

Chapter 1 american political culture

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



Chapter 1 American Political Culture (Ginsberg) 1) In relationship to week's 1 readings about how the government affects our life on a daily basis, discuss why does the general public accept governmental regulations and restrictions on our lives? For the first part of our short history, Americans did not accept the government's right to regulate what individuals or business did. As a matter of fact, Americans greatly resisted any interference by government, especially the federal branch. The government's input begin to change drastically with the period of 'Progressive' in the late 19th Century and into the 20th Century. But still during this period most Americans only accepted governmental regulations in the areas of business and safety in the workplace. Then what caused the American people to accept the government's interference in our daily lives? Usually, during times of disaster and war the American citizen is more likely to allow the government to take our granted liberties in the name of " public safety". Unfortunately, government is not so quick to give back the our liberties. Just think back to 9/11 and the changes this attack brought. We cannot even get on an airplane today without having our shoes being checked. So as Americans, we become accustom to the changes and move on with our lives, while government continues to grow beyond anything our Forefathers imagine. 2) Political efficacy is defined by the Ginsberg, et. al., as the ability to influence government and politics. The authors summarized their points about the declining political efficacy in America. In your own words, list and describe the authors' points with this decline. a) One area that affects our country is the growing apathy about the political structure and the continuing declining participation in the political process. Many people,

young and old, feel like their views and ideals are no longer represented by the governmental structure, but worse than this, many feel their views do not matter. b) If political apathy continues, more and more fringe elements in our society will continue to gain power in the political process allowing extreme views to control the governmental process. After all, the man who many consider the worse leader and murder in the 20th Century was elected to office (Adolf Hitler). c) As many individuals begin to distance themselves from the political process, the ensuing generations will also began to lose interest. After a period of years, we will find ourselves with a population that does not know why this country was founded or the values that this country represents. 3) Summarize from your readings, what Americans should know about government. Make sure you discuss Citizenship: Knowledge and Participation and The Necessity of Political Knowledge; especially how this knowledge relates to the economic structure. (You are on your own now) Americans have lots to learn about the government but they cannot learn if they do not come with an open mind. To begin I believe that Americans need to know that they must speak to be heard. The way Americans are becoming where they think there opinion doesn't matter; therefore they are just sitting back to see the final outcome does not help the country or your opinion being expressed. Citizenship is something that is very important and required as this gives you the place in America, you become one to vote and are able to better exercise your rights to your opinion. The necessity of Political Knowledge relates to the economic structure due to the fact that most people do not know the structure of the local, state and federal government. They do not know who to inform of certain cases or whether

they are going to the right resource. With citizens knowing and participating in politics it would not only help them but help the correct department in providing a timely response or plan of action. 4) Define the basic term of "government" and discuss whether a "government" is needed today.

Government is the term generally used to describe the formal institutions through which a land and its people are ruled. To govern is to rule. 'We the People' Eighth Edition. In my opinion a government is needed today, tomorrow and for as long as the United States plans on being one of the top countries in the world. The government gives the people the personnel that they have appointed to guide and rule the country. Without the 'government' structure I don't believe there would be as much structure as we have known in the United States.

5) There are six types of government listed by the authors. Define each and provide examples of each one. |
 Government Type and Definition | Example | | Autocracy — A form of government in which a single individual — a king, queen or dictator — rules. | England | | Oligarchy — A form of government in which a small group — landowners, military officers, or wealthy | Russia | | merchants — control most of the governing decision. | | | Democracy — A system of rule that permits citizens to play a significant part in governmental process, | U. S. A | | usually through the election of key public officials. | | | Constitutional Government — A system of rule in which formal and effective limits are placed on the powers | Sweden | | of the government. | | | Authoritarian Government — A system in which the government recognizes no formal limits but may | North Korea | | nevertheless be restrained by the power of other social institutions. | | | Totalitarian Government — A system of rule in

which the government recognizes no formal limits on its | Italy under Mussolini | | power and seeks to absorb or eliminate other social institutions that might challenge it. | | 6) There is one form not listed that we need to know about today. It is called " theocracy". Define this term and discuss which predominated Middle East country has this form. Explain some of the dangers of this type of system (remember our First Amendment) Theocracy Government — A government in which the rule is directed by religious beliefs. After a bit of research I was able to find that Iran is a country that is ran by Theocracy Government. Most of the laws in this country are tied or based on Sharia or Islamic law. Some of the dangers with this government are that they do not really believe in people being different. For example Homosexuality is against their law and at times can be punishable with death. 7) Bourgeoisie is a term coined by the French for the middle class. By the end of the 18th Century, governmental power was moving from the aristocrats to the bourgeoisie. Karl Marx, in his Communist Manifesto in the mid-1850s, proclaimed that government should be controlled by the masses. In fact, in a pure democratic government everyone participates in all decisions. In the United States, we have a republic government, one in which governmental decisions are made by representatives. With the influence of the Internet and other forms of communication, in your opinion with justification, could the United States move to a more direct democracy? (Remember in your answer, the foundations of any society is participation and education) In my opinion I do not believe the United States could move to a direct democracy. There would be too many challenges and the voting ballots would be extremely long. As stated in the book I believe people do

have a valid concern in regards to extremist groups being able to pursue the country into laws that would not necessarily pertain to all. 8) Politics is the process in which we settle our conflicts and struggles over leadership, structure, and policies of government. Power is related to politics because those that are involved in the political process are seen as having influence in this process. Discuss whether this "power", as defined by Ginsberg, et al., is useful in a "representative democracy/republic" and whether this "power" would be diluted in a direct democracy. Provide examples, hopefully of current events, of your discussion. The power is very useful in a representative democracy. It brings the groups point of view to light and allows the designated and educated personnel of the group to further discuss and provide points. If we were to move to a direct democracy this would no longer occur, people would solely base their decision on what their knowledge is. As discussed previously in this chapter most Americans have chosen either not to care, or not to educate themselves enough therefore it could possibly end up in incorrect decisions being made. A current event that I could think of is the presidential campaign, at this current moment we have all candidates using their 'power' to attempt to gain votes and have people agree with their political point of view. 9) We have certain values within our system that are unchangeable. These values include "Liberty, Equality, and Democracy". However, even though in our system of government we share these values there is constant conflict between the 'goals' of values. List and discuss each of these values. Ensure that you explain the conflicts we may have in these values and provide some examples of how these conflicts have been resolved. I will discuss Liberty, you will need to explain Equality and

Democracy: a) Liberty means the both the personal freedom and economic freedoms we have in our system of government. Our forefathers originally designed our form of government to provide us with a very limited form of central government, one in which the supply and demand would control the market. This form of economic system that developed was referred to as laissez-faire capitalism, one in which the private ownership of production and the distribution systems was not controlled by the government. Due to the lack of control over the process widespread abuses took place in the work environment and food products. Labor worked 15 hour days, six and seven days a week. There was no sick leave, vacation, or time off for injuries. Food products were containment by unsafe practices at the packing plants along with unsafe products; such as narcotics available to the general public (See Upton Sinclair's book *The Jungle*). Still, as the government began to regulate the abuses with public support, many business fought back with the argument that regulations would infringement upon their freedoms. Therefore, this battle between personal freedoms and economic freedoms was brought to the forefront of the public discourse. This battle is still being played out in today's environment. Example should the price of oil be regulated in the name of "national security"? Should the government regulate the price of gasoline at the pumps and the way the commodity is consumed? Or should the consumer be free to purchase the fuel at market prices for whatever price is set for any amount they wish to purchase? These are tough questions and are difficult to answer. This is why the political process is so important for individual to participate. b) Equality means that all men (people) are created equal. In the beginning equality was

not really in effect as only propertied white men were mainly able to vote as a full person. Although this is no longer the case and equality has been summed up to 'one person, one vote,' some people still believe that it is still not equal as people with money have a better chance of being able to enter the American Political community. I do not believe that this is an issue that is to be addressed by the country as the individual has all the tools and rights to be able to become successful as they'd like in life. c) Democracy is the participation of the people in choosing their rulers and the people's ability to influence what those rules do. The books uses the term 'majority rule with minority rights,' my understanding of this is that the elected officials typically go by what the majority of the people want. It is enacted to make the country as a whole happy (or most), but at the same time they keep in mind the minority (the ones that disagree with the majority) and they still have rights. To be able to better combat big issues the U. S. A has the House of Representatives, which is a large body elected directly by the people which is designed in particular to ensure the majority rules. Furthermore to protect the rights of the minority we have what is called the Bill of Rights which is used to protect the power of the majority. 10) Testing the political waters. Many individuals complain about that their voices are not heard in the political process or that their vote does not matter. Provide and describe at least three ways you may participate in the political process. As a last part, discuss what does political participation produce; that is, the effect of increasing political efficacy on our system. 1. Voting — Voting allows your voice to be heard in regards to what president or leader you are wanting to represent the country as a whole. If an individual does not vote then the

possibilities for the candidate they support are being lowered. One should not have the mindset ‘well one vote won’t make the difference,’ because if 1000 people are thinking the same though the person you are wanting in office has automatically lost those 1000 votes which could have put them ahead of the race.

2. Protest Marches — Protest marches allow the voice of a group of people to be heard. As we have seen recently ‘occupy wall street’ has certainly gained a lot of media attention and in turn has also received a response from the government. The protest might not always end in the getting the results you wished for but of course your voice has been heard and can possibly be used in the future when enacting new procedures or laws.

3. Grouping or Organized Interests — This is a very good way to have your voice heard as in this manner you are not alone but you have gathered a group of people that share the same or similar views. As a group you are able to decide what you are wanting and able to vote all for the same, in the end this of course gives you a larger voice because not only are you speaking out with voting but you also know that your group is doing the same. Political participation allows the people of our country to be heard. The more people that are involved and continue to follow with the current political agenda instead of just letting other people decide the better higher the chances the country will be as we wish. Of course as common knowledge, we cannot sit on the side lines and wish for things to go the way we want, we as the people must make an effort voting and doing our part of protest and this will allow our voices to be heard loud and clear.