

1 Politics is the process of making collective decisions in a community, society, or group through the application of influence and power.

2 People commonly use the term "politics" in a negative sense, as in "There's only one explanation for her being appointed to be the new ambassador — politics"; or, simply, "It's back to politics as usual."

3 The idea behind this casual use of the term implies that a decision is "political" if influence or power is involved in making it.

4 The negative connotation that often surrounds politics derives from the belief that decisions should be made objectively on the basis of merit, quality, achievement, or some other legitimate standard.

5 When we find that influence and power have had an effect on an important decision in government or in large organizations, most people develop a very cynical attitude, accepting the idea that politics is synonymous with cheating or underhanded dealing.

- 1 To understand why some students go to college and others do not, sociologists would say that we cannot rely on individual choice or will (agency) alone — structures, whether subtly or quite obviously, exercise an influence on social behavior and outcomes.

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- 2 At the same time, we should not see structures as telling the whole story of social behavior because history shows the power of human agency in making change, even in the face of obstacles.

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- 3 Agency itself can transform structures.

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- 4 For example, think about the ways women's historical activism has helped to transform gender norms for women today.

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- 5 Sociologists weigh both agency and structure and study how the two intersect and interact.

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- 6 For the most part, sociologists understand the relationship as reciprocal — that is, it goes in both directions, as structure affects agency and agency, in turn, can change the dimensions of a structure.

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1 In the economic system, choice rests largely with the individual.

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2 His preferences go to determine what is to be produced and what is not.

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3 Every penny spent on A is a vote in favour of the production of A; every refusal to buy B is a vote against the production of B.

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4 The free choice of individual consumers between the goods competing on the market helps to determine what industries can carry on at a profit.

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5 The industries that cannot show a profit are not carried on at all.

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6 Those that show excessive profits attract competition and expand until people's wants are more adequately met.

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7 That is, if competition is possible and effective.

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8 But if some commodity is monopolized, consumers may be powerless to get what they want (and will pay for) in the proper quantity.

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9 They show their readiness to cast votes for more of the commodity by offering high prices for it.

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10 But the election is disregarded. No one is willing to stand against the monopolist.

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11 So he is able to preserve an excessive scarcity by keeping people out of his line of business.

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12 He makes things scarcer than people want them to be and earns high profits by doing so.

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- 1 The goal of legal socialization is to instill in people a felt obligation or responsibility to follow laws and accept legal authority.

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- 2 The goal of moral socialization is to instill in people a duty to follow societal standards of proper behavior independent of rules and codes.

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- 3 Given that in normal everyday life those behaviors that society considers immoral are frequently prohibited by law, the two usually work toward the same goal.

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- 4 However, that is not always the case.

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- 5 Criminalizing a behavior does not make it immoral, nor is all immoral behavior necessarily criminalized.

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- 6 Most people can think of an instance where they believe a behavior is immoral, but would not support criminalizing it or using the full force of the law to stop people from doing it.

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- 7 At the same time, even if people do abstractly support legal regulation of immoral behavior, they vary in how and the extent to which they want the legal system to intervene.

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- 8 Such views are strongly shaped by the way in which people understand the position and function of the law within society.