

UNIT 4: AMERICAN POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES AND BELIEFS

Connecting the application of political science methods to the development of social and economic policies that Americans support, advocate for, and adopt is foundational to understanding the ideologies of political parties and patterns of political participation. American political beliefs are shaped by founding ideals, core values, linkage institutions (i.e., elections, political parties, interest groups, and the media in all its forms), and the changing demographics of citizens. These beliefs about government, politics, and the individual's role in the political system influence the creation of public policies.

Big Idea:

- How do our core beliefs about the role of government affect our behavior?
- How does our view of what freedom is shape our opinions?
- Why are some opinion polls better than others?
- How can policy-makers use information from political science to make decisions?

Citizen beliefs about government are shaped by the intersection of demographics, political culture, and dynamic social change.

TOPIC 4.1 American Attitudes About Government and Politics

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Explain the relationship between core beliefs of U.S. citizens and attitudes about the role of government.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- Different interpretations of core values, including individualism, equality of opportunity, free enterprise, rule of law, and limited government, affect the relationship between citizens and the federal government and that citizens have with each other.

TOPIC 4.2 Political Socialization

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Explain how cultural factors influence political attitudes and socialization.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- Family, schools, peers, media, and social environments (including civic and religious organizations) contribute to the development of an individual's political attitudes and values through the process of political socialization.
- As a result of globalization, U.S. political culture has both influenced and been influenced by the values of other countries.

TOPIC 4.3 Changes in Ideology

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Explain how cultural factors influence political attitudes and socialization.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- Generational and life cycle effects also contribute to the political socialization that influences an individual's political attitudes.

TOPIC 4.4 Influence of Political Events on Ideology

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Explain how cultural factors influence political attitudes and socialization.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- The relative importance of major political events to the development of individual political attitudes is an example of political socialization.

Public opinion is measured through scientific polling, and the results of public opinion polls influence public policies and institutions.

TOPIC 4.5 Measuring Public Opinion

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Describe the elements of a scientific poll.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- Public opinion data that can impact elections and policy debates is affected by such scientific polling types and methods as:
 - Type of poll (opinion polls, benchmark or tracking polls, entrance and exit polls)
 - Sampling techniques, identification of respondents, mass survey or focus group, sampling error
 - Type and format of questions

TOPIC 4.6 Evaluating Public Opinion Data

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Explain the quality and credibility of claims based on public opinion data.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- The relationship between scientific polling and elections and policy debates is affected by the:
 - Importance of public opinion as a source of political influence in a given election or policy debate
 - Reliability and veracity of public opinion data

Widely held political ideologies shape policy debates and choices in American policies.

TOPIC 4.7 Ideologies of Political Parties

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Explain how ideologies of the two major parties shape policy debates.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- The Democratic Party (D or DEM) platforms generally align more closely to liberal ideological positions, and the Republican Party (R or GOP) platforms generally align more closely to conservative ideological positions.

TOPIC 4.8 Ideology and Policy Making

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Explain how U.S. political culture (e.g., values, attitudes, and beliefs) influences the formation, goals, and implementation of public policy over time.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- Because the U.S. is a democracy with a diverse society, public policies generated at any given time reflect the attitudes and beliefs of citizens who choose to participate in politics at that time.
- The balancing dynamic of individual liberty and government efforts to promote stability and order has been reflected in policy debates and their outcomes over time.

TOPIC 4.9 Ideology and Economic Policy

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Describe different political ideologies on the role of government in regulating the marketplace.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- Liberal ideologies favor more governmental regulation of the marketplace, conservative ideologies favor fewer regulations, and libertarian ideologies favor little or no regulation of the marketplace beyond the protection of property rights and voluntary trade.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Explain how political ideologies vary on the government's role in regulating the marketplace.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- Ideological differences on marketplace regulation are based on different theoretical support, including Keynesian and supply-side positions on monetary and fiscal policies promoted by the president, Congress, and the Federal Reserve.

TOPIC 4.10 Ideology and Social Policy

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Explain how political ideologies vary on the role of the government in addressing social issues.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- Liberal ideologies tend to think that personal privacy—areas of behavior where government should not intrude—extends further than conservative ideologies do (except in arenas involving religious and educational freedom); conservative ideologies favor less government involvement to ensure social and economic equality; and libertarian ideologies disfavor any governmental intervention beyond the protection of private property and individual liberty

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Explain how different ideologies impact policy on social issues.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- Policy trends concerning the level of government involvement in social issues reflect the success of conservative or liberal perspectives in political parties.