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Chapter 2
Ideologies and Isms

Getting Started

My thought here is many students may be misinformed on a number of basic terms such as the isms listed below. I usually list the terms on the board and ask students to define them, and then walk them through better definitions.

One could also ask them what an ideology is, and get them to think about, maybe even write down the things they believe, and then add that up to see what ideology they identify with. As I always stress, the key here in part could be to get them to think about what they believe, so that their politics becomes more than a matter of blind faith.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand what a theory is, and what a political theory is.
2. Understand how scientific method applies to political science.
3. Learn what the two types of theory are, and what directions political theory tends to take.

Teaching Suggestions

1. Students can again see that the evolution of politics and government stretches back throughout human history, and especially in recorded human history.
2. Theory matters because it can give us a framework to understand why things have happened the way they did, and what the consequences of future decisions could be.
3. Most theorists had something to contribute to our understanding of the world, although their prescriptions for the world's problems have been all over the map.

Section Outline

1. An ideology is a set of beliefs about how the world is and how it ought to be.

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- Ideology can give us a framework for understanding the world.
- It can also blind us to alternative explanations of how the world works or should work.
- Most ideologies contain some truth, so it can be useful to figure out what works in an particular ideology, discarding the rest, as opposed to rejecting something entirely because we disagree with some part of it.
- So, for example, an idea such as the social construction of reality can help us see the extent to which people create the "reality" they want to believe in. Taken to its logical conclusion, however, the idea of the social construction of reality itself would be socially constructed, and therefore no more true than anything else. So perhaps there is some reality that is not socially constructed.
- In judging any ideology, we should be careful to be aware of our own assumptions, and to test them when possible.

2. Political theory

- A political theory is a "Systematic reflection on the nature and purposes of government, characteristically involving both an understanding of existing political institutions and a view about how (if at all) they ought to be changed." – *Blackwell's Encyclopedia of Political Thought*.
- Systematic in this instance means organized and purposeful.
- Reflection in the sense of stepping back to take a broader look at something.
- Nature and purposes as in how government is contructed and what it's supposed to do.
- Political institutions: Actual institutions such as Congress and the House of Commons, but also the structures of government such as electoral systems.
- Finally, theory seeks to ask if and how government should be changed.
- A theory is a testable proposition about the nature and reality of something. If we are to apply scientific method to a theory, theory becomes a hypothesis. We not only test it, we actively try to disprove it.
- A theory that withstands serious attempts to show that it is wrong might be a good one. This can be difficult to achieve in social sciences, particularly political science, because people object to having experiments performed on them. Testing in political science is often limited to observation and asking people what they think.

3. Positive theory tries to explain why things happen the way they do. It is also called empirical or explanatory theory.

4. Normative theory tries to say how things ought to be. It makes an argument that one system is better than another.

1. Three versions of politics

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Learning Objectives

1. Understand different approaches to politics.
2. Understand what ancient thinkers thought was the best state.

Section Outline

1. Three versions of theory include:

    - The democratic model, which argues that people can understand enough about the world to govern themselves.
    - The authoritarian model argues that some people have sufficient knowledge for government, but others do not.
    - The anarchic model argues that it is in fact the institutions of power created by government that cause problems and lead people astray.

2. The three models necessarily include some overlap, so that elements of each may show up in the work of a single political philosopher.

3. The ancient Greeks and Chinese contributed greatly to the development of political philosophy.

    - Plato rejected democracy, since it put citizens who could be misled in charge of the state. He argued for a system that would produce philosopher kings, who could rule justly.
    - Plato's system looked very much like the medieval Catholic Church and Communist Party in the Soviet Union.

4. Aristotle identified three good forms of government.

    - Monarchy was rule by a just king.
    - Aristocracy was rule by the best members of society.
    - Polity was just rule by the people.
    - Each of these three forms of government could be corrupted, however: Monarchy could become tyranny; aristocracy could become oligarchy; polity could become democracy.
    - Aristotle also mistrusted ordinary citizens, but said that a mixed form of government, combining elements of monarchy, polity and aristocracy, would provide for the best

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practical government. The three forms together could be used to keep the excesses of each individual form in check.
- Confucius and his successors argued for a just state based on custom, tradition and respect. The Confucian system provided a measure of stability for the Chinese empire for 2,000 years.

5. The Romans were not great philosophers, but in practice created a legal system that influences systems in use today.

    - The Romans also created an enduring republic with checks and balances on the power of the state. However the checks on power were so severe that it became impossible to achieve needed reforms, and the republic was replaced by an imperial system.
    - The empire foundered in part because its tax system failed to provide enough revenue to effectively defend it against foreign invasion.

Key Takeaways

1. Political theory is a systematic way of studying the performance of government.
2. Political theories tend to fall into authoritarian, democratic and anarchic models.
3. Plato thought that average people were not fit to rule, and that people would need to be carefully trained to make them into rulers.
4. Aristotle didn't trust common people either, but thought that a balanced constitution, combining elements of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy would be best.
5. Confucius thought that emphasis on order, tradition and respect would lead to the best government.
6. The Roman Republic had so many checks and balances it was unable to act when it needed to.

Exercises

1. Assume you were studying to be a member of Plato's guardian class. What things would you need to know to be an effective ruler?
   Answer: Presumably knowledge of economics, politics and military affairs, so as to be able to understand and mediate between different factions in the state.
2. In what ways to order and tradition play a role in everyday life today? Do these help or hinder progress?
   Answer: Laws generally provide stability and predictability in the state, which necessarily means some limits on individual freedom.

Another exercise: Ask students how the Roman Republic, short of becoming an imperial

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state, could have solved the problem of too many checks and balances.
Answer: Possibly some mechanism by which someone could make a final decision with rules that such a decision will be enforced.

Key Terms

1. Political theory
    - Systematic study of government, including how it works and how it might be improved.
2. Theory
    - A testable proposition about what is true or not true.
3. Positive theory
    - Theory that attempts to explain how things actually are.
4. Normative theory
    - Political theory that argues how governments should be organized and run.
5. Monarchy
    - Rule by a king.
6. Demagogue
    - Someone who aspires to political power by telling people what they want to hear, including demonizing his or her opponents, but often doing things that benefit themselves once they are in power.
6. Aristocracy
    - Rule by the best people.
7. Polity
    - According to Aristotle, a fair, just government featuring rule by the people, as opposed to democracy, which he saw as rule by the mob.
8. Democracy

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- A system of government involving direct rule by the people.

2. From Antiquity to Modernity

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how early Christian and Moslem thinkers tried to reconcile the competing spheres of church and state.
2. Understand how political science was reinvented, and how that changed views on government.

Teaching Suggestions

Students should understand the trade-offs made between liberty and security in the Dark and Middle Ages. Compare this to steps taken by the United States after 9.11.

Students can also be shown how the roots of modern government are in some ways developed at this time, with rising wealth and greater social stability leading to new, broader forms of government.

Section Outline

1. The chief question to be answered by medieval political thinkers, both Christian and Moslem, was to reconcile the power of the church with the power of the secular state.
2. Medieval Christian philosophers such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas argued that the church was in fact superior to the secular state.
3. Moslem philosophers built on the work of Plato and Aristotle. Philosophers such as Al-Farabi (872–950 CE), Avicenna (980–1087 CE) and Averroes (1126–1198 CE), built on Plato's idea of a philosopher-king (in this case, a prophet-imam) who would combine both religious righteousness with just rule.

    - In each case, the king and the church are bound by God's law as explained in the Bible or the Quran.
    - Aquinas helped rehabilitate Aristotle in the West, broadening potential approaches to politics and government from those expressed by Plato.

4. Renaissance philosophers increasingly avoided religious justification for the existence of

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the state.

5. Machiavelli said that there was no point in playing fair if your enemies were not going to do the same.

    - Machiavelli also argued that the just state, once established, needed a balance of power to maintain stability.

6. The increasing separation of church and state helped to demystify the world and create the era known as modernity. The challenge of modernity is how do we maintain a stable, civil state without reference to a higher power.

7. Thomas Hobbes said that security was the chief justification for the state, and that citizens surrender their liberty when they establish the sovereign by mutual consent.

    - Although it is in the sovereign's interest to treat the citizens well, the citizens are bound to obey the sovereign until he can no longer protect them.

8. John Locke said that the legislative body of government should be supreme, with regular elections as a check on the power of parliament.

    - Locke had a huge impact on the Founding Fathers of the American republic, including his statement that the state existed to preserve "life, liberty and property."
    - This makes Locke the father of classical liberalism: A reliance on democratic institutions for political decision-making and markets for economic decision-making.
    - Oppression by the state nullifies the social contract that created it, he said.

9. The French philosopher Montesquieu argued that power should be divided between different branches of government, so that each part was dependent on the others to get anything done.

10. Rousseau agued for a republican form of government, established by way of a social contract between citizens.

    - Rousseau's republic would feature direct democracy with administration by elected magistrates, who could not make policy on their own.
    - Rousseau said the general will which constitutes the state should not be used to oppress any part of the state.

Key Takeaways

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1. Medieval philosophers tried to reconcile the competing powers of church and state.
2. Modern philosophers presumed the existence of the state, and set about trying to make it better.
3. Social contract theory saw government as a contract between the government and the governed.

Exercises

1. Do you practice a particular faith? What should be the role of religion in civil society?
   Answers, obviously, could vary quite a bit. Ask the students to justify their responses.
2. Is government a social contract? How does that contract work for people who weren't born when it was agreed upon?
   Apply this thought to Edmund Burke's analsysis of the state and the social contract.

Key Terms

1. Modernity
   - The era after the Middle Ages, and the problem of a world where reason and rationality have begun to replace faith.
2. social contract
   - An agreement between people to create a certain type of government.

3. From modernity to the present.

Learning Objectives

1. Learn what liberalism is.
2. Understand the different types of liberalism.
3. Learn the difference between American liberalism and American conservatism.

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- Classical Liberalism

- Classical liberalism describes a major direction in western politics, of which American liberalism is a subset.
- Classical liberalism has two prominent features:
- A reliance on markets for economic decision-making.
- A reliance on democratic institutions for political decision-making.
- Capitalism aims to promote maximum wealth by letting people try, fail and succeed in business.
- It got its first systematic description in the work of Adam Smith in his work *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776.
- Capitalism succeeded mercantilism as the prevailing economic theory of the western world.
- Mercantilism suggested that states collect gold, carve out colonies for raw materials and as export markets, and limit imports while maximizing exports.
- In fact, states talked capitalism but practiced mercantilism, and no state has become rich by adopting a policy of unfettered free trade.
- Smith criticized mercantilism's obsession with gold, pointing out that it's just a commodity like any other.
- He also noted that mercantilism was too focused on supply and not enough on demand.
- Smith did not believe in the perfection of markets, and noted that firms would try to rig the market to limit competition.
- Smith's reference to "the invisible hand" was simply a way of saying that hard work, savings and investment by individuals would benefit the community by producing more wealth.
- Overall, classical liberalism thus claims to provide people with maximum freedom and maximum wealth.
- It does tend to produce greater wealth and to allow a higher degree of political participation, allowing outlets for citizens' discontent.
- It may also distribute the wealth unevenly, which can lead to wealthy interests dominating the political system.
- Connecting wealth to personal and political freedom may make it more difficult to address collective problems such as pollution.
- The democratic nature of the state, coupled with the power of interest groups, may impede the state's ability to make decisions and address reforms.
- American Liberalism is a variation of classical liberalism.
- American liberalism tends to argue for a higher degree of government involvement in the economy, usually by way of regulation, taxation, and more support for the non-wealthy.
- Progressivism tries to do this while being careful not to overwhelm business with regulation and taxes.

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- Both movements grew out of the apparent failurs of market capitalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—domination of markets by big business, high unemployment and widely unequal distribution of wealth.
- Both liberalism and progressivism, as with all philosophies, offer costs and benefits—tradeoffs in terms of efficiency and equity.
    - Edmund Burke, who supported the American Revolution, was driven by the excesses of the French Revolution to develop a conservative response to efforts at political change.
- Burke argued that human institutions are worth preserving because they represent the accumulated wisdom of the people who have gone before us.
- Burke thought that the individual, who had been born into organized society, must accommodate him or herself into society, not the other wary around. Individual rights must be compatible with the reality of a pre-existing state, which is what makes civilized life possible.

3. Thomas Paine argued that the people always retain a right to revolution if the state does not protect their interests.

    - Paine believed that rights are inherent in the individual. If they are granted by government, they are mere privileges that can be taken away.

4. The Industrial Revolution created more wealth but also poor working conditions for many people. It increased pressure on the state to evolve into a system that invited more widespread political participation.

5. Rapid transit and communications made large commercial enterprises possible, while rising productivity reduced agricultural employment but increased it in others.

6. John Stuart Mill argued for broader political participation.

    - Mill's concept of utilitarianism argued for the greatest good for the greatest number. He also argued for equal rights for women.

        - American conservatism also is a variant of classical liberalism.
        - American conservatism favors low government involvement in the economy and lower tax rates, including less regulation.
        - It grew as a reaction to American liberalism in the mid- to late 20th century.
        - Conservatism can mean a commitment to maintaining existing political and economic institutions.
        - This kind of conservatism derives, in part, from the work of Edmund Burke, an 18th century British politician.
        - Burkean conservatims features respect for the rule of law; an independent court system; representative government; respect for private property; and preservation of an international balance of power.
        - Conservatives may view poverty as a moral failing as opposed to a problem with the system.

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7. Neo-conservatives have a broad social agenda, including opposition to marriage rights, abortion and support for traditional views on marriage, family, patriotism and religion, appealing to morality as well as to economic self-interest.

8. Neo-conservatives also tend to support free trade along with free markets.

9. Christian conservatives have a similar domestic agenda, with frequent reference to their interpretation of the Bible. They argue that American was founded an explicitly Christian state.

10. People in fact tend to hold a variety of opinions, which may in fact be in conflict with each other.

    - Populism is not ideology, but is a common theme in American politics.
    - Populists claim to represent the interests of the ordinary citizen against those of the rich and power. Many candidates and elected officials make these sorts of claims.
    - Populists don't seem to govern in the same way that they talk.

11. Libertarianism argues for the least amount of government possible—national defense, police and fire, and not much else.

    - True libertarians, unlike neo- and Christian conservatives, are not concerned with social issues.
    - Libertarianism grew out of reaction to the excesses of Soviet-style communism.
    - Opponents of libertarianism argue that it would produce economic and environmental problems by restricting the role of government.

Key Takeaways

1. Classical liberalism is currently the dominant political and economic philosophy in the world.
2. Classical liberalism and its variants all have strengths and weaknesses.

Exercises

1. What seems to be different between American conservatives and liberals at present? In what ways would you say you are conservative or liberal in your

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political beliefs?
American conservatives favor less government involvement in the Economy—sometimes. American liberals can favor more of such involvement—sometimes. American conservatives are more likely to have a traditional social agenda.

2. If Libertarians were to win enough elections to take charge of a government, what changes would happen? How would people respond to the changing mix of public services and taxes? How would this work?
Libertarians would try to dismantle the social safety net provided by government. This might provoke a political backlash by both recipients and supporters of that approach to government as the gap between the rich and the poor grew wider. This is what happened in the early to mid-20th century with both the progressive and liberal political movements.

Key Terms

1. Ideology
    - A set of beliefs about politics that seeks to explain both what's wrong with the world and also how things could be made better.
2. Classical liberalism
    - A system of social organization that relies on markets and democratic institutions for decision making.
3. Capitalism
    - An economic system that relies on markets to make decisions on production and pricing.
4. Mercantilism
    - An economic philosophy that encourages nations to maximize exports, minimize imports, and develop colonies as sources of raw materials and markets for finished goods.
5. American liberalism
    - A variant of classical liberalism, which prescribes a bigger role for government in the economy.
5. Progressivism

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- A political philosophy of the late 19th and early 20th century that saw a role for government in breaking up the power of large business and political interests.

6. American conservatism

    - A variant of classical liberalism that seeks less government involvement in the economy.

7. Populism

    - An approach to politics in which candidates claim to represent the interests of the common people as opposed to those of the rich and the powerful.

8. Libertarianism

    - A political philosophy that argues that people will be better off with the least amount of government possible.

4. Alternatives to liberalism

Teaching Suggestions

It should be useful for students to understand that there are alternatives to the dominant ideologies of the 21st century, and why these alternatives arose. I try to get students to understand that every ideology has something to offer—except fascism, etc.—and that they should understand what the trade-offs are in each choice. I try very hard to make clear that while I have my own views, I don't expect them to adopt my views. I do want them to at least understand what they believe at a level beyond mere faith.

Learning Objectives

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1. Understand the difference between socialism and communism.
2. Understand the difference between fascism and Nazism.
3. Learn what anarchism is, and understand how its views of people and politics differ from many other philosophies.

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Section Outline

1. Karl Marx argued that capitalism and democracy had failed people.

    - Marx said the means of production determined the form of government, and that each system "sowed the seeds of its own demise" by creating the conditions that would lead to its downfall.
    - The end result of human political and economic evolution would be socialism. Profit in capitalism, he said, is simply uncompensated labor.
    - Marx saw no hope for democratic forms of government rescuing workers from their plight, as they were dominated by the interests of capital.
    - Marx said that a dictatorship of the workers would be necessary so that they could learn that capitalism would never work. True communism would occur when the state was no longer needed and simply "withered away."
    - Marx's basic ideas were put to the test in the Soviet Union, China and other states. With no check on the power of the state, abuses occurred, and the system proved to be bad at providing consumers with the goods that they wanted.

2. Socialism is purely an economic system, involving public ownership of productive resources.

    - Socialism has the goal of providing work and basic living standards for all citizens.
    - It tends to reduce unequal distribution of wealth.
    - It often is economically less productive and less efficient than capitalism. More people benefit from the economy, but the benefit level may be lower.
    - Consumer goods may be substandard and in short supply.

3. While socialism has currently been rejected as a dominant economic approach, most states in fact have a mixed economy, combining elements of both socialism and capitalism in different parts of the economy.

4. Communism features a socialist (planned) economy plus a one-party dictatorship of the state.

    - Communism was developed by the 19th century thinkers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and refined by the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin.
    - In practice, communism tended to reduce inequality of wealth and guarantee minimum standards of living. It also produced political repression and a lack of consumer goods.
    - Marx argued that excesses of industrial capitalism would drive workers to demand creation of a communist state, which eventually would itself wither away, leaving a workers' paradise.

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- Communism in fact only occurred in poor, largely agrarian societies, or by force of arms.
- North Korea and Cuba are the only remaining truly communist states.

5. Anarchism argue that government in fact is what makes people worse, because whatever its form, it becomes a tool of power and oppression.

    - In practice, anarchism has been based on localized cooperation and decentralized power.
    - 19th century experiments in anarchic communities tended to founder because some people were willing to work and others were not, producing dischord in the community.
    - The Tiv people of Nigeria were very successful in maintaining a peaceful, productive society based on familial and social relationships.

6. Anarchist thinkers have included Lao Tze Henry David Thoreau and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

7. Nazism and Fascism are not coherent political philosophies.

    - Fascism seems to claim that some people are simply better than other people, and glorifies the power of the state over the value of the individual.
    - Nazism does the same thing, but further argues that the superiority of some people is based on race.
    - Both arose out of the economic and political turmoil that followed World War I, and largely ended with the defeat of Germany and Italy in World War II.

8. The United States and other western powers supported authoritarian, right wing governments during the Cold War because their leaders opposed communism.

Key Takeaways

1. Other ideologies outside of classical liberalism and its variants tend to offer greater equality of outcomes but generate less overall wealth.
2. Socialism is an economic system that provides greater equality of result but less equality of opportunity.
3. Communism combines a socialist economy with a one-party government.
4. Anarchism has not been tried on a large scale outside of the Tiv in Nigeria.
5. Fascism glorifies the state; individuals are important only as part of the state.
6. Nazism glorifies the state, with an expressly racist approach to politics
7. Mill thought that government and society should create the greatest good for the greatest number.
8. Marx thought that capitalism would so impoverish the workers that they would revolt and

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create communism.

9. Contemporary theories have sought explain people's political actions by applying the disciplines of other social sciences.

Exercises

1. How would the place where you work be different if it was a government agency? If it's already a public agency, what would be different if it was privatized?
   Possible answers could include more or less efficiency, but not necessarily so. There are certainly efficient public enterprises and inefficient private ones—what would determine whether an operation is efficient? Possible answers there include leadership; a sense of belonging and mission on the part of employees; rewards for good performance.

2. Which countries still claim to be communist? What things could cause that to change?
   North Korea and Cuba. In the case of North Korea, the expectation is that the government may eventually collapse as the state decays from within. In the case of Cuba, a gradual softening of the economic stance of the leadership may lead to internal calls for reform.

3. John Stuart Mill's concept of utilitarianism argued that the state should provide the greatest good for the greatest number. Is that always true? Can you think of times when you might prefer to protect the rights of a minority?
   Students should easily be able to point to situations where people have differences of opinion, of ethnic heritage, or sexual orientation where they have been discriminated against by the majority.

4. Imagine Karl Marx's ideal state, run by and for workers. What could be better about this? What might be worse? How would this work? Could this work?
   Possible answers could include be less exploitation of workers and higher pay in some fields of work. It's an open question as to whether some new group of elites won't arise, however, and dominate the system. The system might also be less economically efficient. The question in some ways isn't whether it would work, but how it would work.

Key Terms

1. Socialism

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- An economic system that relies on public ownership of productive resources and relies on planning to determine what will be produced and how much it will cost.

2. Mixed economy

    - An economy that includes elements of both socialism and capitalism.

3. Communism

    - A political system that relies on a socialist economy and a one-party state for political decision making.

4. Anarchism

    - An ideology that argues that human institutions such as big government and big business make us worse off, not better.

5. Fascism

    - An ideology that glorifies the power of the state and says that the individual is not important except as part of the state.

6. Nazism

    - A variant of fascism that glorifies the state, based on appeals to alleged racial superiority.

7. Institutionalism

    - The study of political institutions with an eye to understanding and improving them.

8. Behavioralism

    - The scientific study of politics, through observation and collection of data and statistical measurement.

9. Systems theory

    - The idea that people and politics form a living ecosystem, and the effort to understand political behavior by studying that ecosystem.

10. Modernization theory

    - The idea that democracy becomes more likely as societies grow wealthier.

11. Feminist political theory

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- The effort to understand and end the political and economic subjugation of women.

12. Rational choice theory

    - The idea that people are rational decision-makers, so that their political behavior can be predicted by looking at what choices would best serve their personal interests.

13. Critical theory

    - The idea that political problems come down to cultural blinders and communication problems. If we can remove/solve these problems, we should be able to decide a right course in government.

5. Postmodern theories

Learning Objectives

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1. Learn how new ideologies have developed in more recent times.
2. Understand that as long as we have problems, and we probably always will, people will propose solutions to fixing them.

Teaching Suggestions

Students can be led to see that the continuing imperfection of human economic and political organization continues to prompt thinkers to both try to understand the nature and scope of problems and to pose possible solutions. One could ask students to list some current problems, and apply solutions based on the ideologies they have encountered so far. Then ask them to consider the flaws in those approaches, and try to get them to suggest something new. Part of the point of this for me always is that A. there are no easy answers and B. there are always trade-offs involved in every answer.

Section Outline

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1. Current theories are often referred to as post-modern, to distinguish them from “modern” theories which stretch from the Renaissance to the end of the Cold War.

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2. Post-modern theories sometimes reject rationalism, the idea that we can make correct choices through evidence-based reasoning.

3. Post-modern theories also tend to address topics that have been somewhat ignored, such as race- and gender-based inequality.

4. Feminism argues for equal treatment for women in all walks of life.

5. Authors such as Christine de Pizan, Mary Wollstonecraft, and John Stuart Mill argued for equality for women.

6. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other American women campaigned for much of the 19th and early 20th century for the right to vote, as well as equal economic and parental rights.

7. World War II both altered people's expectations and challenged notion that women and non-white citizens couldn't do everything that white men could do.

8. Feminism has many variants.

    - Radical feminists tend to fault capitalism for enforcing the subjugation of women.
    - Liberal feminists tend to see women as deserving equal opportunity within the framework of classical liberal society.

9. Environmentalism seeks to address environmental problems and bring them to the forefront of politics.

10. Environmentalism seeks to use the power of the state to address environmental degradation, arguing that environmental destruction and damage has a negative impact on people as well as plants and animals.

    - As with feminism, environmentalism has different factions, both radical and liberal.
    - Green political parties have made some progress win winning legislative seats in other republics around the world.

11. Institutionalism was the dominant school in the U.S. until recent times. It tries to look at the institutions of government to determine how politics will be conducted, but did not account for governments that looked good on paper but failed to protect people's interests.

12. Behavioralism attempts to collect data on people's actual behavior and analyze that to explain why they do the things that they do.

13. Systems theory attempts to view the political scene from an ecological/environmental perspective. How do the changes in the environment produce changes in actions by

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government?

14. Modernization theory argues that as societies become wealthier they are more likely to become and remain democratically ruled.

15. Rational choice theory attempts to apply economic logic to politics. It says that people calculate what is in their own interests, and behave accordingly.

16. Critical theory argues that people need ideal conditions for communication to determine what they should do, since otherwise we may be deluded by our own cultural blinders.

Key Takeaways

1. Post-modernism is sometimes a reaction against rationalism, and sometimes a response to the confusion and problems of contemporary politics.
2. Feminism is a broad and longstanding movement that seeks to ensure equal rights and opportunity for women in all walks of life.
3. Environmentalism seeks to encourage people and policies to limit their impact on the planet and thereby preserve higher standards of living for all.

Exercises

1. Do you feel that women where you live are treated the same as men? Do they have the same opportunities? Are there parts of life where they don't?
Answers clearly could vary. One area where this is true is in terms of equal pay for equal work, which still does not always obtain in the world.
2. What environmental laws have an impact on your life? How would it be different if those laws didn't exist?
Answers could include water safety standards; tax-supported storm water runoff utilities; curbside recycling programs; restrictions and taxes on development. All types of such regulations raise some costs and lower others.

Key Terms

1. Rationalism

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- The idea that correct choices can be made by use of reason and evidence.

2. Post-modernism

    - A catch-all phrase used to describe different features of the contemporary world, from the rejection of rationalism to the idea that economic and political problems may not be easily solved by existing ways of thinking.

3. Feminism

    - The broad historical and contemporary movement to advance the cause of women's rights in society.

4. Environmentalism

    - The movement to preserve and protect the planet by limiting humanity's impact on the biosphere.

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An Introduction to Politics v2.0

- T.M. Sell

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CHAPTER 2
Ideologies and Isms: The Foundations of Politics

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand what an ideology is and what a political theory is.
2. Understand how scientific method applies to political science.
3. Learn what the two types of theory are and what directions political theories tend to take.

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Ideologies and Isms: The Foundations of Politics

- An ideology is a set of beliefs about how the world is and how it ought to be.
  - Descriptive: what the world actually looks like.
  - Prescriptive: how it should ideally be.
- Many ideologies end in the suffix *–ism*.
- Classical liberalism is the most dominant ideology in world politics at the moment.
- Ideology grows out of political theory, which is the part of politics in which people try to come up with ideas for how government should work.

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Ideologies and Isms: The Foundations of Politics

- Ideology mobilizes people and organizes people; if citizens believe in something, they will support and work for those beliefs.
- Ideologies contain both truths and assumptions.
- Ideology and theory give us tools for understanding politics and political belief systems and perhaps a way to change them.
- Because ideology tends to substitute belief for understanding, it is not the same thing as a social science, which seeks to understand.

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Political Theory: The Beginnings

- Underlying every ideology is a theory about how things are and ought to be.
- Political theory is one of the longest-running and most important debates on the planet: How should society be organized? Who gets power and for what purposes?
- Theory matters because it tells us something about why we do what we do. Theories can give us ideas about what we ought to do, they can help us understand why things happen the way they do.
- Political theory is the “Systematic reflection on the nature and purposes of government, characteristically involving both an understanding of existing political institutions and a view about how (if at all) they ought to be changed.”

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Political Theory: The Beginnings

- A theory is a testable proposition about the nature and reality of something.
- If we are to apply scientific method to a theory, a theory becomes a hypothesis. Hypotheses can be tested.
- In social sciences, such as political science, it's a lot more difficult to actively test a theory, if only because people tend to object when you perform experiments on them.
- The kind of theory that we might try to test is called *positive theory*, *empirical theory*, or *explanatory theory*.
- Normative theory tries to say how things ought to be, as opposed to how they are.
  - Norms are averages or standards; social norms are the traditional rules that govern a society.
- All political theories have positive and normative elements.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand different approaches to politics.
2. Understand what ancient thinkers thought was the best state.

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What Is and Ought to Be: Three Versions of Politics

- The Democratic Model: most people can know something and because it's possible for people to know something, it's also possible for them to participate in governing themselves.
  - Broadly participatory forms of government will, in fact, perform better than those that don't invite people to get involved, thereby lending legitimacy to states and creating conditions for more comfortable, fulfilling lives.
- The Authoritarian Model: some people have knowledge and others have to be taught.
  - If ruling themselves without proper instruction, the people will go astray.
- The Anarchic Model: government is the problem—not the solution—and that the institutions of government, in fact, lead people astray.
  - As soon as we have a formal government, it becomes a tool of power, which the people who end up in charge will use to oppress everybody else.

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What Is and Ought to Be: Three Versions of Politics

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The Ancients: It's All Greek (or Chinese) to Them

- Different societies developed different ways of ruling themselves throughout antiquity, all over the world.
  - Kings could come to rule through election, passing through the hereditary line, or by being the toughest, smartest, and the one who could organize and protect.
- In ancient Greece and in ancient Rome, kings were overthrown in favor of various kinds of republics.
- Athenian democracy frequently bordered on mob rule. Good leaders were thrown out in popularity contests; Athenians could vote to exile anyone they didn't like by writing that person's name on a piece of pottery—*ostraka* in ancient Greek, from which our word *ostracize* derives.
- Democratic Athens: demagogue
  - A demagogue is someone who plays on people's fears, prejudices, and emotions in order to gain political power.

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The Ancients: It's All Greek (or Chinese) to Them

- Aristotle's good forms of government:
  - Monarchy: rule by one—by a just king
  - Aristocracy: rule by the best
  - Polity: rule by the people
- Aristotle's forms of government can all erode into "perversions" of the original.
  - Monarchy decays to tyranny: rule by a bad king.
  - Aristocracy decays to oligarchy: rule by the few for their own benefit, often involving excessive greed.
  - Polity decays to democracy: rule by the mob, who tend to give in to the passions of moment and be driven to excessive and extreme behavior.

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The Ancients: It's All Greek (or Chinese) to Them

- Confucius and Plato independently arrived at the idea of a philosopher-king.
  - Philosopher-king: the perfect combination of wisdom and power to effectively and fairly rule the state.
  - Confucius emphasized the importance of custom and tradition in cementing the links between the ruler and the ruled; he seems to have seen the structures and formalities of the state as playing a role in teaching and reminding people to do the right thing.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Political theory is a systematic way of studying the performance of government.
- Political theories tend to fall into authoritarian, democratic, and anarchic models.
- Plato thought that average people were not fit to rule and that people would need to be carefully trained to make them into rulers.
- Aristotle also didn't trust common people, but thought a balanced constitution, combining elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, would be best.
- Confucius thought that emphasis on order, tradition, and respect would lead to the best government.
- The Roman Republic had so many checks and balances that it was unable to act when it needed to.

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EXERCISE

1. Assume you were studying to be a member of Plato's guardian class. What things would you need to know in order to be an effective ruler?

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EXERCISE

2. In what ways do order and tradition play a role in everyday life today? Do these help or hinder progress?

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand how early Christian and Moslem thinkers tried to reconcile the competing spheres of church and state.
2. Understand how political science was reinvented and how that changed views on government.

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FROM ANTIQUITY TO MODERNITY

- As the Roman Empire fell apart in the fifth century CE, Europeans faced the challenge of rebuilding society and government.
- Every society is born out of chaos. When times are uncertain, we turn to strong people to create order out of chaos, which creates a different set of conditions and needs.
  - Once order is established, other things are addressed, including food, wealth, and more comfortable existence.
- The one institution that survived the fall of the Roman Empire was the Catholic Church.
- Reconciling church and state was the problem for the next thousand years.

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THE ROOTS OF CLASSICAL LIBERALISM

- In Europe, the medieval period gave way to a new beginning around the fourteenth century. While people of ancient civilizations clearly cared about wealth, the philosophers of that age were more concerned with stability and avoiding oppression than with how best to meet people's needs.
  - The Renaissance, and the return of trade and commerce, began to change that.
- Increasing stability and order produced the conditions that made it possible to trade and economic conditions improved creating a new class of people.
  - Merchants, bankers, and manufacturers didn't need or want the interference of feudal lords or crafty cardinals.
- Pre-Renaissance period was largely about how much power should be possessed by the church.
- Renaissance theory increasingly was once again about what the ideal state should look like.

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THE ROOTS OF CLASSICAL LIBERALISM

- Machiavelli argued that:
  - You don't get very far by playing it fair if your enemies don't.
  - A just government is a wonderful thing, but the enemies of the just state will use unjust methods to tear it down.
- Modernity: the problem of a world where reason and rationality have begun to replace faith; describes the era after the Middle Ages.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Medieval philosophers tried to reconcile the competing powers of church and state.
- Modern philosophers presumed the existence of the state and set about trying to make it better.
- Social contract theory saw government as a contract between the government and the governed.

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EXERCISE

1. Do you practice a particular faith? What should be the role of religion in civil society?

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EXERCISE

2. Is government a social contract? How does that contract work for people who weren't born when it was agreed upon?

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand why the US Constitution was designed the way it was.
2. Understand Marx's and Mill's different visions for a just society.
3. Understand contemporary approaches in political theory.

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FROM MODERNITY TO THE PRESENT

- James Madison: fourth president of the United States and the chief author of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.
  - He argued for a balance of power in government, which became the division of power in US government between the states and the national government; the division of power between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; and the literal encouragement of interest groups who would, Madison hoped, keep each other in check.
- Federalism argues for subdivision of power between national and regional governments.

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CLASSICAL LIBERALISM

- Classical liberalism: A system of social organization that relies on markets for economic decision making and on democratic institutions for political decision making.
  - A reliance on markets for economic decision making (capitalism).
  - A reliance on democratic institutions for political decision making (democracy, in the broadest sense).
- A reliance on markets means that people get to vote with their dollars, pounds, rupees, or euros on what they want to buy and how much they're willing to pay for it.
- Capitalism is an economic system that relies on the interactions of markets to decide what gets produced and how much it will cost.

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MERCANTILISM

- An economic system that encourages states to maximize exports, minimize imports, and accumulate internal wealth.
- A very Eurocentric theory.
- It argued that the state with the most gold was the best off.
- It also argued that nations should maximize overseas colonies to serve as sources of raw materials and markets for finished goods.

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CLASSICAL LIBERALISM

- Relies on democratic institutions, where political decisions are made by people casting votes.
- States decide which citizens are qualified, and those people get to vote in free elections.
- The state may set rules regarding who can run for office, such as a minimum age requirement, but if, for example, you reach that age, the state cannot decide that you can't run.
- This kind of government is called a *republic*.

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CLASSICAL LIBERALISM AND ITS CRITICS

- Classical liberalism claims to provide people with maximum freedom and maximum wealth.
- By allowing people to spend and invest as they wish, and by depending on open elections, it provides a higher degree of individual liberty than some alternatives.
- It creates the opportunity to participate in the economic and political life of a country.
- By relying on markets to make economic decisions, it tends to produce more wealth, more efficiently (at lower costs).
- Because it depends on elections for political decision making, it gives citizens an outlet for their discontent and allows them to make changes to law and policy.

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CLASSICAL LIBERALISM AND ITS CRITICS

- While classical liberalism tends to produce more wealth, it may distribute that wealth unevenly.
- An uneven distribution of wealth can lead to wealthy people dominating the political system.
- Because the creation of wealth often gets tied to the broader concept of liberty, the system may have a difficult time dealing with problems generated by market activity, such as pollution.
- If the specific political system is more inclusive (gives everybody a real voice), it may not be very efficient in decision making and may in fact be slow to respond to people's needs.

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AMERICAN CONSERVATISM

- American conservatism is a subset of classical liberalism.
- It argues for less government involvement in the economy.
  - It argues that people should be able to make their own choices about where to spend their money, pointing out that taxes to support government programs effectively make those choices for you.
- Pillars of Conservatism:
  - The rule of law
  - Independent courts
  - Representative government
  - Private government
  - Private property
  - Foreign policy
- It favor lower taxes, a balanced federal budget, and less regulation of the economic system.

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THE ROOTS OF CONSERVATISM: REVOLUTION AND COUNTERREVOLUTION

- The American Revolution was followed by the French Revolution in 1789, with somewhat less benign results.
- Revolution produced different reactions among political thinkers.
- A strong believer in representative government, Burke is nonetheless often regarded as the father of modern conservatism.
  - He argued against rapid, radical change, saying instead that human institutions are there for a reason and embody the collective wisdom of generations.
  - Burke said that the just state must have strong institutions and civil liberty.
- In Burke's mind, it is in fact the existence of the state that makes civilized life possible, and therefore the institutions of the state are important and should be preserved.

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THE ROOTS OF CONSERVATISM: REVOLUTION AND COUNTERREVOLUTION

- The 1800s saw a broader push for more popular participation in government and the Industrial Revolution, which began the movement from a world in which most people were farmers to a world in which people were not.
- John Stuart Mill argues for broader political participation. He saw the benefits of expanding wealth and thought that open and accessible political institutions were the best way to address the inequalities generated by the uneven flowering of capitalism.
  - Free markets: leaving the economy alone and letting capitalism work as intended.

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POPULISM

- An approach to politics in which candidates and leaders claim to represent the interests of the common people as opposed to those of the rich and the powerful.
- Populism is not an ideology. It is an approach to politics.
- At its best, populism displays a genuine concern for citizens whose rights and needs have not been considered.
- At its worst, populists can be as oppressive as the people they have replaced.
- Populists make an appeal to the common person and claim to represent their interests, as opposed to the interests of the rich and powerful.

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LIBERTARIANISM

- Libertarians believe in the least amount of government possible: national defense, police and fire, and not much else.
- True libertarians are not at all concerned with social issues, as they don't see that as government's job.
- It offers considerable freedom of choice on a range of issues.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the difference between socialism and communism.
2. Understand the difference between fascism and Nazism.
3. Learn what anarchism is, and understand how its views of people and politics differ from many other philosophies.

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ALTERNATIVES TO LIBERALISM

- Classical liberalism is perhaps the dominant ideology of our time.
- After WWII, countries moved from authoritarian governments to liberal ones.
- Economies moved away from planning and toward markets for decision making.
- Governments have moved to democratization.

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SOCIALISM

- Socialism is an economic system that relies on public ownership of productive resources and relies on planning to determine what will be produced and how much it will cost.
- Whereas capitalism is more concerned with generating wealth and efficiency, socialism is more concerned with equality of outcome.
- Wealth is more evenly distributed, and people tend to get the minimum of what they need: food, clothing, housing, and health care.
- There's less of everything to go around, and consumers tend to see lower quality and less choice.
- Most states have a mixed economy, which is an economy that includes elements of both socialism and capitalism.

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COMMUNISM

- Communism implies a high degree of socialism, and a one-party state.
- Soviet communism had all the problems of socialism and then some.
  - While it did mean that people had jobs, homes, and health care, consumer goods were often inferior and in short supply.
- Other communist governments included China, North Korea, Cuba, and Yugoslavia.

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RADICAL ROOTS: THE MARX BROTHER

- Karl Marx did not believe in free markets, God, capitalism, or democracy.
- Labor theory of value: The worth of anything is reflected by the labor it took to produce it.
- Dialectical materialism: the conditions of production determine the material and political conditions of life.
- Marx promoted socialism: developing as a response to the excesses of industrial capitalism.
  - The workers would control the means of production, and people's needs would be met "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

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ANARCHISM: THE ONLY GOOD GOVERNMENT IS NO GOVERNMENT

- Anarchism is an ideology that argues that human institutions such as big government and big business make us worse off, not better off.
  - They want nearly no government.
  - Their vision is driven by localized cooperation.
- Anarchists range from people who think society should be organized collectively (anarchocommunists) to a libertarian strain that believes in private property and free enterprise—just no government (and no big business).
- Anarchosyndicalists want to replace capitalism with an economy run by workers for workers, with production for use, not for profit, and an end to wages.

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NAZISM AND FASCISM

- Fascism is an ideology that glorifies the power of the state and says that the individual is not important except as part of the state.
  - "We're right; you're wrong if you're against us; and we're right because we say we're right."
  - Fascism glorifies the power of the state, but it's hard to tell how that makes the majority better off.
- Fascism argues that some people are just better than others and should be in charge.
- Nazism is a variant of fascism that glorifies the state, based on appeals to allege racial superiority.
- Nazism and fascism could be said to be forms of totalitarianism, a kind of authoritarian government that relies on an arbitrary application of the law (it's not the same for everybody) and the cult-like status of official leaders.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Other ideologies outside of classical liberalism and its variants tend to offer greater equality of outcomes but generate less overall wealth.
- Socialism is an economic system that provides greater equality of result but less equality of opportunity.
- Communism combines a socialist economy with a one-party government.
- Anarchism has not been tried on a large scale outside of the Tiv in Nigeria.
- Fascism glorifies the state; individuals are important only as part of the state.
- Nazism glorifies the state, with an expressly racist approach to politics.

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EXERCISE

1. How would the place where you work be different if it was a government agency? If it's already a public agency, what would be different if it was privatized?

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EXERCISE

2. Which countries still claim to be communist? What things could cause that to change?

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LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Learn how new ideologies have developed in more recent times.

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POSTMODERN IDEAS ABOUT POLITICS

- Political theory scholars often refer to the current age as *postmodern*, a term that lacks any kind of precise definition.
- Sometimes it is a rejection of rationalism, the idea that through reason and evidence, we can figure out the right choices to make.

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FEMINISM

- Women have only begun to receive equal political and economic rights in the last 150 years.
- Feminism: is the broad historical and contemporary movement to advance the cause of women's rights in society.
- We can find feminism that is essentially conservative, liberal, libertarian, or radical.

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ENVIRONMENTALISM

- Environmentalism is the movement to preserve and protect the planet by limiting humanity's impact on the biosphere.
- Evangelical environmentalists cite biblical precedence for the need to protect the planet, noting that according to the Bible, God made us shepherds of the Earth to watch over it.
- Free-market environmentalists argue that law markets, and property rights will best protect the environment.

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IDEOLOGY: A CHOICE

- People subscribe to one ideology or another because they believe that this system will work better.
  - They may make that decision based on evidence, and they may make that decision based on faith.
  - Most people are subject to the “confirmation bias,” or the tendency we have to seek and interpret new information as confirming what we already believe.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Postmodernism is sometimes a reaction against rationalism and sometimes a response to the confusion and problems of contemporary politics.
- Feminism is a broad and longstanding movement that seeks to ensure equal rights and opportunity for women in all walks of life.
- Environmentalism seeks to encourage people and policies to limit their impact on the planet and thereby preserve higher standards of living for all.

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EXERCISE

1. Do you feel that women where you live are treated the same as men? Do they have the same opportunities? Are there parts of life where they don't have the same opportunities?

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EXERCISE

2. What environmental laws impact your life? How would it be different if those laws didn't exist?

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