

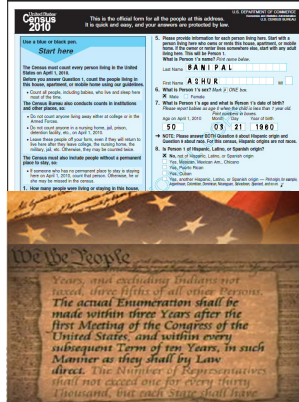
AP GOV

PUBLIC OPINION & POLITICAL ACTION REVIEWED!

Government in America (Pearson) Chapter 6
American Government: (Wilson) Chapter 4, 7-8
Institutions & Policies

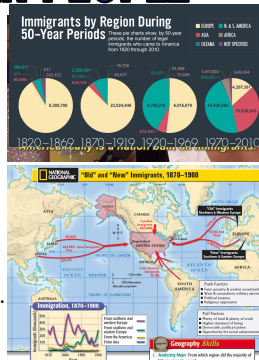
THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

- The U.S. is a very diverse nation
- This diversity makes study of American public opinion complex
- Widely held political ideologies shape policy debates and choices in American politics.
- The **Census** allows us to understand demographic changes in America
 - 1st census in 1790
 - Constitutional requirement that the government conduct an **"actual enumeration"** of the population every 10 years
 - Census also determines amount of money each state gets
 - Determines number of representatives



THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

- The U.S. is a nation of immigrants
 - Multicultural and multilingual society
 - Different groups have **assimilated** many basic American values
 - Melting pot**: different cultures blend into one. Contrast "salad bowl"
- Different phases of immigration
 - "Old immigrants"**: Northern & Western Europe (England, Ireland, Germany)
 - "New Immigrants"**: Southern & Eastern Europe (Italy, Russia, Poland)
 - Post 1965**: Latin America and Asia
- Historically, largest minority group in the U.S. has been African Americans
 - 2000 census revealed that Latino population outnumbered the AA
 - "Minority majority"**: America will soon no longer have a white majority

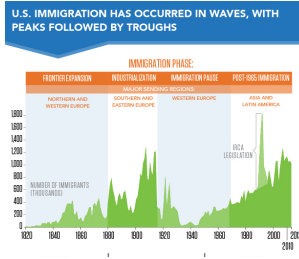


RESTRICTIONS ON IMMIGRATION

- Until about the 1870s the U.S. had a relatively **open immigration policy**

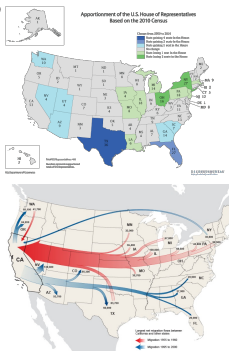
- Restrictions on immigration
 - Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)
 - National Origins Act (1924)

- Immigration and Nationality Act (1965)



THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

- Reapportionment:** reallocating House of Representative seats after each census
- There has been a **regional shift** since World War II
 - Move from **"rust belt"** (NE) states to the **"sunbelt"** (South & West)
- Citizens over age of 65 are the **fastest growing age group** in America
 - Advances in medicine, fertility rate lower
 - Baby Boomers** (those born between 1945-1960s)
- This demographic change has consequences for programs such as **Social Security**
 - Social Security is the 2nd most costly public program



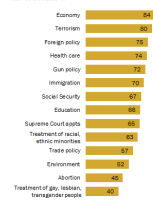
POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

- Political socialization:** how individuals learn or develop their political beliefs
- The Process of Political Socialization:
 - Family:** oftentimes a major influencer of political socialization
 - School / Peers:** attending school plays a major role in political socialization
 - Mass Media:** influence of traditional media (tv, radio) and social media on political beliefs
 - Social Environments:** civic, employment, religious organizations
- Political Learning over a lifetime
 - Older people get, more involved in politics they become
 - Older people get, the more attached to their political beliefs they become

MEASURING PUBLIC OPINION & POLITICAL INFORMATION

- **Public opinion:** what people believe or think they know about politics and policy issues
- **Polls** are used to measure public opinion
 - **Gallup polls:** relies on taking a **sample** of the population
 - **Sample:** small proportion of people are chosen as representatives of the whole
 - **Random Sampling:** everyone should have an equal probability of being selected.
- **Role of polls in American democracy**
 - **Pro:** politicians can know opinions on issues
 - **Con:** Politicians can become more concerned about following than leading
 - Possible **“bandwagon effect”**
 - **Wording** of poll questions can influence results
 - **Exit polls:** voters are asked questions just after they have voted

Economy and terrorism are top issues for voters in 2016
% of registered voters saying each is “very important” to their role in 2016 ...



Note: Based on registered voters, Q40.
Source: Survey conducted June 22-26, 2015.
Pew Research Center

What Polls Reveal about Americans' Political Information

- **Average American has a lower level of political knowledge than citizens of many other countries**
- **General agreement about basic core values** the nation should uphold: **individualism, free enterprise, rule of law, & limited government**
 - Different interpretations of these core values
- **Since the 1960s there has been a decline of trust in the government**
 - **Reasons:**
 - Vietnam War: Gulf of Tonkin, Tet Offensive, Pentagon Papers
 - Watergate
 - Iran Hostage Crisis

Annenberg Public Policy Center

Americans know surprisingly little about their government, survey finds

Survey: Most Americans Can't Name All Three Branches of Government

Survey: Only 43 percent can name a Supreme Court justice

What Americans Value: Political Ideologies

- **Political ideology** is a coherent set of values and beliefs about public policy
 - **Conservatives:** tend to favor a small national government
 - Tend to support less regulation of the marketplace
 - Who: older voters, wealthier voters, & more religious voters tend to be conservative
 - **Liberals:** tend to favor a larger national government to address social/economic problems
 - Tend to support governmental regulation of the market
 - Who: under 30 years old, minorities, women tend to support liberal candidates
 - **Libertarians:** little to no regulation
- Many voters do not vote along ideological lines

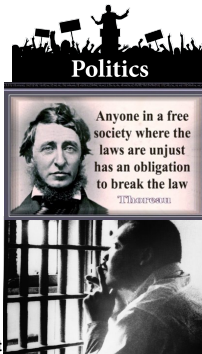
TABLE 6.1 HOW TO TELL A LIBERAL FROM A CONSERVATIVE

Liberal and conservative—these labels are thrown around in American politics as though everyone knows what they mean. Here are some of the political beliefs likely to be preferred by liberals and conservatives. This table, to be sure, is oversimplified.

	Liberals	Conservatives
Foreign Policy		
Military spending	Believe we should spend less	Believe we should maintain peace through strength
Use of force	Less willing to commit troops to action, such as the war in Iraq	More likely to support military intervention around the world
Social Policy		
Abortion	Support "freedom of choice"	Support "right to life"
Prayer in schools	Are opposed	Are supportive
Affirmative action	Favor	Oppose
Economic Policy		
Scope of government	View government as a regulator in the public interest	Favor free-market solutions
Taxes	Want to tax the rich more	Want to keep taxes low
Spending	Want to spend more on the poor	Want to keep spending low
Crime		
How to cut crime	Believe we should solve the problems that cause crime	Believe we should stop "toughing criminals"
Defendants' rights	Believe we should guard them carefully	Believe we should stop letting criminals hide behind laws

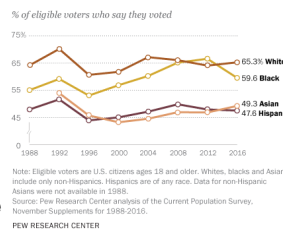
HOW AMERICANS PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS

- **Political participation** includes the activities citizen use to influence the selection of political leaders or the policies they pursue
 - Political participation goes well beyond voting
 - **Beyond voting**: protesting, writing letters, starting petitions, filing lawsuits, rallies, etc.
- **Conventional participation**: Includes many widely accepted ways of influencing government such as voting, running for office, door to door campaigning, signing petitions, etc.
- **Unconventional**: Includes actions such as protesting, boycotts, civil disobedience, etc.
 - Protesting seeks to achieve policy change through dramatic action
 - **Civil disobedience** is the act of deliberately breaking a law that an individual thinks is unjust
 - Henry David Thoreau (1840s), nonviolent civil disobedience (MLK's **Letter from a Birmingham Jail**)



CLASS, INEQUALITY, & PARTICIPATION

- Individuals of higher socioeconomic status tend to be more politically active
- Minority groups typically are below average in terms of political participation
 - **BUT**, when African American, Latino, and white voters of equal incomes and educations are compared, people of color participate more in politics
- Voting means politicians pay attention to the needs of a particular group



Public Attitude Toward the Scope of Government

- Complicated and oftentimes contradictory positions about role of government
 - General belief that government is too big
 - But, many Americans support increased spending on programs for education, healthcare, crime prevention, environment, and other issues.
 - Ideological conservatives, but operational liberals
- Protest in America is typically aimed at getting the attention of government, not at attempting to overthrow it

