

UNIT II (A) LECTURE POLITICAL BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS

I. What is Meant by the Phrase “Political Beliefs?”

The stuff we generally accept when it comes to the subject of how groups of people make collective decisions.

II. What is Meant by the Phrase “Political Culture?”

A distinctive and patterned way of thinking about how political and economic life ought to be carried out.

III. What do we Believe When it Comes to the Question of How Our Political Life Ought be Carried Out

We believe that in our political life there ought to be

- Liberty
- Equality
- Democracy
- Individual Responsibility
- Civic Duty

Liberty meaning freedom from governmental restraints and protection of rights

Equality meaning an equal vote and an equal chance to succeed

Democracy meaning officials are accountable to the people

Individual Responsibility meaning that barring disability, individuals are responsible for their own actions and well-being

Civic Duty is defined as the belief that citizens have an obligation to participate in civil and political affairs

III. What do we Believe When it Comes to the Question of How Our Economic Life Ought be Carried Out

We believe that in our economic life there ought to be

- Free enterprise but with some limits on market place freedoms
- Equality of opportunity but not equality of results
- Commitment to economic Individualism not socialism

Equality of Opportunity is defined as a value in American culture which maintains that all people should have the same opportunity to get ahead.

Equality of Result is defined as a value in American culture which maintains that there should not be significant income disparities and that the government should guarantee a basic standard of living

V. How Do We Compare to Other Countries When It comes to the Question of How Political Life Ought to be Carried Out

Swedes

- Defer to governmental experts and specialists
- Rarely challenge governmental decisions in court
- Believe in what's best more than what do the people want
- Value harmony
- Honor and observe obligations

Japanese

- Value good relations with colleagues
- Emphasize group decisions and social harmony
- Respect hierarchy

Americans

- Tend to assert rights
- Emphasize individualism, competition, equality, following rules, treating others fairly but impersonally

Europeans

- Americans lag in voting rates but in on other forms of participation
- Americans have more confidence in governmental institutions
- Americans acknowledge flaws but are still very proud" of their national identity and "would be willing to fight" for their country in the event of war

VI. How Do We Compare to Other Countries When It comes to the Question of How Economic Life Ought to be Carried Out

Swedes

- Favor equal pay and top liit on incomes
- Favor less income inequality

Other countries

- The text makes little or no mention

VII. How Do We Compare to Europeans When It comes to the Question of How our Religious Life Ought to be Carried Ought?

- Americans are highly religius when compared to Euros
- Religious beliefs have played an all important role in American politics
- Both liberals and conservatives have used the pulpit to promote polifical change

VIII. What is the Source of Our Politicial Culture

- The American Revolution – from here sprang interest in liberty/rights which led to a preoccupation with the assertion and maintenance of rights
- Constitution – from here came interest in reconciling personal liberty with societal control
- Experience with British – from here we get longstanding distrust of authority
- The absence of an official religion – from here there developed religious pluralism and ultimately political pluralism
- Child rearing practices –practices which stressed equality among family members and freedom for children produced and which led to corresponding political views
- The dominance of Protestantism which promoted a participant oriented culture, one which stressed personal achievement and called for

- Work (the puritan work ethic)
- saving money
- Obeying secular law
- Doing good works

IX. How Can We Prove that Americans Believe the Above

We can't prove that these beliefs exist.

On the other hand, they can be Inferred from books, speeches, political choices of the past

They can also be measured - polls/Survey today

X Is That to Say We All Believe the Same Way?

Of course not.

There's no one homogeneous cultural belief. We do have differences.

XI How do we Differ Culturally?

When it comes to certain **values**, one might even say we are at war with one another – a cultural war.

In this war an orthodox view is battling against a progressive view – views that reflect a split in beliefs about private and public morality and which regard the question of what standards ought to govern individual behavior and social arrangements.

- Orthodox View: One of two camps in the culture war that believes morality is as, or more, important than self-expression and moral rules are derived from fixed rules from God. Associated with fundamental Protestants
- Progressive View: One of two camps in the culture war that believes personal freedom is as, or more, important than tradition with changing rules based on the circumstances of modern life. Associated with liberal Protestants and with those with no strong religious beliefs

XII What do we Believe in Terms of the Extent to Which Government Ought to be Trusted

Today, there's also a lot of mistrust of government. In fact, the mistrust of government has increased since 1960's after having reached a high point in the 1950's. This distrust is due to:

- Watergate
- Vietnam
- Bush, Jr.
- Obama ? ? ?

Has led to what Carter in '79 called a "crisis of confidence, an American malaise.

Polls consistently show that less and less people

- Trust government to "do what is right."
- Trust the President and the Congress
- Trust state and local governments

Only the level of trust in the Supreme Court has remained stable

So what to make of all of this

- Not of system; of individuals and their policies
- Present level of distrust closer to historical norm
- No real loss of confidence in Americans themselves or in their system.

What about political efficacy – the sense that citizens have the capacity to understand and influence political events?

- If talking about “internal efficacy” (the belief in one’s own ability to understand and to take part in political affairs – this belief has remained stable over the past few decades.
- If talking about “external efficacy” – the belief that the political system will respond to citizens – this belief has declined in recent years because of public sentiment that the government has become too big to be responsive.