

APGOVPOL

Chapter 1: Introducing Government in America

Key Words and Terms, Defined

1. conservatives/conservatism: those persons who advocate conservatism; a political ideology whose advocates fear the growth of government, prefer to maintain the status quo, deplore the government's drag on private-sector initiatives, dislike permissiveness in society, and place priority on military needs over social needs
2. democracy: a system of selecting policymakers and of organizing government so that policy represents and responds to the public's preferences
3. elite: the upper class in a society that utilizes wealth for political power; according to the elite and class theory of government and politics, elites control policies because they control key institutions
4. elite and class theory: a theory of government and politics contending that societies are divided along class lines and that an upper-class elite will rule, regardless of the formal niceties of governmental organization
5. government: the institutions and processes through which public policies are made for a society
6. gross domestic product: the sum total of the value of all the goods and services produced in a nation
7. hyperpluralism: a theory of government and politics contending that groups are so strong that government is weakened; an extreme, exaggerated, or perverted form of pluralism
8. individualism: the belief that individuals should be left on their own by the government; one of the primary reasons for the comparatively small scope of American government is the prominence of this belief in American political thought and practice
9. liberals/liberalism: those who advocate liberalism; a political ideology whose advocates prefer a government active in dealing with human needs, support individual rights and liberties, and give higher priority to social needs than to military needs
10. linkage institutions: the channels or access points through which issues and people's public policy preferences get on the government's policy agenda; in the United States, elections, political parties, and interest groups are the three main linkage institutions
11. majority rule: a fundamental principle of traditional democratic theory; in a democracy, choosing among alternatives requires that the majority's desire be respected
12. minority rights: a principle of traditional democratic theory that guarantees rights to those who do not belong to majorities and allows that they might join majorities through persuasion and reasoned argument
13. pluralist theory: a theory of government and politics emphasizing that politics is mainly a competition among groups, each one pressing for its own preferred policies
14. policy agenda: the list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time

15. policy gridlock: a condition that occurs when no coalition is strong enough to form a majority and establish policy; the result is that nothing may get done
16. policy impacts: the effect a policy has on people and problems; impacts are analyzed to see how well a policy has met its goal and at what cost
17. policymaking institutions: the branches of government charged with taking action on political issues; the U.S. Constitution established three policymaking institutions – the Congress, the presidency, and the courts; today, the power of the bureaucracy is so great that most political scientists consider it a fourth policymaking institution
18. policymaking system: the process by which political problems are communicated by the voters and acted upon by government policymakers; the policymaking system begins with people's needs and expectations for governmental action; when people confront government officials with problems they want solved, they are trying to influence the government's policy agenda
19. political issue: an issue that arises when people disagree about a problem and a public policy choice
20. political participation: all the activities used by citizens to influence the selection of political leaders or the policies they pursue; the most common, but not the only means of political participation in a democracy is voting; other means include protest and civil disobedience politics: the art or science of government or governing, especially the governing of a political entity, such as a nation, and the administration and control of its internal and external affairs; "who gets what, when, and how"
21. public goods: goods, such as clean air and clean water, that everyone must share
22. public policy: a choice that government makes in response to a political issue; a policy is a course of action taken with regard to some problem
23. representation: a basic principle of traditional democratic theory that describes the relationship between the few leaders and the many followers
24. single-issue groups: groups that have a narrow interest, tend to dislike compromise, and often draw membership from people new to politics; these features distinguish them from traditional interest groups
25. traditional democratic theory: a theory about how a democratic government makes its decisions; its cornerstones are equality in voting, effective participation, enlightened understanding, final control over the agenda, and inclusion