

LECTURE / DISCUSSION / DEBATE
THE STUDY OF POLITICS AND HUMAN NATURE

Terms and concepts to know:

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|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Democratic system | Authoritarian system |
| Totalitarian system | Empirical orientation |
| Normative orientation | Institutional v. behavioral perspective |
| Case studies | Agent-Structure debate |
| Ethnographic research | Survey research |
| Modeling | Historical Descriptive approach |
| Quantitative perspective | Rational Choice perspective |
| Pluralism | Elitism |
| Ideological perspectives | Comparative perspectives |

Study and discussion questions:

1. Describe the differences between democratic, authoritarian and totalitarian systems of government. Give examples of each and a critical evaluation of each system's pros and cons.
2. What preference do you have when examining or writing about political concepts: normative or empirical? Why are you more comfortable with one or the other?
3. Discuss and evaluate the various perspectives on politics: the quantitative, rational choice, elitist, pluralist, ideological, and comparative perspectives. Which ones appear to be the most useful for studying politics? Why / why not?
4. Beginning our discussion of human nature: Is there anything "innate" or "true" about human nature? If so, what? Do these differences transcend gender or are they gender specific? Is there anything that is "essential" about human nature or are we merely products of our social environment?
5. Should Stevenson have included a separate chapter examining "female" nature? Why / why not?
6. Discuss the primary criticisms of Christianity and Marxism. How would proponents from both schools of thought respond to such criticisms?

Readings:

Heineman. *Political Science*, chapter 1.
Stevenson. *Twelve Theories of Human Nature*, Introduction.

Video: *The Lottery of Birth*