

UNIT 4A: PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

American Political Ideologies and Beliefs Vocab

1. **Public opinion** – The distribution of individual preferences or evaluations of a given issue, candidate, or institution within a specific population.
2. **Political socialization** – The process – most notably in families and schools – by which we develop our political attitudes, values, and beliefs.
3. **Scientific poll** – A method of poll selection that gives each person in a group the same chance of being selected.
4. **Opinion poll** – Interviews or surveys with samples of citizens that are used to estimate the feelings and beliefs of the entire population.
5. **Benchmark (tracking) poll** – Researchers ask people the same or similar questions over time to “track” the path of public opinion.
6. **Entrance/exit polls** – They are conducted outside of polling places on Election Day to predict the outcome of an election.
7. **Sampling error** – Error in a statistical analysis arising from the unrepresentativeness of the sample taken (error that occurs simply because the researchers aren’t asking everyone).
8. **Margin of error** – Maximum amount by which the sample results are expected to differ from those of the actual population.
9. **Random sample** – In this type of sample, every individual has unknown and random chance of being selected.
10. **Public policy** – A choice that government makes in response to a political issue. A policy is a course of action taken with regard to some problem.
11. **Political ideology** – A consistent pattern of beliefs about political values and the role of government.
12. **Liberalism** – A belief that government can and should achieve justice and equality of opportunity.
13. **Conservatism** – A belief in private property and free enterprise.
14. **Libertarianism** – An ideology that cherishes individual liberty and insists on minimal government, promoting a free market economy, a noninterventionist foreign policy, and an absence of regulation in moral, economic, and social life.
15. **Free enterprise** – Freedom of private business to organize and operate for profit in a competitive system without interference by government beyond regulation necessary to protect public interest and keep the national economy in balance.
16. **Keynesian economics** – Developed by the British economist John Maynard Keynes during the 1930s in an attempt to understand the Great Depression. Keynes advocated increased government expenditures and lower taxes to stimulate demand and pull the global economy out of the depression.
17. **Supply-side economics** – An economic theory that holds that, by lowering taxes on corporations, government can stimulate investment in industry and thereby raise production, which will, in turn, bring down prices and control inflation. Supply-siders focus on increasing the supply of goods rather than stimulating demand by granting subsidies to the public. Supply-side economics influenced the presidency of Ronald Reagan.

UNIT 4B: VOTING AND ELECTIONS

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1. **Rational-choice voting** – Voting based on what is perceived to be in the citizen's individual interest.
2. **Prospective issue voting** – Voting based on predictions of how a party or candidate will perform in the future.
3. **Retrospective issue voting** – Voting to decide whether the party or candidate in power should be re-elected based on the recent past.
4. **Party-line voting** – Supporting a party by voting for candidates from one political party for all public offices across the ballot.
5. **Voter registration** – System designed to reduce voter fraud by limiting voting to those who have established eligibility to vote by submitting the proper documents, including proof of residency.
6. **General election** – Elections in which voters elect officeholders.
7. **Primary election** – Elections in which voters determine party nominees.
8. **Presidential election** – Elections held in years when the president is on the ballot.
9. **Midterm election** – Elections held midway between presidential elections.
10. **Off-year elections** – Elections held in odd-numbered calendar years.
11. **Turnout** – The proportion of the voting age public that votes, sometimes defined as the number of registered voters that vote.
12. **Winner-take-all system** – An election system in which the candidate with the most votes wins.
13. **Single-member district** – An electoral district in which voters choose one representative or official.
14. **Proportional representation** – Election system in which each party running receives the proportion of legislative seats corresponding to its proportion of the vote.
15. **Electoral College** – Electoral system used in electing the president and vice president, in which voters vote for electors pledged to cast their ballots for particular party's candidates.
16. **Safe seat** – Elected office that is predictably won by one party or the other, so the success of the party's candidate is almost taken for granted.
17. **Coattail effect** – The boost that candidates may get in an election because of the popularity of candidates above them on the ballot, especially the president.
18. **Candidate appeal** – How voters feel about a candidate's background, personality, leadership ability, and other personal qualities.
19. **Name recognition** – Incumbents have an advantage over challengers in election campaigns because voters are more familiar with them, and incumbents are more recognizable.
20. **Caucus** – A meeting of local party members to choose party officials or candidates for public office and to decide the platform.
21. **National party convention** – A national meeting of delegates elected at primaries, caucuses, or state conventions who assemble once every four years to nominate candidates for president and vice president, ratify the party platform, elect officers, and adopt rules.
22. **Efficacy** – Citizens' faith and trust in government and their belief that they can understand and influence political affairs.
23. **Internal efficacy** – *Belief that one can understand politics and therefore participate in politics.*
24. **External efficacy** – *Beliefs that the government will respond to one's demands.*