

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
AND  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**Posc 105**

**POLITICAL CULTURE AND PHILOSOPHY**

**I. THIS MORNING:**

- A. Political culture and popular philosophy of government

**II. SOME GENERALIZATIONS:**

- A. \*Ideas have a powerful effect on politics.
- B. Proposition: substantive differences between liberals and conservatives are often overstated.
1. The Democratic party is essentially a “left” of middle group while Republicans are more to right of middle.
    - a. Republicans are greatly influenced by a conservative vocal faction.
    - b. But when push comes to shove they often adopt or at least live with middle-of- the-road policies.
  2. There is no real socialism or conservatism in the United States.
    - a. To see what the extremes of political philosophies look like visit:
      - (1) Foreign political parties:  
<http://www.psci.unt.edu/es/elect.htm>
      - (2) Libertarian party: <http://www.lp.org/lp.html>
      - (3) Green party: <http://www.greens.org/>
      - (4) Socialist Party USA: <http://socialist.org/>
      - (5) Reform Party: <http://www.reformparty.org/>
      - (6) U. S. Taxpayers party:  
<http://www.ustaxpayers.org/index.shtml>
    - b. For your own edification (and possible minor extra credit) why not visit a couple of these sites to explore the range of opinion about government and then compare it to the standard Democratic-Republican debate.
      - (1) Example: What does the Libertarian Party say about impeaching President Clinton?

- E. The public philosophy has several consequences:
  - 1. Understanding this philosophy is essential for understanding American government.
  - 2. It determines what kinds of policies will and will not be pursued.
  - 3. It “justifies” the surprisingly tight bond between government and the economy.
  - 4. It limits American democracy and political capacity.
- F. "General-welfare liberalism" consists of two strands, "classical" liberalism and mixed feelings about active government.

### III. THE LIBERALISM COMPONENT:

- A. American interpretation of classical liberalism
  - 1. See the Declaration of Independence for an excellent example of this philosophy
- B. Liberalism's components:
  - 1. Political equality
  - 2. Emphasis on individual political rights and liberties
    - a. Humans have natural, inalienable rights that can be known
    - b. Property rights
      - (1) Note as an aside, these rights have been extended to abstract entities such as corporations and groups.
  - 3. Limited government and distrust of public (i.e., governmental) power
    - a. Central government is to be distrusted, even feared.
    - b. State and local government preferable
  - 4. \*Unwavering faith and trust in:
    - a. Individualism
      - (1) The American dream
      - (2) The power of economic growth to solve problems
      - (3) Economic and social mobility
      - (4) Hence, distrust of poor and welfare programs
    - b. Rationality
    - c. Science and technology as solutions to public problems.
    - d. Optimism and progress
    - e. Economic growth will solve collective problems
- C. Misunderstanding of the difference between public and private power
- D. “Hubris” “... the greatest nation on earth.”
  - 1. America has a special place in the world.
- E. Tone: pragmatism or practical thinking
- F. Main proposition: belief and faith in these ideas shapes public policy process and content.
  - 1. Welfare reform rests to a large extent on these beliefs.

### IV. THE GENERAL-WELFARE COMPONENT:

- A. \*There is now agreement that the national government manage the economy to lessen, if not eliminate, depressions, recessions and inflation.
  - 1. Government should attempt to take the “rough edges off capitalism.”
  - 2. Ours is sometimes called a “mixed system”
  - 3. Our conceptions of welfare and social justice reflect this idea.
- B. But more is involved than making life bearable for the average citizen.
  - 1. There is a very specific way the U.S. government and private economic actors, especially large ones, work together to attempt to achieve growth with social harmony
  - 2. This idea sometimes goes under the name **state capitalism**

#### V. STATE CAPITALISM:

- A. Proposition: policy making in is dominated by corporate-government partnership.
- B. \*Goals of this partnership:
  - 1. Promote economic growth but not redistribute wealth.
  - 2. Maintain social peace, especially by managing
    - a. Labor-management conflict
    - b. Corporate-citizen conflict
  - 3. Legitimize the economic and social order.
- C. \*Proposition: undertaking these tasks requires a corporate-government partnership.
  - 1. One can attribute the political battles in Washington partly to the government's inability to finance and enforce these goals

#### VI. STATE CAPITALISM IN PRACTICE:

- A. Macroeconomic policy: fiscal and monetary policy
  - 1. The Federal Reserve system
- B. \*Regulation as promotion of business interests
  - 1. What seems to be a regulation sometimes turns out differently
    - a. Warning labels often protect industries from lawsuits and other government action.
      - (1) Tobacco and now television “warning labels”
    - b. Transportation, communications, banking
- C. \*Direct and indirect support of business
  - 1. Subsidies and direct aid to specific industries
  - 2. \*Tax cuts and revenue expenditures
  - 3. Industrial policy
    - a. Research and development
    - b. "Infrastructure" (e.g., roads, harbors, airports)
    - c. Protection: tariffs, quotas
      - (1) Current example: help for American steel industry
  - 4. "Human capital" (schools, health, job training)
    - a. Functions:

- (1) Supply of trained, "disciplined" labor to enhance productivity
- (2) Legitimation
- (3) Stabilize economy and create a market for goods and services

VII. SUMMARY:

- A. Conflict between liberalism and the general-welfare is what is at the heart of the current debate in Congress over the role of government.
- B. Manifestations of liberalism
  1. Term-limits
- C. Manifestation of general-welfare
  1. Health care

VIII. NEXT TIME:

- A. Continue discussion general-welfare liberalism.
  1. We won't cover all of these topics so will continue tomorrow.
- B. The constitution.
  1. The written constitution embodies many classical liberal ideas.
  2. The unwritten constitution embodies many general-welfare notions.
- C. Reading:
  1. Class web site articles under **public philosophy**.
    - a. "The Concept of a Public Philosophy"
    - b. "Laissez-faire"
    - c. "Main Ideas"
    - d. "General-welfare in Practice"
  2. Start Patterson, *We the People*, Chapter 3.
  3. The Declaration of Independence.

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