

LECTURE / DISCUSSION / DEBATE
THE FEDERAL SYSTEM: STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS

Terms and concepts to know:

Federalism	Unitary system
Articles of Confederation	Dillon's rule
<i>McCulloch v. Maryland</i> (1819)	"Necessary and Proper" clause
Dual federalism	The New Deal
The Great Society	"Marble-Cake" Federalism
"Picket-Fence" Federalism	General revenue sharing
Special revenue sharing	

Study and discussion questions:

1. Internationally, only about 17 of the over 150 democracies that exist in the world today have structured themselves in a federalist-type system. What do you think accounts for so few federalist systems? Why might democracies choose a more centralized (unitary) system?
2. Examine and discuss the advantages and disadvantages associated with federal systems. Do you feel the founding fathers made the right decision in choosing this form of government over a unitary one?
3. When looking at federalism from a theoretical perspective, does it appear to conform most to a democratic, pluralist, or elitist view of American politics? How do you think an elite theorist might respond to the idea that federalism "democratizes" government and makes it more responsive to the people?
4. Why does Robert Jensen have a problem with being labeled "the greatest nation on earth"? Do you agree that Americans should not describe their country on those terms? Why or why not?
5. What do Cohen and Rogers have to say about the effects of federalism on democracy? Do you agree or disagree with their assessment?
6. Cohen and Rogers state that "ordinary people in the U.S. are among the most political disorganized in the world." What evidence of this do the authors provide and how does that relate to the issue of "American exceptionalism"?
7. Have the six basic factors contributing to American exceptionalism been *equally* important in U.S. history? Which are most important today?

Readings:

Heineman. *American Government*, Chapter 3.
WEB – Readings from the "Federal System" links.

Video: *The Electoral College is Anti-Democratic.*