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Political Culture and Ideology

Key Question

- Who are the American people and what do they believe about government and politics?

The Census

- The constitution mandates a census every decade
- Historians use that data to make judgements about the voting populace
- **Sample** = a collection of participants that represent a certain population
- **Random Sample** = technique employed by statisticians to ensure a sample is representative
 - Every member of a certain demographic should have an equal chance of being the representative of that demographic in the sample
- **Representative Sample** = sample must contain sufficiently large sub-samples for each demographic the survey is targeting
- **Sampling Error** = margin of error in survey results
- **Wording Effect** = wording of poll questions must be unambiguous and unbiased

Three Waves of Immigration

- Wave 1: Western Europeans
 - Spain, Portugal, Britain, France, etc
- Wave 2: Southeastern European
- Wave 3: Asians and Hispanics
 - Asians come from war-torn areas = refugees

2016-10-10

The American People

- Age as a political factor

- Because of baby-boomer generation, Americans over 65 are fastest-growing group
- Puts strain on social security
 - * Less paying in, more taking out
- *How do Americans learn about politics?*
 - Answer: **Political Socialization** = the process through which one comes to identify with a particular political ideology
 - Factors
 - * Family
 - * Peers
 - * Media consumed
 - Younger generation doesn't consume TV media—mostly internet
 - * Class distinctions
 - * Education
 - Public schools assimilate children into society = *indoctrination*?

Voting Behavior

- **Political Ideology** = a set of beliefs about government, economics, and society
- Demographics
 - Age
 - Gender/Sexual Orientation
 - * Women typically vote democrat
 - * Men typically vote democrat
 - Race
 - * Hispanics typically vote democrat
 - * African Americans typically vote democrat
 - * Asians typically vote Republican
 - Escaping communist regimes
 - Disproportionately wealthy
 - Religion
 - Income
 - * Blue Collar/White Collar
 - Location
 - * Urban/Rural/Suburban
 - Education

2016-10-11

Groups of American Voters

- Ideologue = person who thinks of politics in terms of *ideology*
 - 12% of population
- Group Benefits = people who go along with party labels
 - 42% of population
- Nature of the Times = people who orient themselves based on the state of the nation (economic security, national security, etc)
 - 24% of population
- No-Issue Content = people who orient themselves politically based on personality of politicians
 - 22% of population

Choosing to Vote

- **Legitimacy** = the belief that politicians rise to the ticket meritocratically; the voter has a say in *who* they're voting for
- **Political Efficacy** = the belief that political participation *actually* shapes the government
- **Civic Duty** = the belief that it is your moral *duty* to participate in democracy

Voter Registration

- **Motor Voter Laws** = laws that allow people to register at the DMV
- Voting registration is the best predicting factor as to whether or not someone will vote
- Motor Voter Act 1993

What Factors Influence Voter Turnout?

- Biggest factor: whether or not one registers to vote
 - Obviously...
- Demographics
 - Education
 - Age

- Gender
 - Race/Ethnicity
- Other factors
 - Marriage status
 - Persistent housing
 - Union membership

What is “Political Participation”?

- Protesting as participation
 - **Protest** = engaging in disobedience for the purpose of furthering a political goal
 - **Civil Disobedience** = the conscious breaking of laws or norms to get a message across