



# LESSON 1

## DEFINING DEMOCRACY

### UNIT 1

#### Constitutional Underpinnings of the U.S. Government (≈10%)

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#### WHY WAS DEMOCRACY SEEN AS A BAD THING TO THE FOUNDING FATHERS?

- Formerly a term of derision (bad) - Positive meaning only in last 100 years
- Distinguishing feature of democracy is that government derives authority from its citizens
- DIRECT DEMOCRACY
  - Rule by the people and
    - (1) individual participation on legislation or policy or
    - (2) making decisions without delegating authority to elected representatives
  - Only example in original Constitution is the election of House of Representatives
  - Modern day examples:
    - Election of United States Senators – 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment
    - Direct primary - voters, rather than party leaders or other elected officials, select who may run for office
    - Referendum - procedure for submitting to popular vote measures passed by the legislature or proposed amendment to a state constitution (can only be done at the state level)
    - Initiative - procedure whereby a certain number of voters may, by petition, propose a law or constitutional amendment and have it submitted to the voters (can only be done at the state level)
    - Recall - procedure for submitting to popular vote the removal of officials from office before the end of their term (can only be done at the state level)
  - Founding Fathers feared direct democracy >> fear of *MOB RULE* or *MOBOCRACY*
    - Did not trust the people
    - Uninformed public

#### HOW WAS A REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY (REPUBLIC) BETTER?

- REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY
  - Authority is delegated to elected representatives to make decision on behalf of citizens
  - People vote >> Representatives >> make law (public policy)
  - This is today's meaning of democracy
  - Representative democracy = republic
  - Republic
    - Same as indirect democracy
    - Solves problems of direct democracy
    - "Secures the advantages of direct democracy while curing its weaknesses"
- Constitutional democracy refers to a government that enforces limits on those who govern and allows people to be heard through free and fair elections
- Constitutionalism refers to how power is granted, dispersed, and limited

## WHAT ARE THE CORE BELIEFS IN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY?

- Individual liberty/Individual freedom
  - All individuals must have the opportunity to realize individual goals
  - Every individual has rights; these rights are the source of all legitimate governmental authority and power
    - John Locke & social contract theory - gov't promises to protect the natural rights of people
  - Freedom of expression
  - The right to assemble and protest
  - Opposite of statism (state supreme over individual)
- Popular consent
  - Governmental power from people
  - A willingness to lose if majority removes support
- Equality of opportunity
  - Jefferson's Declaration of Independence statement ("All men are created equal")
  - What kind of equality? Equality of opportunity? Role of FDR's 2<sup>nd</sup> Bill of Rights: economic security
- Free and fair elections
  - Held at frequent intervals; decided by majority rule
  - All citizens should have equal voting power
  - Existence of opposition political parties
- Majority rule
  - Those with the most votes assume power
  - Majority still respects minority views
  - Constitution reflects fear of tyranny by majority

## WHAT ARE THE FOUR THEORIES OF HOW POWER IS DISTRIBUTED IN OUR DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM?

- Majoritarian (traditional) theory
  - Leaders are heavily influenced by the will of the people
- Elite theory
  - Society is divided along class lines and that an upper-class elite rules
  - Wealth is seen as the basis of power
- Pluralist theory
  - Many centers of influence compete for power and control over public policy, with no one group or set of groups dominating
  - Pluralists view bargaining and compromise as essential ingredients to democracy
- Hyperpluralist theory
  - "Pluralism gone sour"
  - There are so many groups, and they are so strong, that government has become **gridlocked** and is unable to act

## FREE RESPONSE QUESTION (FRQ) REVIEW

1. There are several different approaches to representation within a democratic political system.
  - (a) Define direct democracy.
  - (b) Define republican form of government.
  - (c) Describe one reason the framers of the United States Constitution chose a republican form of government over a direct democracy.
  
2. When the United States first became a country, no other country in the world had a thriving, democratic government.
  - (a) Explain why the Founding Fathers feared a direct democracy.
  - (b) Explain why the Founding Fathers wanted to establish a republic (representative democracy).
  - (c) Explain the following three modern day examples of direct democracy.
    - Referendum
    - Initiative
    - Recall
  
3. The United States Constitution established a democratic government but also contained several provisions that limited majority rule. Throughout the next two centuries, the role of majority rule in the United States government and politics continued to change.
  - (a) Explain how the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment has moved the United States from a less democratic system to a more democratic system.
  
4. Four theories of democracy have taken shape over time, each addressing the questions of who holds power and influences public policy.
  - (a) Describe (in detail) the four theories of democracy.
  - (b) Explain which one is most prevalent in America today.

## MULTIPLE CHOICE (MC) REVIEW

1. What is meant by constitutional democracy?  
(A) government by representative politicians  
(B) required voting by law  
(C) centralized governmental power  
(D) simple participatory democracy  
(E) voting rights tied to property ownership
2. How is democracy defined?  
(A) government by one person  
(B) all people must be involved in politics and policy making  
(C) the fragmentation of powers  
(D) government by the few  
(E) government by the people
3. What is the term for an election in which a candidate can win by getting the most votes, even if it is less than 50 percent of the votes?  
(A) a runoff election  
(B) a plurality  
(C) a recall election  
(D) a majority  
(E) a retention election
4. Statism is the idea that the rights of the nation are supreme over the rights of the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) popular consent  
(B) region  
(C) individual  
(D) community  
(E) government
5. What is the idea that a just government must derive its powers from the people it governs called?  
(A) equality  
(B) popular consent  
(C) electoral politics  
(D) equality of opportunity  
(E) statism
6. Governance according to the expressed preferences of the majority is known as which of the following?  
(A) statism  
(B) tyranny of the majority  
(C) individual rights  
(D) majority rule  
(E) plurality principle
7. What is the name given to the law that would govern human beings before governments existed?  
(A) original law  
(B) Biblical law  
(C) natural law  
(D) Constitutional law  
(E) universal law
8. Prior to the ratification of the Seventeenth Amendment, how were senators selected?  
(A) by direct election  
(B) by the president  
(C) by state governors  
(D) by state legislators  
(E) by the Supreme Court