Chapter 7: Political Participation

The links between democracy & political participation

The gradual extension of the right to vote in the USA.
   Women & the right to vote (the 19th Amendment)
   African-Americans & the right to vote (the 15th Amendment)
   Young people & the right to vote (the 26th Amendment)

Electoral Tricks
   The poll tax
   Literacy tests

Compare US voter turnout to turnout in Europe.

Contributing factors to the relatively low voter turnout in the USA

1. Registration requirements
   Eligibility requirements
   The effects of the “motor voter” law

2. The frequency of elections
   Comparison of the election cycles of the USA & other democracies.

3. The timing of elections

4. Party Differences
   How do US parties compare with parties in other democracies?

In what ways can low participation rates be a problem?

What is the argument used by some politicos to support non-voting?

Why do some Americans vote and others do not?

1. Civic attitudes:
   Civic duty
   Apathy
   Alienation
   Disenchantment with the political process

2. Age

3. Education and Income
Contrast conventional forms of participation (other than voting) to unconventional activism.

Social movements

Protest politics

What is social capital and why do some experts consider it important for maintaining democracy?

Describe the current state of news consumption in the USA. How do young adults differ from older adults?

In what ways do those who vote have more influence in politics?

**Chapter 1: American Political Culture**

What is political culture and why is it important in the study of Am politics?

What were the origins of American’s core ideals?

- European settlers
- The Enlightenment
- The Declaration of Independence
- The expansion of core ideals during the Great Depression

Describe the core values of American govt.

- Primary core values
  - Liberty
  - Equality
  - Self-government
- Secondary core values
  - Individualism
  - Unity
  - Diversity

How does the American belief of individualism lead to differences from Europeans about issues such as welfare and care from the poor?

Provide some examples of the limits of American idealism, the ways in which this country has not lived “up to” its ideals.
Define politics

What are the sources of political conflict?

John Locke’s beliefs on natural rights

Rousseau’s beliefs: the people are sovereign

Social contract

The benefits of a temporary worker program.

The arguments against a temporary worker program

The rules of American politics:

  Democracy not oligarchy or autocracy
    Fragmentation of governing authority
  Constitutionalism
    Limits on the power of govt
    Emphasis on individual rights
  Capitalism rather than socialism

Define power & authority

Totalitarian govt

Authoritarian govt

Theories about power: (Who really does govern?)
  1. Majoritarianism
  2. Pluralism
  3. Elitism
  4. Bureaucratic rule

The political system

**Chapter 6  Public Opinion and Political Socialization**

What is public opinion?

How informed is public opinion?

How is public opinion measured?
Public opinion polls
Poll population
Random (or probability) sampling
Sampling error

Problems with polling

1. The sample doesn’t really include everyone
2. An increase in the number of those who refuse to participate
3. Nonopinions
4. The wording of questions

How Americans learn their politics

1. Childhood learning: The effects of the family
2. Age-cohort tendency: The effects of peers
3. Schools
4. Mass media
5. Churches
6. Political institutions and leaders

Frames of reference: How Americans think politically

1. Cultural Thinking:
2. Ideological Thinking:
   Conservatives
   Liberals
   Libertarians
   Populists
3. Group Thinking:
   Religion
   Region
Race, ethnicity, & class

Gender (the gender gap) and age

The effect of crosscutting cleavages

4. Partisan Thinking:

Party identification: How stable is it?

How influential is public opinion?

Chapter 2: Constitutional Democracy pp. 34-51

The Framers belief in:

- Limited govt
- Self-govt

Colonial experiences

- The Iroquois Confederacy
- “The rights of Englishmen”

The Declaration of Independence

- Inalienable (natural) rights
- The importance of John Locke’s theory to Jefferson
- The Articles of Confederation

Shay’s Rebellion: A Nation Dissolving

James Madison’s contributions

Negotiations at the Constitutional Convention

- The Great Compromise
- The North-South Compromise
- Separate institutions sharing power (checks and balances)
- Grants of power & denials of power