

Federalism and Public Policy

Power Distribution in American Governance

POSC 315: Introduction to Public Policy

Lecture 3.2

California State University, Fullerton

What is Federalism?

Federalism Defined

Definition

Federalism: The division of power between a central government and regional governments

The distribution of power and authority on a geographical basis.

Core Features

- A system of checks and balances between the national and state governments

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- The founders believed that federalism would protect liberty
- Protects against **factions**: groups of citizens who have a common interest in some proposal that would either violate the rights of other citizens or harm the nation

The Founders' View

Governance Benefits

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Governance Benefits

- Prevents faction dominance
- State policy experimentation
- Government closer to people

Democratic Benefits

The Founders' View

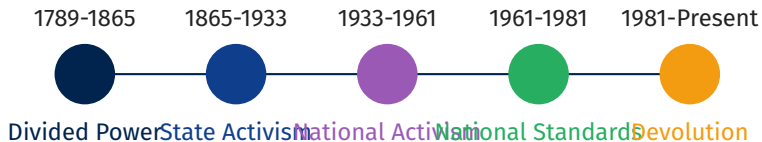
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Democratic Benefits

- Increases political participation
- More effective government
- More access points to government
- Increases policy innovation

Eras of Federalism



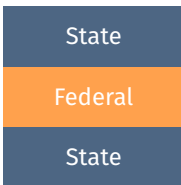
Models of Federalism

(from the Literature)

Five Models of Federalism



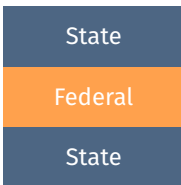
Dual Federalism (1789-1932)



"Layer Cake"
Federalism

- Clear division of authority

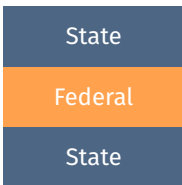
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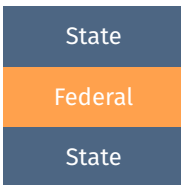
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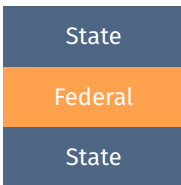
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Cooperative Federalism (1933-1960s)



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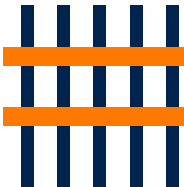
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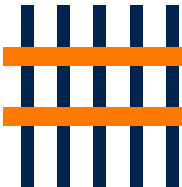
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"Picket Fence"
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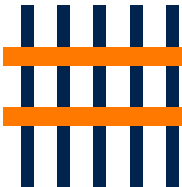
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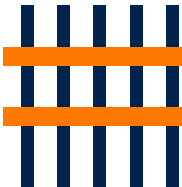
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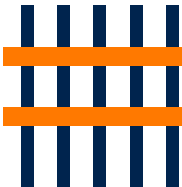
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New Federalism (1990s-2010s)



"Pineapple Upside-Down"
Cake Federalism

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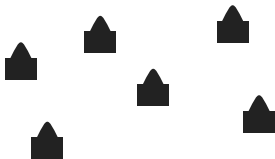
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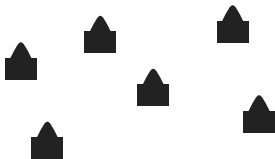
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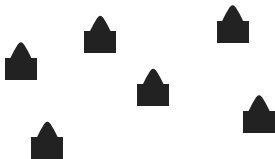
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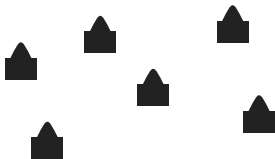
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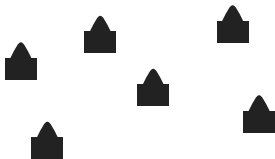
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Federalism in Practice

Policy Implementation in a Federal System

“It is one of the happy incidents of the federal system that a single courageous State may, if its citizens choose, serve as a laboratory; and try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country.”

— Justice Louis Brandeis (1932)

State Policy Innovation



State Laboratories

States experiment
with different policy
approaches



Policy Diffusion

Successful policies
spread across states



Comparative Analysis

Which approaches
work best?

Federal-State Coordination

Federal Tools

Federal-State Coordination

Federal Tools

- Categorical grants
- Block grants
- Mandates
- Regulatory frameworks

State Implementation

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State Implementation

- Administrative adaptation
- Supplemental funding
- Waiver requests
- Local distribution

Understanding Federalism

Is Key to Understanding American Policy Design
and Implementation