

08-29 Class Summary: Political Science, Assignments, and Test Preparation

Summary of Class Information and Activities

Academics and Assignments

Upcoming Political Parties Test

- ****Test Date:**** The test is scheduled for Wednesday.
- ****Content Focus:**** All material from the political parties unit will be on the test. Success is directly correlated with the quality of notes and absorption of class information.
- **Study Resources:**
 - A color-coded study guide is available:
 - ****Red:**** Topics heavily featured on the test.
 - ****Blue:**** Topics appearing occasionally.
 - ****Orange:**** Topics with minor representation.
 - Class summaries available on the website are recommended for preparation, as they reflect the exact content taught.
- **Test Format:**
 - ****Total Points:**** Approximately 85.
 - ****Question Types:**** About 30 multiple-choice questions and 5-10 short essay questions.
 - ****Essay Topics:**** Will focus on controversial topics, requiring an explanation of both Democratic and Republican viewpoints (e.g., global warming).
- ****Assignment Deadline:**** Students who have not submitted the "controversial topic" assignment must turn it in by Sunday to avoid a permanent zero.

Political Science Unit Summary

Defining Political Parties

- ****Core Definition:****A political party is a "group of persons seeking to control government through winning political offices." This definition is guaranteed to be on the test.
- **General Political Terms:**
 - ****Liberal (Left):****The general political term associated with the Democratic Party in the US.
 - ****Conservative (Right):****The general political term associated with the Republican Party in the US.

Core Functions of Political Parties

1. ****Nominate Candidates:****Select and present candidates for public office.
2. ****Inform and Stimulate Participation:****Educate the public on issues and encourage citizens to vote.
3. ****Act as a "Bonding Agent":****Ensure their candidates are qualified, honest, and capable.
4. ****Govern:****The structure of the US government, especially Congress, is organized around the two-party system.
5. ****Act as a Watchdog:****The party not in power monitors and holds the ruling party accountable. This function is compromised when one party controls all branches of government.
6. ****Develop Platforms:****Create a set of official stances on various issues.
7. ****Link Citizens to Government:****Serve as a connection between the public and the political process.
8. ****Moderate Extremism:****Manage and contain radical elements on the fringes of their ideology.

Global Party Systems Overview

- ****Multi-Party Systems:****The most common system globally (especially in Europe), where parties form around specific issues and must create coalitions to govern.
- ****One-Party Systems:****Characteristic of dictatorships (e.g., Cuba, North Korea) where one group holds all power.
- ****Two-Party Systems:****Extremely rare, with only three globally: the United States, Jamaica, and Malta.

The American Two-Party System

- ****Historical Origins:****Traces back to the Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists, which evolved into the modern Democratic and Republican parties.
- ****Systemic Reinforcement:****The US Constitution and election process are structured to support a two-party framework.

- ****Ideological Consensus:****The system is based on the idea that most Americans hold moderate views, and parties compete for undecided voters in the center.

Arguments for a Two-Party System

- ****Predictability & Stability:****The same two parties compete with generally known platforms.
- ****Simplicity for Voters:****Simplifies the voting process with clear choices.
- ****Broad Appeal:****Parties must create platforms that appeal to a wide range of voters.
- ****Smoother Transitions:****Power transitions between two established parties are, in theory, more seamless.

Arguments Against a Two-Party System

- ****Limited Choice:****Voters have no viable alternative if they dislike both major party candidates.
- ****Political Polarization:****Can lead to gridlock, hostility, and a focus on opposition over collaboration.
- ****Suppression of New Ideas:****Difficult for new parties or alternative viewpoints to gain traction.
- ****Voter Apathy:****In non-competitive states, individual votes can feel inconsequential.
- ****Focus on Winning over Governance:****The primary goal can become winning elections rather than effective problem-solving.

Classroom Rules, Policies, and Management

Classroom Conduct and Policies

- ****Posture:****Students must sit up properly in their chairs; laying down or putting feet on furniture is not permitted.
- ****Music:****Students may listen to music with headphones only while actively working. Phones must be put away after selecting a playlist.
- ****Grading Policy for Daily Exercises:****Daily exercises are not graded if turned in after the due date. No points will be awarded for late submissions of this type of work.

Extra Credit and Hall Pass Policy

- ****Point System:****Each student receives 20 extra credit points at the beginning of every month.
- ****Forfeiture Condition:****A student loses all 20 points for the month if they leave the classroom for any reason (e.g., restroom, removal from class).
- ****Rationale:****This policy is in place to comply with administrative directives to reduce students in the hallways.