**Political Science Terms**

balance of power the distribution of power in a system such that no one state may overwhelm others.

bicameralism A system of government in which the legislature is divided into two chambers, an upper and lower house.

bill A piece of legislation under consideration by a legislative body.

bureaucracy A type of administration characterized by specialization, professionalism, and security of tenure.

checks and balances A system of government in which power is divided between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, and these powers check and balance each other.

coalition government A parliamentary government in which the cabinet is composed of members of more than one party.

coalition An alliance between two or more political units in response to opposing forces.

coercion A form of power based on forced compliance through fear and intimidation.

confederation A federal system of government in which sovereign constituent governments create a central government but balance of power remains with constituent governments.

consent of the governed People's acceptance of the form of government under which they live.

constituency A electoral district with a body of electors who vote for a representative in an elected assembly.

constitution The fundamental rules and principles by which a state is organized.

coup d’état A forceful and unconstitutional change of government, often by a faction within the military or the ruling party.

delegate A representative role in which the individual subordinates his/her views to those of their constituents.

devolution A system of government in which the sovereign central government devolves (delegates) power to regional governments.

diplomacy A system of formal, regularized communication that allows states to peacefully conduct their business with each other.

direct democracy A system of government based on public decisions made by citizens meeting in an assembly or voting by ballot.

Electoral College The body which formally chooses the president.

ethnic group A group whose common identity is based on racial, national, or religious association.

executive A small group of elected officials who direct the policy process, and oversee the vast array of departments and agencies of government.

extractive laws Laws designed to collect taxes from citizens to pay for governing society.

federalism A system of government in which sovereignty is divided between a central government and several provincial or state governments.

feminism The belief that society is disadvantageous to women, systematically depriving them of individual choice, political power, economic opportunity and intellectual recognition.

head of government The person in effective charge of the executive branch of government; the prime minister in a parliamentary system.

head of state An individual who represents the state but does not exercise political power.

human rights Rights thought to belong to all people simply because they are human beings.

ideology A system of beliefs and values that explains society and prescribes the role of government.

international law The body of rules governing the relationships of states with each other.

International Monetary Fund An international organization created to prevent another collapse in the world monetary system through the stabilization of national currencies throughout the world.

international relations An area of political study concerned with the interaction of independent states.

judicial activism The willingness and inclination of judges to overturn legislation or executive action.

judicial review The power of the courts to declare legislation unconstitutional (ultra vires).

judiciary The branch of government with the power to resolve legal conflicts that arise between citizens, between citizens and governments, or between levels of government.

legislature A representative assembly responsible for making laws for society.

legislature The branch of government responsible for making laws for society.

legitimacy Belief in the "rightness" of rule.

liberal democracy A system of government characterized by universal adult suffrage, political equality, majority rule and constitutionalism.

Magna Carta (Great Charter) A document signed by King John in 1215, conceding that the king is subject to law.

majority government A parliamentary government in which the party in power has over 50 percent of the seats in the legislature.

ministry The entire group of MPs appointed by the Prime Minister to specific ministerial responsibilities.

minority government A parliamentary government in which the government party has less than 50 percent of the seats in the legislature.

modernization The gradual replacement of traditional authority with legal authority.

monarchy Form of government in which a single person rules under the law.

multipolar A system of actions involving several states.

national interest Interests specific to a nation-state, including especially survival and maintenance of power.

nationalism The feeling of loyalty and attachment to one's nation or nation-state, and strong support for its interests.

plebiscite Another term for an advisory referendum.

political party An organized group that makes nominations and contests elections in the hope of influencing the personnel and policy of government.

political philosophy An area of political study based on historical, reflective and conceptual methods.

politics A process of conflict resolution in which support is mobilized and maintained for collective action.

power The ability to get other individuals to do as one wants them to do.

privatization The sale of government-owned assets or activities to the private sector.

proclamation The announcement of the official date a new law will take effect.

referendum A decision on policy proposals by a direct vote of the electorate.

residual powers Those powers in a federal system of government not explicitly allocated in a constitution.

separation of powers The separation of powers between executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.

society A self-sufficient group of individuals living together under common rules of conduct.

sovereign The highest or supreme political authority.

subjects Members of a society who are not involved in the political process of that society.

unitary system A system of government in which a single sovereign government rules the country.

unwritten constitution An uncodified constitution established through traditional practice.

veto The authorized power of a president to reject legislation passed by Congress.

violence The utilization of physical force or power as a means of achieving ends.

welfare state The provision for redistributive benefits such as education and health services by the state.

World Trade Organization An international organization created to provide the ground rules for international trade and commerce.