California Politics — California’s Political Culture

(A) Citizen Make-up

- Growing ethnic diversity; Immigrant groups who come largely from Mexico, Central America, the Pacific Rim region, Caribbean, and Middle East
- Recent immigrants do not settle in urban areas, as much as they settle in suburban areas, such as Orange County and Santa Clarita
- First generation children of immigrants have increased in voter registration and voter turn out; altering the political landscape
- Religious demographics:
  - Protestant = 45%
  - Roman Catholic = 25%
  - Jewish = 5%
  - “other” = 7%

The Political/Ideological Make-up of California

The Right Wing:

- Christian Coalition:
  - Have formed an agenda against abortion, gay marriage, etc.
  - Have strong financial ties from the Allied Business Political Action Committee (ABPAC)
  - ABPAC helps finance campaigns of Christian Coalition candidates to local and state offices (such as school board seats)
  - Have become influential in Republican Party politics
  - Have a voting majority in 38 of the 58 GOP county committees
  - CA is also home to the Institute for Historical Review — has roots with the John Birch Society

The Left Wing:

- CA shifted more to the right in recent years, only to shift back to the left with the rise in Latino/minority voters
- While the ideological left is not as influential with the Democratic party as the Christian right is with the GOP
- Former members of the Communist Party now belong to the Committees of Correspondence, a natl. coalition of socialists that formed at UC Berkeley in 1992
- There is also the Democratic Socialists of America
- Have an alliance with the far liberal wing of the Democratic Party
- Focus on issues such as health care, civil rights, solving social ills of poverty, inequality, etc.
Voting Participation:

Groups Who Vote:

(1) Parochial Participants:

- Vote with their own self-interests in mind
- Limit themselves to contacting public officials and voting for those candidates ONLY when a self-interested base issues presents itself

(2) Communalists:

- Not really into electoral politics and campaigns
- Instead, make up membership in organizations that are public affairs, community-service based; PTA’s, charitable groups, public affairs groups

(3) Campaigners:

- Policy issues, community service, and joining these type of organizations are secondary to actually getting out the vote and CAMPAIGNING
  - Calling voters
  - Campaigning for a candidate
  - Working the polls on election day
  - Registration drives
  - Campaign strategy

(4) Complete Activists

- They vote, PLUS engage in campaign activity, PLUS engage in policy and community service and civic minded organizations
- They do ALL OF THE ABOVE

Groups Who Do NOT Vote:

Some of the Causes:

(1) Voter Indifference:

- Non-voters are often poor and without education
- Are “content-apathetics”

(2) The Type of Election Matters:

- Drop off from Presidential to Mid-Term elections
- Interest varies from Natl. to state and local elections
- Also varies from general to primary elections
- Less interest and enthusiasm with each of the latter types of elections
- Overall voting turn-out for primary and mid-term elections: between 25%-35%

(3) **Voter Fatigue:**

- A high cost to voting: Doing “homework” to learn about different candidates and multi-varying complex issues
- Boring, complex campaigns and debates
- Negative campaigns and “mud-slinging”
- Excess of campaign mail frenzy, commercial ads and political “junk mail”