

**COMPARATIVE POLITICS**

# **Introduction to Comparative Politics and the Other World**

DEPARTMENT OF  
**POLITICAL SCIENCE**

# COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Understanding political developments and disputes around the world has never seemed more important than it does today....



# COMPARATIVE POLITICS



Many people now see the world as more complicated and less comprehensible than it was during either the Cold War (1944-1989) when clear and predictable divisions seemed to dominate the globe....





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Diversity of political, economic, and social life among nations exists in every period of history. *Comparative politics* attempts to understand this diversity, assessing current events in the light of fundamental and long-standing questions such as:



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Why do governments form?

Why does a group of people come to see itself as a nation?

Why do nations sometimes fall apart?

How can a government convince people that it has the right to rule?

Do some forms of government last longer than others?

Do some forms of government serve their people's interests better than others?

How do democracies form and how do they fall apart?

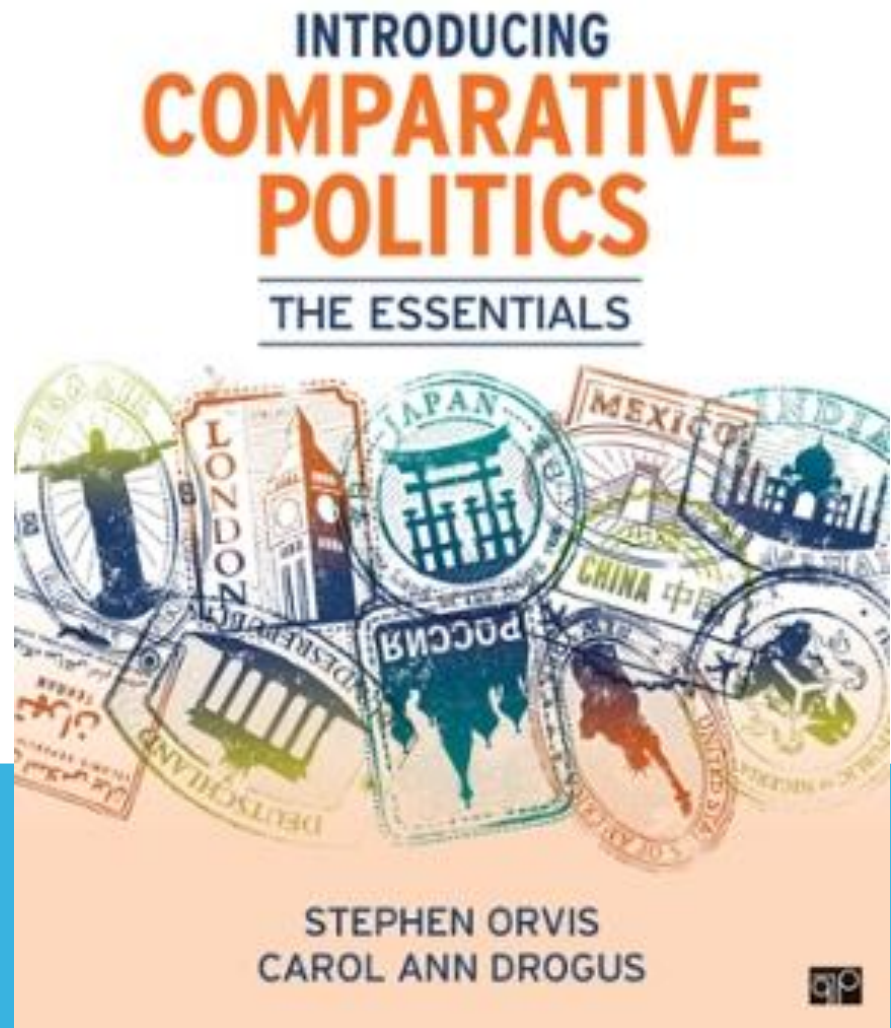
Can democracy work anywhere, or only in particular countries and at particular times?

Are certain political institutions more democratic than others?

Can government policy reduce poverty and improve economic well-being?

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This course will introduce you the many and often conflicting answers to these questions by examining the comparatively. It will also help you start to assess which answers are the most convincing and why...



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## The Big Issues

1. Political Development
2. Participation and Representation
3. Political Economy





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## Political development

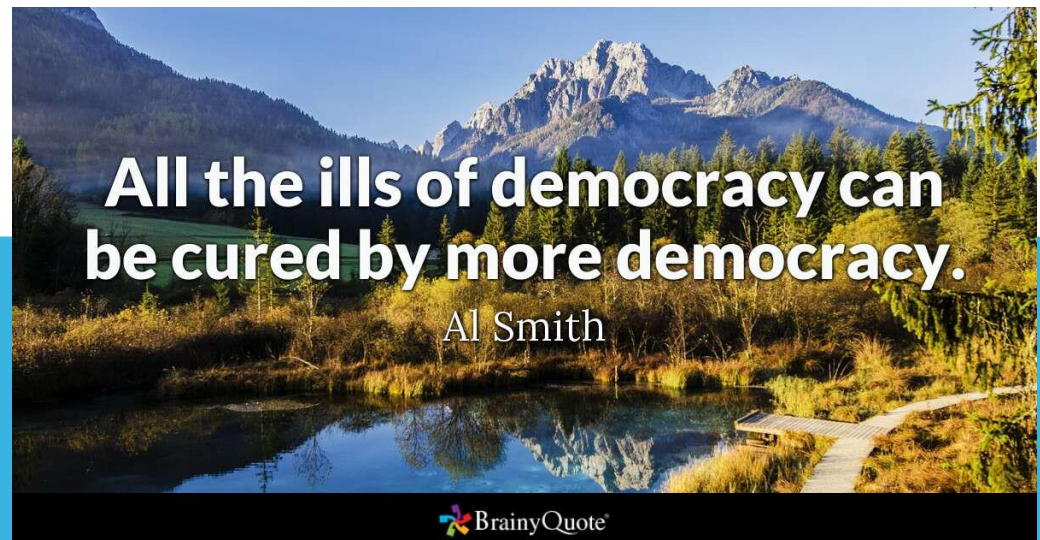
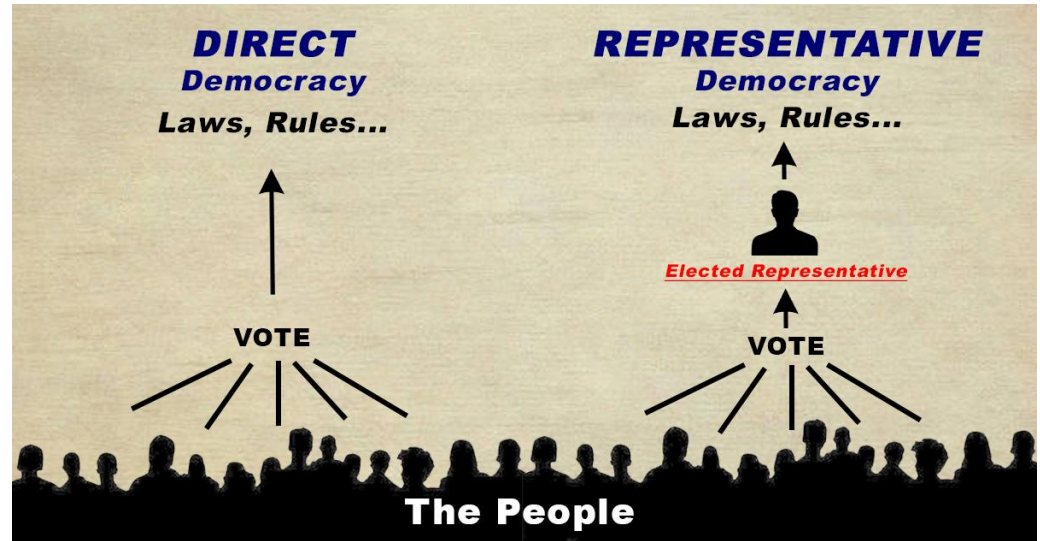
The rise and  
evolution of  
modern nations,  
states, and  
political  
institutions



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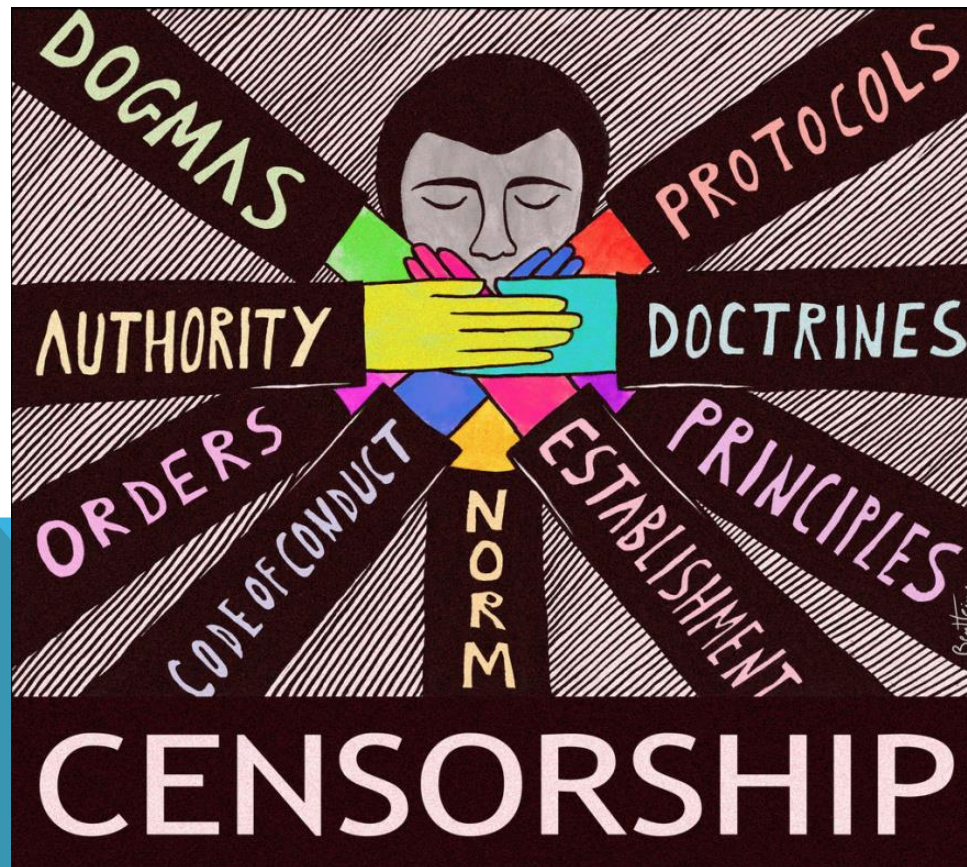
## Democracy

A regime in which citizens have basic rights of open association and expression and the ability to change the government through some sort of electoral process.



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**Authoritarian regime** A regime lacking democratic characteristics, ruled by a single leader or small group of leaders.





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## Civil society

The sphere of organized, nongovernmental, nonviolent activity by groups larger than individual families or firms.



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## Political economy

The study of the interaction between political and economic phenomena.





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## Comparative Politics:

What is it? Why study it? How to study it?



# COMPARATIVE POLITICS

**Politics** - The process by which human communities make collective decisions.

**Political Science** – The systematic study of politics and power.

**Comparative Politics** – One of the major subfields of political science, in which the primary focus is on comparing power and decision making across countries.



Politics is the art of making your selfish desires seem like the national interest.

— Thomas Sowell —

AZ QUOTES

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## 3 Dimensions of Power (Lukes, 1974)

**First Dimension** – The ability of one person or group to get another person or group to do something it otherwise would not do.

**Second Dimension** – The ability not only to make people do something but to keep them from doing something.

**Third Dimension** – The ability to shape or determine individual or group political demands by causing people to think about political issues in ways that are contrary to their own interests.



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## Theory

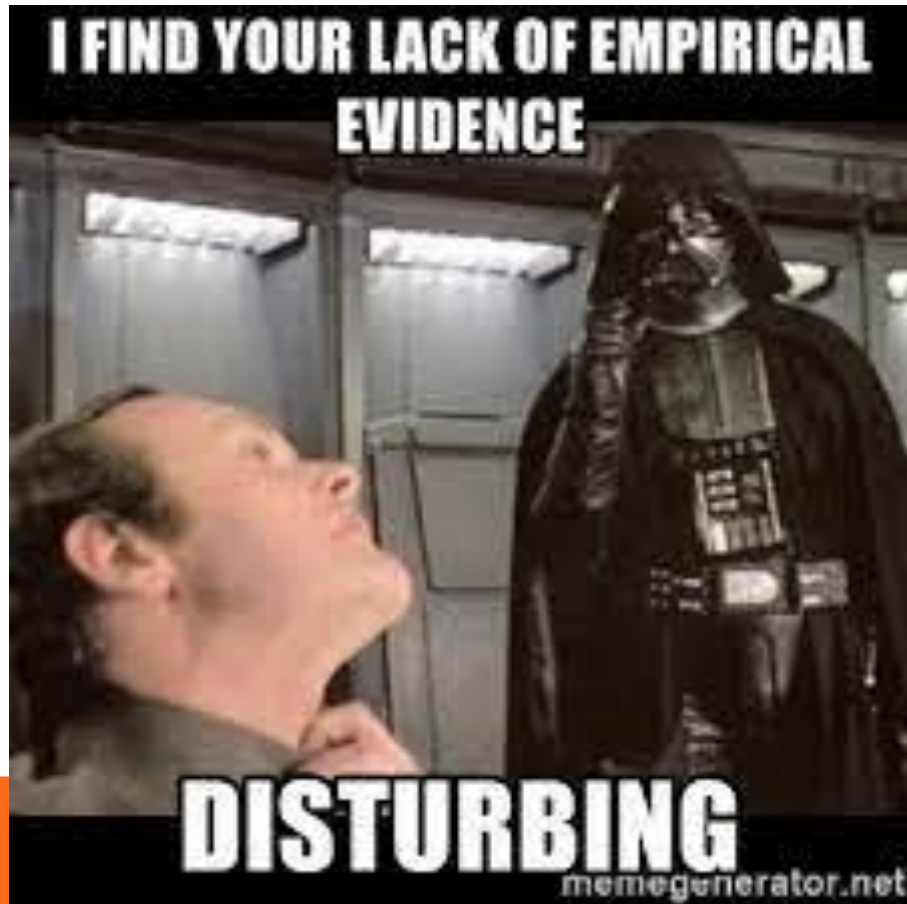
An abstract argument that provides a systematic explanation of some phenomenon

*3 important things that defines theory:*

- Theory logically consists of concepts, assumptions and generalization.
- The major function of theory is to describe, explain, and predict behavior.
- Theory is heuristic for it stimulates and guides the further development of knowledge.



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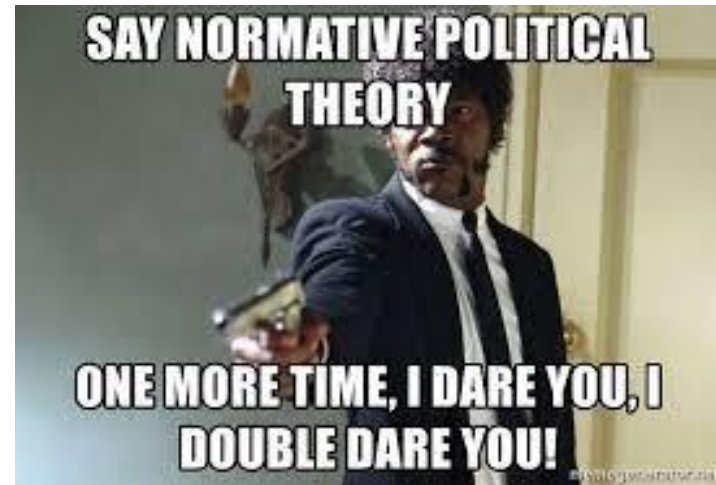
## Empirical Theory

An argument explaining what *actually occurs*; empirical theorists first notice and describe a pattern and then attempt to explain what causes it.

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## Normative Theory

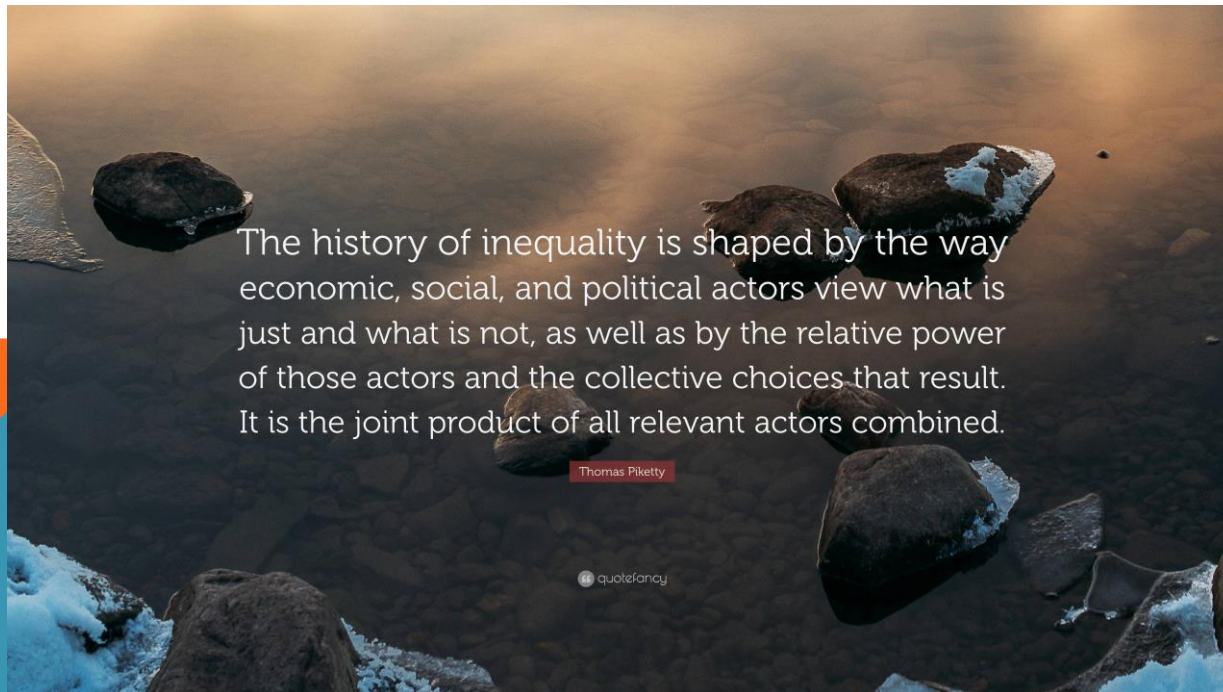
An argument explaining what *ought to occur* rather than what does occur; contrast with empirical theory.



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## Three Key Questions in Comparative Politics

1. What explains political behavior?
2. Who rules?
3. Where and why do particular types of political behavior occur?



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## Political actor –

Any person or group engaged in political behavior.

## Main Assumptions of Rational Choice Theory

- They must make choices in relation to both their goals and the means for attaining these goals
- Rational choice theories hold that individuals must anticipate the outcomes of alternative courses of action and calculate that which will be best for them
- Rational individuals choose the alternative that is likely to give them the greatest satisfaction

## Rational choice theory

An explanation for political behavior that assumes that individuals are rational beings who bring to the political arena a set of self-defined preferences and adequate knowledge and ability to pursue those preferences.



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## Psychological theories

Explanations for political behavior based on psychological analysis of political actor's motives.

## Political culture

A set of widely held attitudes, values, beliefs, and symbols about politics.

### What Are American Shared Political Values?

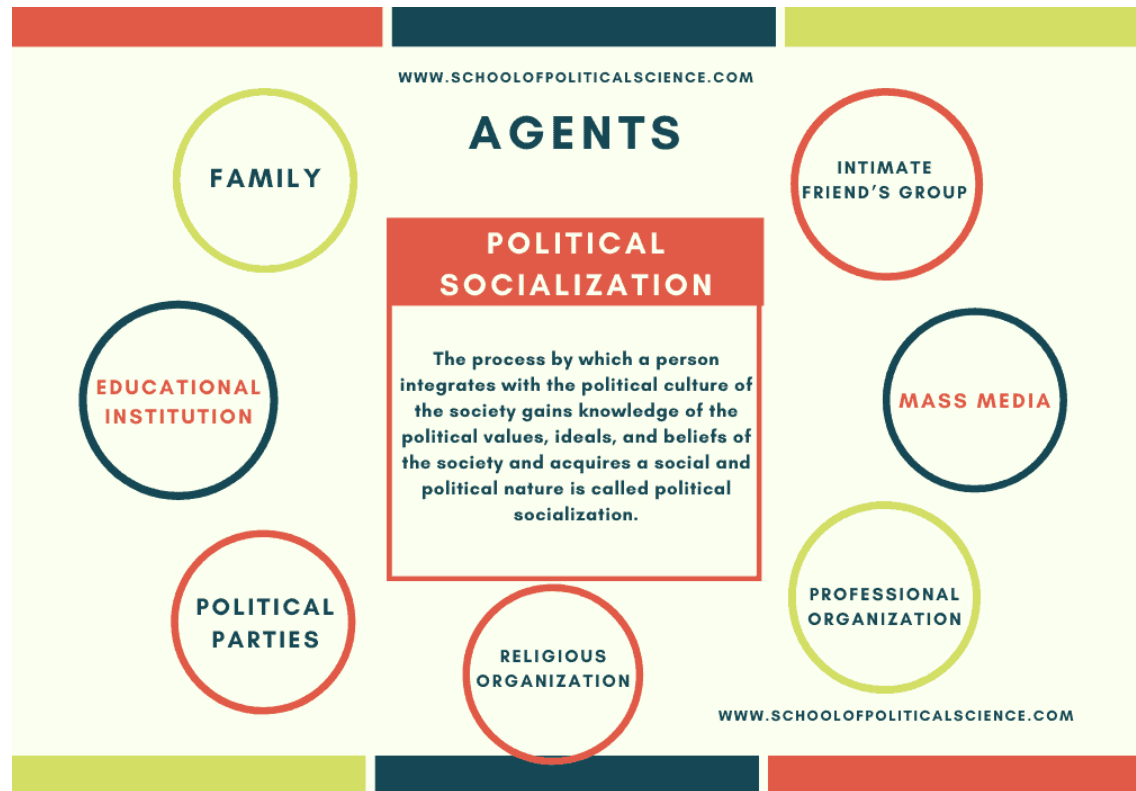
- You make a list first
- Here's what the book says:
  - Natural Rights
  - Liberty
  - Equality
  - Individualism
  - Majority rule
  - Popular Sovereignty
  - Justice and the Rule of Law
  - Patriotism and Nationalism
  - And a few more...
- What do these mean? Let's debate!



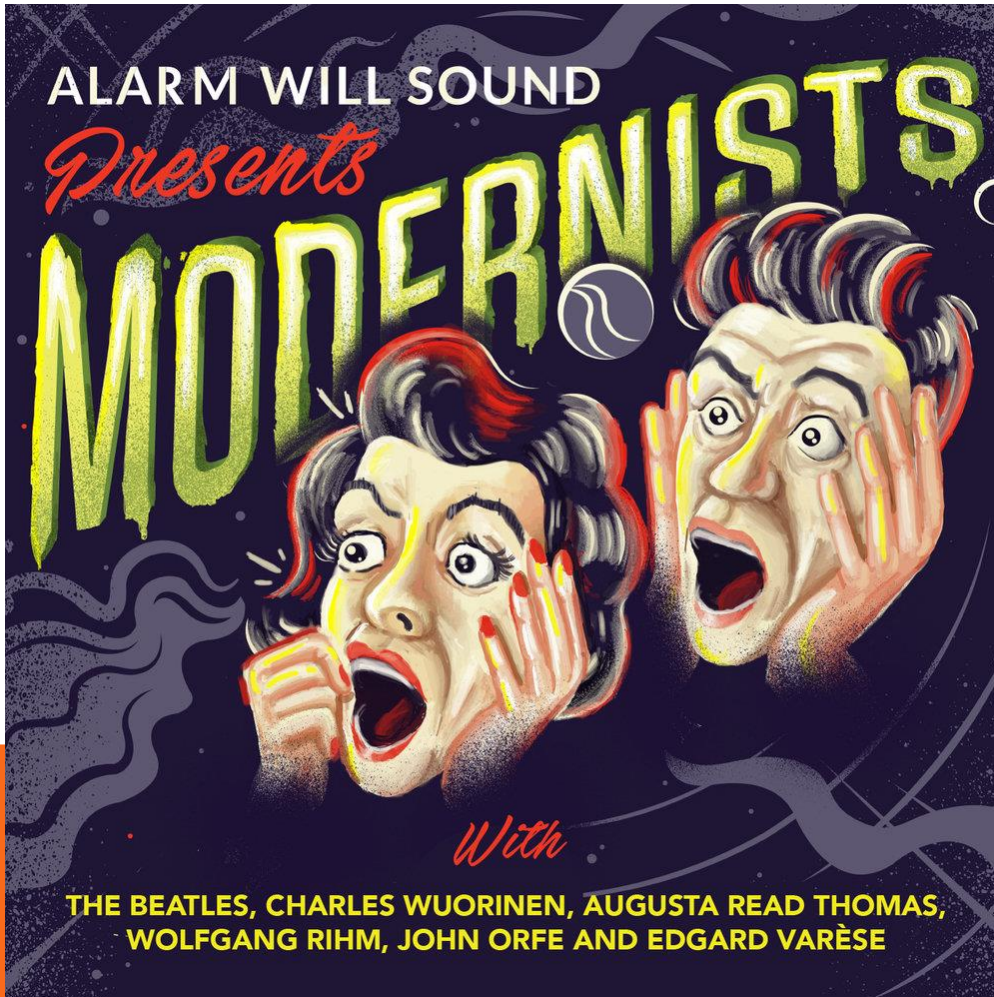
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## Political socialization

The process through which people, especially young people, learn about politics and are taught a societies common political values and beliefs.



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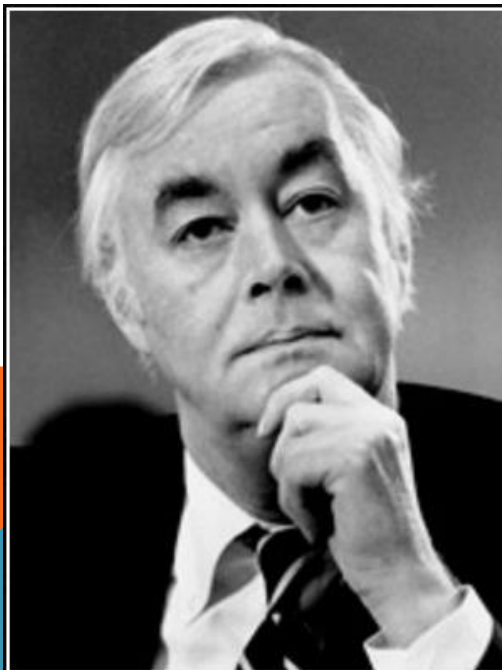
## Modernists

Theorists of political culture who believe that clear sets of attitudes, beliefs, and values can be identified in each country that change very rarely and explain much about politics there.

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## Civic Culture

A political culture in which citizens hold values and beliefs that support democracy including active participation in politics but also enough deference to the leadership to let it govern effectively.



The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself.

— Daniel Patrick Moynihan —

AZ QUOTES



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## Subcultures

Groups that hold partially different beliefs and values from the main political culture of a country.



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## Postmaterialist

A set of values in a society in which most citizens are economically secure enough to move beyond immediate economic (materialist) concerns to “quality of life” issues like human rights, civil rights, women’s rights, environmentalism, and moral values.

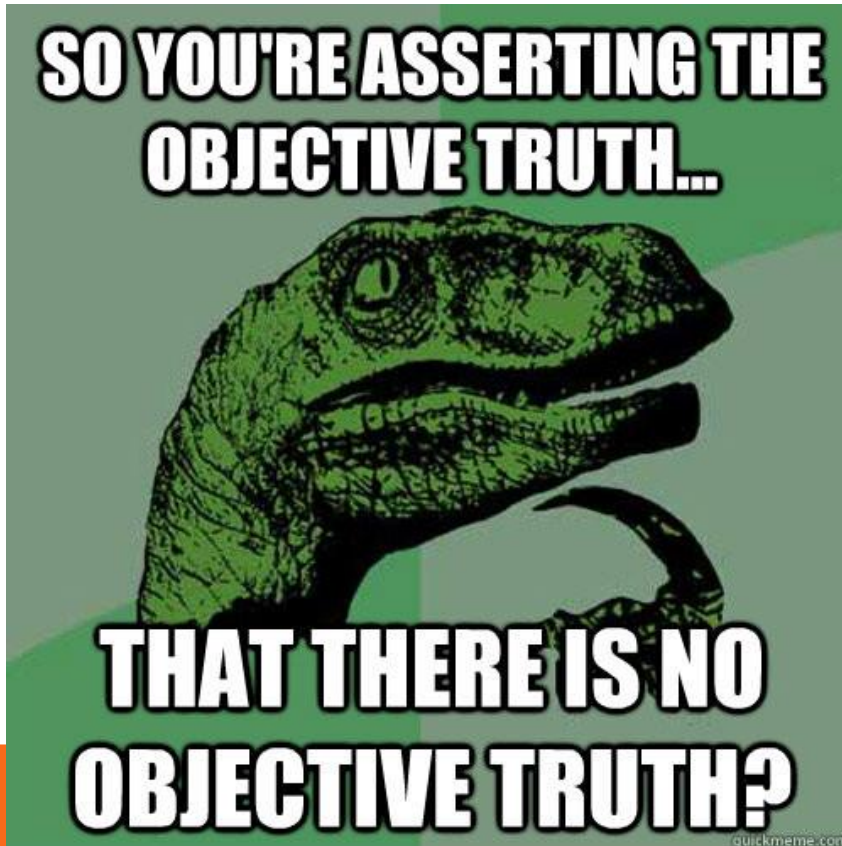




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## Postmodernist

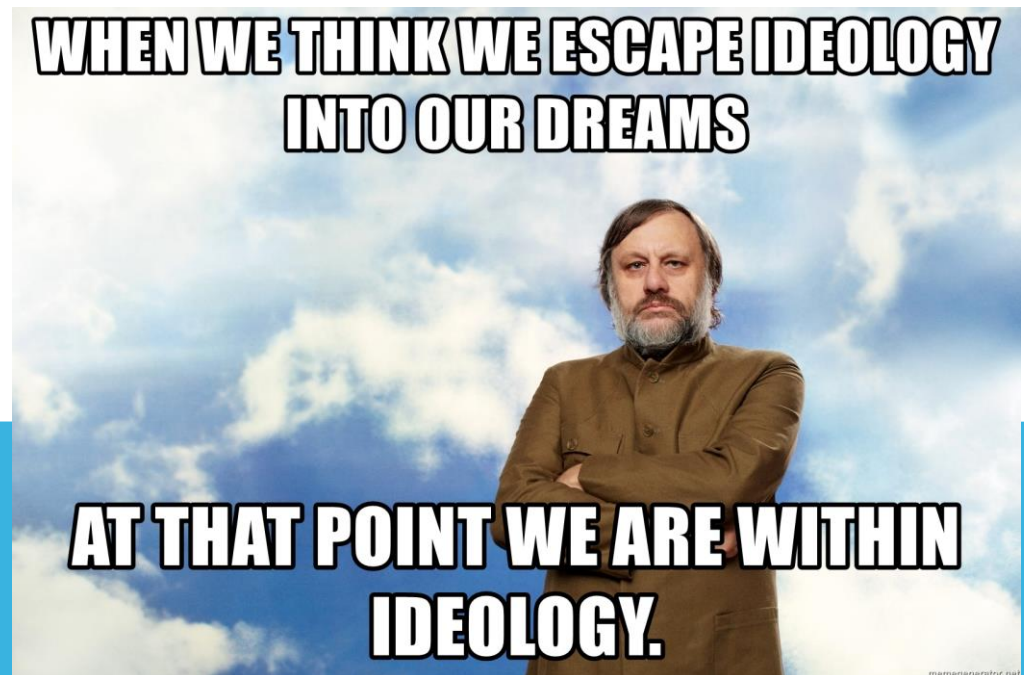
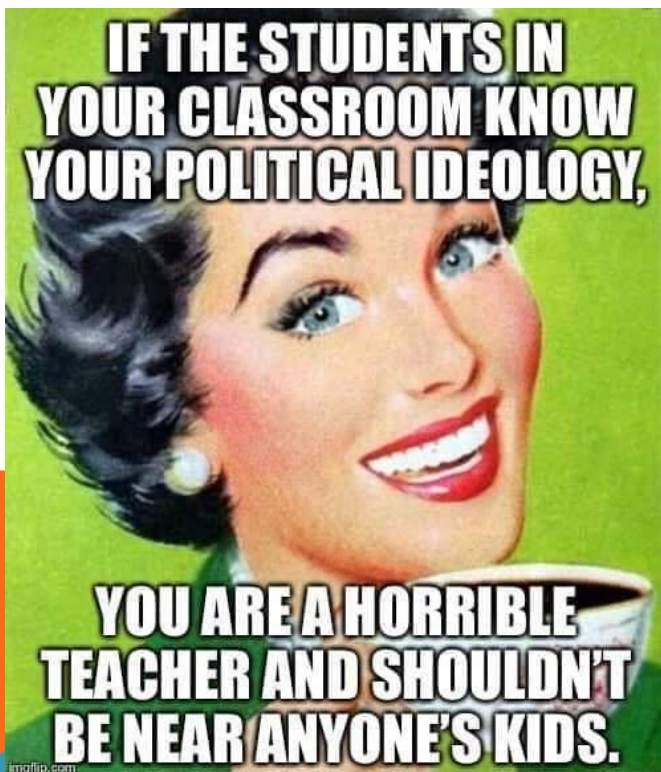
An approach that sees cultures not as sets of fixed and clearly defined values but rather as sets of symbols subject to interpretation.



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## Political Ideology

A systematic set of beliefs about how a political system ought to be structured.

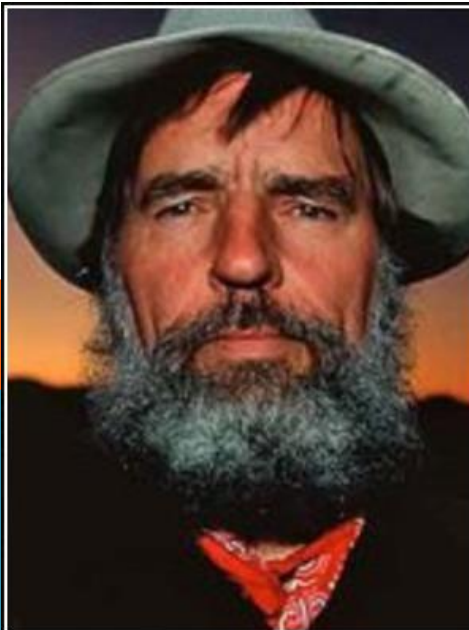




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## Structuralism

Approach to explaining politics that argues that political behavior is at least influenced and limited, and perhaps even determined, by broader structures in a society such as class divisions or enduring institutions.



I hate intellectual discussion. When I hear the words 'phenomenology' or 'structuralism', I reach for my buck knife.

— Edward Abbey —

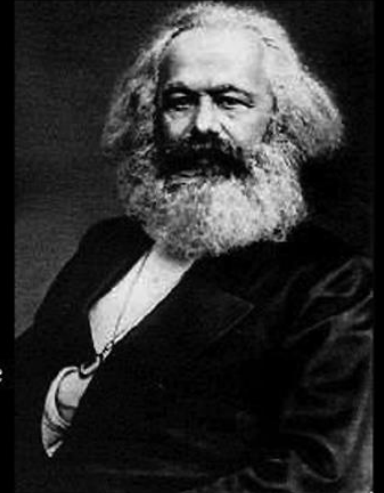
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## Marxism

Structuralist argument that says that economic structures largely determine political behavior; the philosophical underpinning of communism.

"Boss makes a dollar,  
I make a dime;  
that's why i poop  
on company time."

-Karl Marx on the Labor Theory of Value



Why did Karl Marx dislike Earl Grey tea?

Because all proper tea is theft.



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## Bourgeoisie

The class that owns the capital; according to Marxism, the ruling elite in all capitalist societies.

## Proletariat

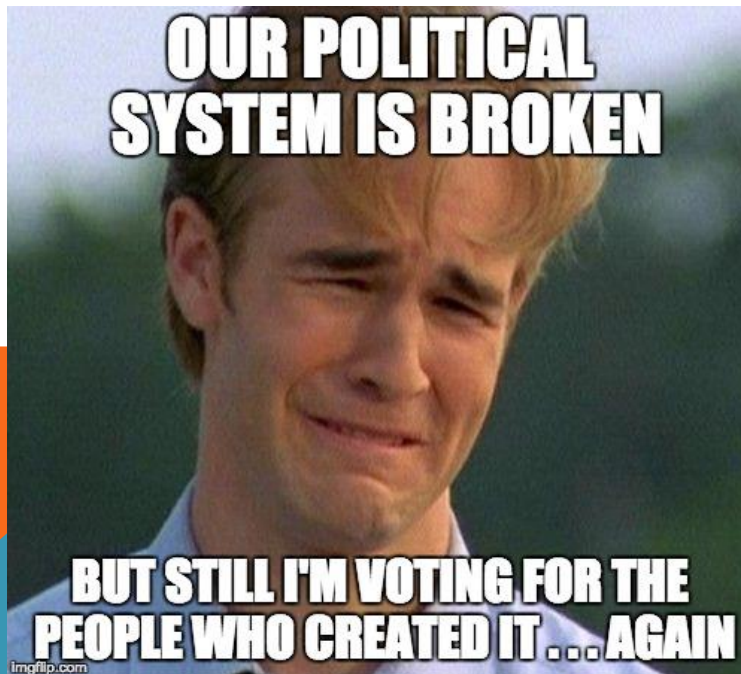
The class of free-wage laborers who own no capital and must sell their labor to survive.



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## Institutionalism

An approach to explaining politics that argues that political institutions are crucial to understanding political behavior.



## Political Institution

A set of rules, norms, or SOPs that is widely recognized and accepted by the society, structures and constrains political actions, and often serves as the basis for key political organizations.



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# Who Rules?



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## Pluralist Theories

Explanations of who has power that argue that society is divided into various political groups and that power is dispersed among these groups so that no group has complete or permanent power; contrast to elite theory.



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## Elite Theories

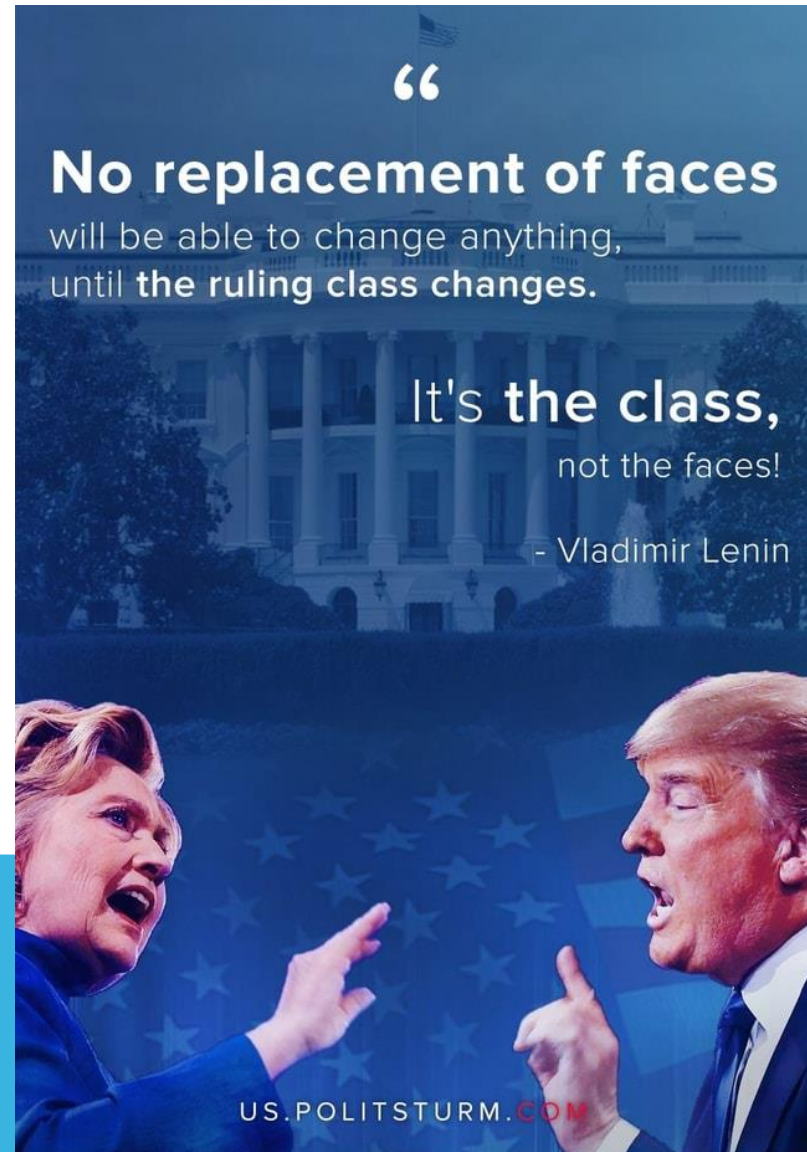
Theories that all argue societies are ruled by a small group that has effective control over virtually all power; contrast to pluralist theory.



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## Ruling class

An elite who possess adequate resources to control a regime; in Marxist theory, the class that controls key sources of wealth in a given epoch.

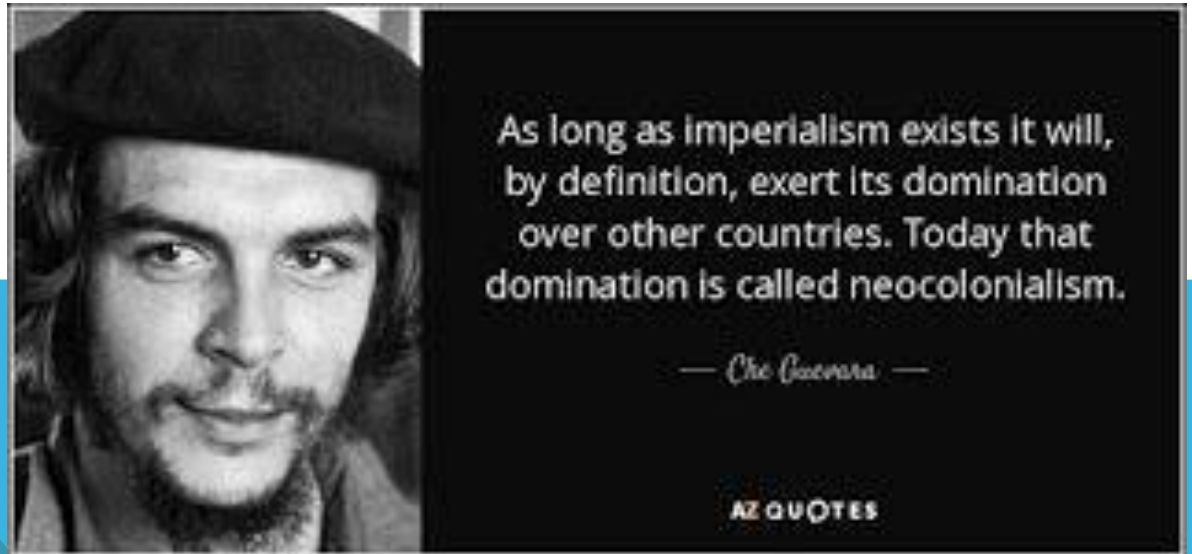




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## Neocolonialism

A relationship between postcolonial societies and their former colonizers in which leaders benefit politically and economically by helping outside businesses and states maintain access to the former colonies' wealth and come to serve the interests of the former colonizers and corporations more than they serve their own people.



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## Patriarchy

Rule by men

