

TEXTBOOK: [Magleby 24th Edition, Chapter 1 \(pp. 1-26\), Chapter 4 \(pp. 104-125\)](#)
[{Magleby 2009 Brief Edition, Chapter 1 \(pp. 3-10\), Chapter 3 \(pp.73-93\)}](#)

There are two major questions about government: Who governs? To what ends? This unit will focus on the first question, and will encourage students to develop their own answers to the second question. In order to choose among these theories or to devise new ones, one must examine the kinds of issues that do (and do not) get taken up by the political system and consider how they are resolved by the system. It is not enough to merely describe governmental institutions and processes.

Democratic theory recognizes that the answer to the question “Who governs?” is more complicated than “the people.” Participatory democracy has only been a reality in a limited number of cases. Representative democracy gives rise to an elite. Although Americans value liberty in both the political system and the economy, they believe equality is important primarily in the political realm. In economic affairs, while a few people wish to see equality of results, many support equality of opportunity.

Not only is our culture generally supportive of democratic rule, it also has certain distinctive features that make our way of governing different from other democracies. Americans are preoccupied with their rights. This fact, combined with a political system that encourages the vigorous exercise of rights and claims, gives political life in the United States an adversarial character. Unlike the Japanese or the Swedes, Americans do not generally reach political decisions by consensus and we often do not defer to the authority of administrative agencies. United States politics, more than those of many other nations, has competition rather than cooperation at every stage.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to give the student a preview of the major questions to be asked throughout the textbook and to introduce key terms. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter the student should be able to do each of the following:

- What are most important questions to be asked about government in any political system?
- What are society's basic goals and how are they prioritized?
- How can we distinguish between power, legitimacy, and authority?
- What are the main tasks of government?
- Is there such a concept as American political culture? If so, what are its characteristics?
- What is Political Ideology, and how do you distinguish *right* from *left*?
- What is meant by Efficacy?

VOCABULARY

NATION
POLITICS
POWER
LEGITIMACY
AUTHORITY
GOVERNMENT
CONSTITUTION
NATURAL RIGHTS
AUTOCRACY
OLIGARCHY
ARISTOCRACY

THEOCRACY
REPUBLIC
DEMOCRACY
RECALL
REFERENDUM
POLITICAL CULTURE
POLITICAL COMPETENCE
POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION
CONSERVATIVE
LIBERAL
EFFICACY