless address two major problems. The first is the mass of associations that the word has when used in everyday language; in other words, politics is a ‘loaded’ term. The second and more intractable difficulty is that even respected authorities cannot agree what the subject is about. Politics is defined in such different ways as the exercise of power.

Politics as the art of government

The word ‘politics’ is derived from polis, meaning literally ‘city state’.

Anti-politics’s negative view of politics reflects the essentially liberal perception that, as individuals are self-interested, political power is corrupting. ‘Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absoutely’(Lord Acton).

Politics as public affairs