9.0 | What’s in a Name?

Have you ever been in a political discussion, debate, or perhaps even a heated argument where one person objected to another person’s statement by responding, “That’s not what I mean by conservative (or liberal)?” If so, then join the club. Good political discussions often have to be paused when it becomes clear that the participants do not agree on the meanings of the terms that are central to the discussion. Ideologies are such conversation stoppers because familiar terms such as conservative, liberal, populist, socialist, and fascist are often used without agreeing on their meanings. This chapter has three main goals:

- Explaining what ideology is and what it does;
- Defining the major ideologies that influence American government and politics—primarily liberalism, conservatism, libertarianism, socialism, and populism.
- Describing how ideology affects modern American government and politics.

Some attention is also paid to other “isms” that are closely associated with important political movements or actions. They have some of the attributes of an ideology but are typically focused on a specific subject: feminism; environmentalism; fundamentalism; and terrorism.

9.1 | What is an ideology?

An ideology is a belief system that consists of a relatively coherent set of ideas about government and politics AND the public policies that are intended to implement the ideas or achieve the goals. An ideology is a belief system that consists of a set of ideas on a broad range of issues as opposed to a single belief about a single issue. The belief system can help people make sense of the world around them. People go through life with “mental images” of “how the world is or should be organized.” These images constitute an ideology—a way to simplify, organize, evaluate and “give meaning to what otherwise would be a very confusing world.”

Individuals who are daily bombarded with information can use ideology to help make sense of it. When people read about a terrible crime or crime statistics, ideology can provide a ready-made explanation for the cause of the criminal behavior as well as a predisposition to support a liberal or conservative public policy response to crime. A person who sees video of police officers beating someone on the streets on Los Angeles or elsewhere is apt to use ideology to provide a handy mental image of whether the use of force is
justified or a case of police brutality. A person who reads about the latest data on unemployment can use ideology to provide a framework for thinking that the unemployment rate is too high or too low. A person who thinks about taxes is apt to use ideology to conclude that taxes are too high or too low without having to spend a great deal of time learning about economic policy. And finally, individuals who view actual images of bombing or read about the use of military force can use an ideological “mental image” to react to the action based on an ideological bias for or against the use of military force.

The second part of an ideology is its action component. Ideologies include public policies that are intended to act on ideas or goals. In fact, the commitment to action differentiates an ideology from a philosophy. For example, political philosophy is the study of fundamental questions about human nature, politics and government, rights such as liberty and equality, law, justice, and what constitutes a good or moral public order. Political philosophers examine questions about the legitimacy of government; the difference between power and authority; the nature of freedom and equality; civic duties and obligations; and the nature and scope of government power to limit individual liberty. The adherents of an ideology are committed to specific sets of values and to acting to achieve them in the realm of politics and government.


An ideology is not just a set of ideas it is a coherent set of ideas. This means that the components of an ideology should be consistent with one another. One idea should not conflict with others. For example, ideologies typically include beliefs about human nature and beliefs about the appropriate role for government. In terms of human nature, an ideology can describe human nature as basically 1) good or bad; and 2) fixed or flexible. The belief that human nature is basically good means that people are expected to do the right thing because they have a natural sense of right and wrong and will generally do what is right. The belief that human nature is basically bad means that people are by nature self-interested, that evil is part of human nature, and therefore people will often do wrong. The belief that human nature is fixed assumes that an individual’s capacities and abilities are determined at birth: intelligence, aptitudes, and character are a matter of nature. The belief that human nature is flexible means that an individual’s capacities and abilities can be developed by family, religion, culture, tradition, and education: intelligence, aptitudes, and character are a matter of nurture. Beliefs about the determinants of human behavior are of great political importance because they shape beliefs about the best form of government (e.g., whether democracy will work), the

Think about It! Watch the trailer for the 1938 film Angels with Dirty Faces. What do you think the film says about human nature?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nld4DcRHEME0
appropriate role of government (e.g., limited or broad), and they shape public policies. For instance, they determine criminal justice policies, particularly whether sentencing policies should emphasize punishment or rehabilitation.

James Madison is called the architect of the American system of government he designed the elaborate system of institutional checks and balances. He believed that people were by nature self-interested and needed to have their ambitions checked. Thomas Jefferson wrote extensively about human nature, specifically about the question whether humans were self-interested egoists (individuals whose actions are based solely on “self-love”) or whether they had a moral sense. He believed people had a natural moral sense. The question was whether it was based on religion, which would justify government support for religion, or a natural sense of moral obligation or conscience. These are some of the most profound questions about human nature and social or political behavior. In a June 13, 1814 Letter to Thomas Law, “The Moral Sense,” Jefferson discussed his thoughts on the question. “The Creator would indeed have been a bungling artist had he intended man for a social animal without planting in him social dispositions.” These social dispositions, which limit self-interest, self-love, or egoism, provide an innate sense of morality that constitutes the “Principles of Natural Religion.”

In his First Inaugural Address (delivered March 4, 1861), President Lincoln spoke about human nature when he closed his Address with the hope that the divisiveness of the Civil War could be ended by appeals to “the better angels of our nature.” Lincoln believed that without such appeals to our good nature, appeals to the worse angels of our nature would result in division, discord, and violence.

An ideology is inconsistent if it includes positive and negative views of human nature, or if it includes both fixed and flexible views of human nature. It is harder to determine whether an ideology has consistent views on the role of government because ideologies include ideas about the appropriate size of government and the appropriate use of government power. Size refers to small or big government; use refers to the purposes of government. With the notable exception of libertarianism, ideologies typically support small government for some purposes and big government for others. For example, modern conservatives support big government for national security, morals regulation, and crime, but small government for regulating business. Liberals support big government to regulate business and to expand social and economic equality, but small government to regulate morality. Political debates tend to focus on the size of government: which individual, political party, or ideology supports big government and which supports small government. The focus on size overlooks the importance of the role of government—what government power is actually being used for.

Think About It!
Are humans Hobbesian creatures who are violent by nature?
What does Steven Pinker’s 2007 TED Lecture, The Myth of Violence, say about human nature?
Chapter 9: Political Ideology

9.13 | The Meaning of Terms

Liberalism and conservatism are the two labels that are most commonly attached to individuals, political parties, interest groups, the media, public policies, and government officials—including judges. The fact that they are very familiar terms does not mean that their meanings are very clear. The absence of shared definitions of important political concepts such as freedom, order, justice, conservatism, and liberalism is problematic. A shared political vocabulary is important in a democracy where voters are expected to make informed decisions. Democracy works best when citizens know the meanings of the words used to describe government and politics. Developing shared understandings of conservatism and liberalism is complicated by the fact that they have changed a great deal over time. Ideologies are dynamic, not static. What it means to be a conservative or a liberal changes over time.

9.14 | The Functions of Ideology

In politics as in economics and sports, organization increases effectiveness. Ideologies organize interests. Ideologies can increase the effectiveness of individuals and ideas by organizing them in order to maximize their impact on public policy. In this respect, ideologies serve a purpose that is similar to political parties and interest groups. But ideologies both unite people and divide them. Ideologies do bring people together to work for shared ideas but they also move people apart by dividing them into opposing camps: believers and non-believers. The fact that ideologies both unite and divide, increase political cooperation and political conflict, is one reason why Americans are so ambivalent about ideology, why they have conflicting feelings about ideology. The ambivalent feelings about ideology can be traced to the earliest days of the republic when the Founders warned against “the mischiefs of faction.” In Federalist Number 9, Hamilton argued that a firm union was a safeguard against “domestic faction.” In Federalist Number 10, Madison described how to design a political system that “cured” the “mischiefs of faction.” Worries about the harmful effects of factions have not gone away. Today’s worries are about ideologies or parties or special interests divided Americans into competing camps that fight hard for their views rather than working toward the common good. The later chapters describe how organization can increase an individual’s feelings of efficacy, the belief that individual participation in politics matters because it can make a difference. Ideology can play a similar role because it unites and organizes like-minded people to work on behalf of shared ideas.

9.2 | The Major Isms

The range of ideological debates in the U.S. is very limited compared to other democracies. American politics is practically limited to liberalism and conservatism. There are occasional references to other ideologies such as libertarianism, radicalism, socialism, and fascism, but these ideologies are for the
most part outside the mainstream of political debate or they are considered the more extreme elements within liberalism or conservatism. The more extremist ideologies of the left and right ends of the political spectrum are not usually part of political discourse. In this sense, the two-ideology system mirrors the two-party system: both present voters with a limited range of political choices.

Liberalism and conservatism have changed a great deal over time. In the early 1800s, the conservative party was the Federalist Party, which advocated a strong federal government, and the liberal party was the Jeffersonian Republicans, which advocated states’ rights. In the 1930s, conservatives supported states’ rights while liberals supported expansion of the federal government. Since the mid-1960s four major issues have consistently divided conservatives and liberals:

- **National Security Policy.** Conservatives have generally been stronger supporters of national defense than liberals. This was the case during the Cold War and it has continued during the War on Terror.
- **Crime Policy.** Conservatives have consistently supported getting tough on crime by strengthening the police and punishment as the main goal of sentencing. Liberals have consistently supported the expansion of due process rights of suspects and rehabilitation as a main goal of sentencing.
- **Moral Regulatory Policy.** Conservatives have consistently supported moral regulatory policies related to abortion, pornography, sexual behavior, marriage, and the establishment of religion. Liberals have consistently supported moral deregulatory policies.
- **Economic Policy.** Conservatives have been more consistently pro-business and anti-tax. Liberals have generally been more pro-labor and more supportive of government regulation of business.

### 9.30 Conservatism: Traditional and Modern

This is a conservative era in American politics. Conservatism has been the dominant, but not exclusive, force in national politics since the late 1960s. The notable exception is the reaction to the Watergate scandal in the mid-1970s. However, conservatism is not monolithic. It might be said that wherever two or more conservatives are gathered together the discussion invariably turns to who is the real, true conservative. The following describes the two main strains of conservatism: traditional conservatism (during the period from the 1930s until the mid-1960s) and modern conservatism (from the mid-1960s until today). There are three main differences between traditional and modern conservatism—their views on change, ideology, and the role of government.

### 9.31 Views on Change

Traditional conservatism is closest to the original meaning of the word conservative, which is derived from the Latin *conservāre*—meaning to conserve by preserving, keeping, or protecting traditional beliefs, values, customs, or ways of doing things. Traditional conservatives defend the status quo against radical or revolutionary change or the assumption that all change is reform (good change). [Edmund Burke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund_Burke) (1729-1797), the
Irish-British political philosopher, is considered the father of traditional conservatism. He did not oppose change. In fact, he argued that a government without a means of changing lacked the necessary means for its own survival. However, Burke preferred slow or incremental change and opposed radical or revolutionary change.

Modern conservatism is a much stronger advocate for change. In fact, some conservatives call themselves radical conservatives. A radical is someone who advocates basic, even revolutionary change. Radicals can be leftwing or rightwing. When President Reagan called his administration a bunch of radicals he reminded voters that he was a movement conservative, a person who was committed to the cause of overturning liberal social, economic, and defense policies. In contrast to traditional conservatism, which rejected radical or revolutionary change of the right or left, modern conservatism advocates major, even radical or revolutionary change. However, the change is usually described as radical change from the liberal status quo, change that will bring the country back to the basics. This usually means that the solution for many of the contemporary social, economic, and political problems is to return to the Founder’s original understanding of politics, government, and the Constitution. This recurring conservative theme is one of the main points of the Tea Party movement.

Traditional conservatism’s skepticism about change is related to the belief in the importance of order. Traditional conservatives consider order the necessary condition for achieving or maintaining other important values such as individual freedom, private property, and justice—and without good order, these other values and valuables are unlikely to be attained. Traditional conservatives believe that order can be created and maintained by social institutions (family, schools, churches, and civic organization) as well as by government. In this sense, traditional conservatives are not anti-government. They believe that government has a responsibility to maintain domestic order, to control crime, to preserve traditional values through moral regulatory policies, and to provide national security from foreign threats. But traditional conservatives believe that the primary responsibility for these activities lies with the private sector, the civil society, rather than the public sector (the government). The Burkean emphasis on order, social institutions, and civic responsibility made traditional conservatism less committed to other values such as individualism, individual liberty, and equality. A leading American traditional conservative is Russell Kirk (1918-1994). The Russell Kirk Center provides a good description of traditional conservative principles. They include belief in natural law, hierarchy, the connection between property rights and freedom, faith in custom and tradition, and skepticism of change.

9.32 Views on Ideology

The second different between traditional and modern conservatism is that modern conservatism is much more ideological. Today’s conservatives portray conservatism as an ideology that will solve the problems created by liberalism. The term movement conservative refers to those conservatives who consider themselves part of an organized cause to work for conservative ideas. These conservatives are part of a cause. Traditional
conservatives were to a certain extent anti-ideological. They considered ideology problematic because it was extremism rather than moderation—and traditional conservatives were in the Aristotelian and Burkean traditions that emphasized conservatism as moderation rather than extremism. The word ideology was originally coined to refer to the scientific study of ideas. It was originally used to describe how the systematic study of ideas could lead to a better understanding of the political world the way that science increased understanding of the natural world. But by the middle of the 20th Century the word ideology was used to describe the ideas that were used to get political power, to shape public policy, and to justify government action. In fact, beginning in the latter 1950s, sociologists including Nan Aron, Seymour M. Lipset, Edward Shils, and Daniel Bell warned that in modern societies ideology was actually assuming the role that religion played in traditional societies. They did not mean this as a compliment. They considered ideology at least partly an irrational, unthinking, and therefore unreasonable force in a world where modern governments had become very powerful and even totalitarian. Their warnings about the dangers presented by modern ideology came from recent political experience. It was a reaction against the ideologies of the left (Communism in the Soviet Union and China) and the right (Fascism in Hitler’s Germany and Mussolini’s Italy) during the period from the 1930s to the 1960s. These critics of ideology came to be called neoconservatives, or new conservatives.

9.33 Views on the Role of Government

The third difference between traditional and modern conservatives concerns the role of government. Modern conservative support for change and ideology has changed conservative thinking about the role of government. Conservatives are not antigovernment or even advocates of small government as much as they oppose what government has been doing. Specifically, conservatives oppose public policies that promote egalitarianism, social welfare, the due process model of justice, and the deregulation of morals. The claim that conservatives are not antigovernment can be supported by examining conservative views on the four major policy areas that have consistently divided conservatives and liberals: national security; crime; economics; and moral regulatory policy. The conservative position is not antigovernment in these four areas. Conservatives are pro-government on national security, crime, regulation of morals, and even, to a lesser extent, economics. There is a libertarian strain within conservatism that is consistently antigovernment but mainstream conservatism does not take the libertarian position on the major policies.

The conservative movement’s support for government is apparent in the principles and positions taken by leading conservative organizations such as The Heritage Foundation, The American Conservative Party, and The American Conservative Union. The Heritage Foundation describes itself as a leading voice for conservative ideas such as individual freedom, limited government, traditional values, and strong national defense. It promotes the latter two values by support for “big” government. The American Conservative Party’s principles are more anti-government in the sense that they more consistently advocate limited government. The principles include natural rights and individual liberty, the belief that law should be used to support liberty and mediate disputes where one person has harmed another, and the reminder that “[t]he armed forces and law enforcement exist to bolster private defense, not supplant it.”
Ideologies include a commitment to acting on values. Conservatives use both the government and the private sector to achieve their goals, but they are more likely than liberals to support the private sector delivery of goods and services. The free market plays a central role as a means to achieve conservative goals. In fact, the market model is often presented as an alternative to a statist or government model for organizing society. The English political philosopher Adam Smith developed the marketplace model in *Wealth of Nations*. This book, which was published in 1776, the same year as the Declaration of Independence, is one of the most influential books ever written. Smith advocated an alternative to mercantilism, the conventional economic model of the day that the government should direct economic activity for the wealth of the empire. Smith described an economic system where the prices of goods were determined by the interactions of buyers and sellers in a competitive marketplace rather than the government. Over time, however, the logic of the marketplace model has been extended beyond economics to other, non-economic areas of society. For example, the economic free marketplace of goods has been expanded to politics where the free marketplace of ideas is based on the same logic as the economic free market. This is controversial because the marketplace model assumes that goods and services should be available on the basis of the ability to pay—but some things are valuable even though they are not highly valued in the economic marketplace. The philosopher Michael Sandel worries about applying the logic of the marketplace to more and more non-economic settings. Listen to his argument about what money cannot buy and should not buy. Do you agree with him? What are some of the consequences of thinking about citizens as consumers?

Michael Sandel, “‘What Money Can’t Buy’ and What it Shouldn’t Buy,” PBS NewsHour (June 11, 2012)

9.40 | Liberalism

A standard dictionary definition of a liberal is a person who believes in individual liberty. But defining liberalism as an ideology that values individual liberty is not very helpful because conservatives also profess a belief in individual liberty. Furthermore, liberals, like conservatives, value good public order. So it is more accurate to say that liberals and conservatives place different values on individual liberty and order. In general, liberals tend to place a higher priority on liberty than order, while conservatives generally tend to place a higher priority on order more than liberty.

Defining liberalism is complicated for some of the same reasons that conservatism is complicated: liberalism is a set of ideas—not just one idea; the set of ideas has changed over time; and liberalism is not monolithic. The two main strains of liberalism that are examined here are classical liberalism and modern liberalism.
Chapter 9: Political Ideology

9.41 | Classical Liberalism

Classical liberalism is rooted in the ideas of the English political philosopher John Locke (1632-1704). Locke’s ideas greatly influenced the thinking of the American founders. His words about the importance of life, liberty, and property found their way into the Declaration of Independence. Locke emphasized the following five ideas:

- **Reason.** Humans should use their reasoning capacity to understand the natural and political world rather than merely relying on faith, custom, or tradition in order to organize society.
- **Individualism.** The importance of the individual as a political actor relative to groups, classes, or institutions included an emphasis on legal equality.
- **Liberty.** Freedom is valued more than order, or relative to obedience to authority.
- **Social Contract Theory of Government.** Individuals decide to leave the state of nature and create government based on the consent of the governed and created by a social contract.
- **Property Rights.** Economic rights (to property and contract) are related to political rights. The shift is toward a private sector economy rather than one run by the government is an aspect of the commitment to limited government.

Classical liberalism originated as a political theory that limited government. During much of the 20th Century classical liberalism was actually considered conservative because it was associated with the defense of property rights and the free market, and opposition to government regulation of the economy and the expansion of the social welfare state.

9.42 | Modern Liberalism

The main difference between classical liberals and modern liberals is that modern liberals abandoned the emphasis on limited government as the best way to protect individual rights. Modern liberals used government to achieve greater equality, liberty, and income security.

- **Equality.** The various civil rights movements of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries expanded equality for racial and ethnic minorities and women. Most recently, the gay rights movement has advocated for greater legal equality under the law. Egalitarianism became a more important goal for modern liberals. Laws were used to limit discrimination.
- **Liberty.** Modern liberals also used law to protect civil liberties. Radical political speech. Limits on government censorship. The right to privacy and deregulation of morals.
- **Income Security.** Modern liberals used government policies to pass social welfare programs (e.g., social security; Medicare; unemployment insurance; workers compensation). These policies were designed to increase income security for the young, the old, and the sick. Support for the creation of the social welfare state explains why modern liberals are called social welfare liberals to differentiate them from classical liberals.
One of the founders of modern liberalism is the 19th Century English political philosopher John Stuart Mill. In *On Liberty and Representative Government*, Mill explained a principle or rule for determining what government should be allowed to do,

“The only purpose for which power can be rightly exercised over a member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant.”

and what it should not be allowed to do, in a political system based on limited government. The rule has come to be called The Harm Principle. In fact, Mill was merely restating the liberal idea developed by Thomas Jefferson (and John Locke before him):

“The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty Gods or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.”

The Harm Principle is libertarian in the sense that it limits government power over individuals. Mill accepted the basic principles of classical liberalism, particularly individual freedom, but he was more supportive of using government power to protect liberty and to promote equality. The origins of social welfare liberalism can be traced to this shift toward greater reliance on government to provide economic and social security. In modern American politics, liberals generally support government regulation to promote equality and economic security—the social welfare state—while conservatives generally support government regulation to promote law and order, national security, and morality—the national security and moral regulatory state.

One indication that this is a conservative era in American politics is the fact that liberalism has become a pejorative term, a negative term. Liberalism has been stigmatized as the “L-word” after been blamed for being soft on crime, for being weak on national defense, for undermining traditional values, and for being unduly critical of capitalism. In fact, the word liberal is so out of political favor today that liberals call themselves progressives. Progressive is a euphemism for liberal and *Progressivism* is a strain of liberalism.

Think About It!
Why are conservatives happier than liberals?
9.50 | Libertarian

Libertarianism is a simpler ideology than either conservatism or liberalism. Simply stated, libertarians value freedom and believe that individuals and groups can organize life with only minimal government. Libertarians have a positive view of human nature. The belief that government threatens freedom—that more government means less freedom—is reflected in The Libertarian Party motto: “Maximum freedom. Minimal Government.” The familiar slogan, “That government is best which governs least!” is libertarian. Libertarians believe in minimal government: government should be limited to doing what is necessary to protect individuals from being harmed by others. Libertarians value freedom more than order, but they believe that order actually emerges from the competition of the marketplace. This is the basis of libertarian support for laissez faire policies in economic, political, and social affairs. Laissez faire is a French term for “let it be.” In economics, laissez faire means allowing the competition of the marketplace, and the interaction of buyers and sellers, to operate without government intervention, regulation, or control. Libertarians rely on the private sector to produce order and prosperity. In politics, libertarians oppose using government power to promote values such as equality, patriotism, or morality. They also oppose immigration policies that limit the free movement of people across national borders. This is why libertarians can be conservative on some issues (opposed to using law to promote equality or create social welfare or to regulate business) and liberal on others (opposed to moral regulatory policy and opposed to laws promoting patriotism).

Libertarians take seriously the harm principle as a guide for limited government. The harm principle is libertarian insofar as it considers the only legitimate use of government power is preventing individuals from being harmed by others. Harm means physical harm to person or property or interests. The harm principle does not allow paternalistic legislation, using laws to prevention people from harming themselves by smoking, drinking alcohol or using drugs, eating unhealthy food, riding motorcycles without a helmet, or riding in a car without a seatbelt.

9.60 | Other Isms

9.61 | Socialism and Communism

Socialism is the belief that economic power is the basis of political power and that economic equality is essential for political equality. The belief that economic inequality causes political inequality provides the socialist justification for using government to actively promote equality through extensive government regulation or even government control of the economy. In order to achieve political equality, the government as redistributes resources through progressive taxation and social welfare program, at a minimum, and government control of the economy (both the means of production and the distribution of goods and services) at a maximum. Karl Marx is the most famous figure associated with socialism because he developed a comprehensive, systematic analysis of the relationship between economics and politics, thereby giving earlier socialist thinking
an ideology or world view. For an American economist’s critique of the rise and fall of socialism as an economic model read Robert Heilbroner’s analysis.

Like conservatism and liberalism, there are many variations of socialism. In fact, in American politics the term socialist is often used in a generic sense to refer to any “big government” taxing and spending policies. In this sense, government spending as a share of the nation’s Gross Domestic Product is a measure of how socialistic the country is. Socialists do support expansive government. But so do non-socialists. For example, the federal government’s response to the Great Recession included the infamous Troubled Asset Relief Program (or TARP) of 2008 and the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 which provided government bailouts for financial services companies and car manufacturers (GM and Chrysler). These policies were socialistic only in the sense that they increased government intervention in the private sector economy. But the bailouts were not socialistic in the sense that they were not aimed at promoting greater economic equality: critics called them Wall Street bailouts that Main Street would have to pay for. The key to identifying socialist policies that result in big government, as opposed to non-socialist policies that result in big government, is the social policies promote egalitarianism: economic equality.

Communism can be understood as an extreme version of socialism. It takes the socialist ideal of equality, and the government’s responsibility to achieve it in the economic, political, and social sectors to the point where there is no distinction between a private sector and the public sector. Communism is totalitarian in the sense that it advocates total government power over society. Indeed, the word totalitarian means total control with no distinction between the public sector and the private sector. In a totalitarian system, the government is authorized to use its powers and laws to regulate individual behavior, family policy, business and labor, as well as all aspects of social life.

9.62 | Anarchism

In terms of the size of government, anarchism is at the opposite end of the ideological spectrum from communism. The key to understanding anarchism is the fact that the Greek origin of the term means “without rulers.” Anarchists oppose all forms of government because governments by definition have the power to coerce individuals to join a community or require obedience to laws. Government use force—even the force of law—to ensure compliance rather than merely allowing individuals to freely, voluntarily join a political community. Anarchists believe that government is not necessary because people can use their capacity for reasoning to decide whether to freely and voluntarily agree to live in orderly and just societies without government requiring them to do so. Anarchists have a basically positive view of human nature which contrasts with Thomas Hobbes who believed that humans were by nature selfish, and the strong would take advantage of the weak. Anarchists believe that people will learn from experience that some rules are necessary for peaceful and prosperous coexistence and therefore will voluntarily accept rules that provide good order and justice without the force of law. Anarchists consider government power to compel individuals to obey the law illegitimate because it violates an individual’s inherent right to be free from coercion by others. In today’s political debate, anarchists are most often depicted as violent radicals who oppose government policies promoting international trade and globalism.
Think About It!
The “Sheep, Wolves, and Sheepdog” scene from the 2014 film *American Sniper*
https://youtu.be/uxZ0UZf0mkk

9.63 | Populism

The term populism refers to “of the people.” Populists identify with or advocate on behalf of the common person, who they depict as being unfairly treated by the rich, the powerful, or some other privileged elites who are working against them. In modern American politics, populist movements are essentially anti-establishment protests on behalf of the average American, the blue-collar workers, the middle-class, the silent majority, the forgotten person, or even the poor. Charles Barkley, a member of the National Basketball Association (NBA) Hall of Fame, expressed populist sentiment when he said that “all politics is rich people screwing poor people.”

Some of the Founders worried a great deal about what is today called populism. In *Federalist No. 1*, Alexander Hamilton warned about popular leaders who, behind the “mask of zeal for the rights of the people,” courted the people, became demagogues, and then ended up as tyrants. And Aaron Burr famously told the Senate that if the Constitution ever expired by the “sacrilegious hands of the demagogue or the usurper” it agonies would be witnessed on the floor of the Senate. But American ideas about democracy and popular sovereignty have made populism a recurring theme in the American political experience. President Andrew Jackson was a populist who worked to bring the average person into a political process that was controlled by “the better sorts” of society. In the latter 19th and early 20th Century, agrarian populists defended rural/agrarian interests from the urbanization and industrialization that occurred with the Industrial Revolution.

Populism often emerges as a reaction against major social, economic, or cultural changes (e.g., immigration) or economic crises (e.g., panics, depressions, or recessions). The cultural revolution of the 1960s spawned right wing populists such as George Wallace, the Governor of Alabama and third-party presidential candidate. Listen to Wallace’s populist campaign message making fun of northern urban elites—including the Washington press. Because populists generally promote a more equal distribution of resources and power, the growing economic inequality in the country has fueled a rise of populist sentiments. The main targets of modern left wing populism are economic elites, principally the finance industry represented by Wall Street (e.g., Moveon.org) and the multinational corporate interests that have promoted globalization and the interests of management rather than labor. Today’s right wing populism includes opposition to immigration, or at least the demand that the federal government defend the country’s borders and enforce immigration laws, and opposition to efforts to change the traditional definition of marriage as a union between one man and one woman. The Tea Party Movement’s rallying cry, “Take back the Constitution,” is a populist protest against the establishment elites.

9.64 | Feminism
Feminism is a social or political movement that strives for equal rights for women. It is a multi-faceted movement that has political, economic, social, legal, and cultural components. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* defines feminism and describes it by paying special attention to its various dimensions. Feminist theory describes and analyzes gender differences (and similarities) in order to better understand gender differences and gender inequality. From the perspective of political science, feminist theory is an attempt to explain relevant facts, include gender behavior, sexuality, and inequality. One relevant fact is the different gender political power relations. Feminism describes and critiques these political power relations. As such, feminist theory often promotes women’s rights. The subjects of study include discrimination, stereotypes, objectification, and patriarchy. *Women’s Studies* is a multidisciplinary academic field that includes anthropology, communications, economics, history, philosophy, political science, and sociology.

9.65 / ENVIRONMENTALISM

Environmentalism is a movement whose members advocate protecting the natural environment. Environmentalism is an example of modern issue politics advanced by individuals—policy entrepreneurs who take up a cause—and organizations (interest groups). The environmental movement began to have an impact on national politics in the 1960s and 1970s when they put the environment on the government’s agenda. Senator Gaylord Nelson founded *Earth Day* on April 22, 1970. The *Environmental Protection Agency* also was created in 1970. The EPA is the primary federal government agency responsible for providing clean air and clean water. Why is the environmental movement political? Why is it controversial to provide clean air and clean water? Because doing so involves the allocation of scarce resources. Protecting the environment costs money and entails government regulation of business and consumer behavior. This explains the debate over global warming. Global warming is an example of an environmental issue that has become controversial because addressing it will require governmental regulation.

9.66 / FUNDAMENTALISM

Fundamentalism is not usually considered an ideology the way conservatism, liberalism, and libertarianism are ideologies. However, fundamentalism is an idea which has an important impact on modern American politics and the politics of other countries. Fundamentalism is usually defined as a movement within a religious denomination—a movement that reacts against modernity by advocating a return to the basics or the fundamentals of a particular faith. Religious fundamentalism is evident in most of the major religions of the world today. Christian, Islamic, and Judaic fundamentalists advocate a return to basic articles of faith, particularly those tenets of faith that are expressed or revealed in sacred texts such as the Bible or Koran.

Fundamentalism is not limited to religious movements. It can be secular as well. From a social science perspective, fundamentalism is a reaction against modernity, particularly science, secularism, and value relativism. Secularism is the belief that government and politics should be separate from religion, that religion is appropriate for the private (social) sphere, not the public (governmental) sphere. In the U.S., secularism is reflected in the idea that there should be a “wall of separation” between church and
Relativism is the belief that values are subjective and conditional rather than universal and objectively true. Fundamentalists advocate restoring the traditional or fundamental belief that morals and values are universal truths that are not subject to evolving standards of modernity.

In the U.S., political fundamentalists advocate returning to the nation’s founding values, political principles, and founding documents. Legal or constitutional fundamentalists advocate Originalism, the belief that judges should decide cases based on the original intentions of those who wrote the words of the Constitution rather than their interpretation of the words or the modern meanings of the words. Religious fundamentalists and secular fundamentalists tend to be conservative insofar as they work to return to or restore the values of the founding era.

Terrorism

Terrorism is hard to define in a way that is universally accepted or which differentiates between acceptable and unacceptable uses of political violence. The old saying that one person’s freedom fighter is another person’s terrorist still applies to contemporary analyses of political violence. A basic definition of terrorism is the use of violence or the threat of violence to intimidate or coerce a people, principally for political purposes. Terrorism creates a climate of fear in a population in order to achieve a particular political objective.

U.S. law does define terrorism. Title 118 of the U.S. Code defines international terrorism as violent acts that “appear to be intended to” “intimidate or coerce a civilian population;” “to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion,” or to “affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping.”

It defines domestic terrorism as activities that “involve acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State;” “appear to be intended” to “intimidate or coerce a civilian population; to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or to affect the conduct of a government by
mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping...”; and “occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States.”

An extremely broad range of individuals, political organizations, and movements have used terrorism: leftist and rightist; conservative and liberal; nationalistic and internationalist movements; religious and secular; defenders of the status quo and revolutionaries; populists and elitists; and even governments (though state institutions such as armies, intelligence services, and the police). Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the government has devoted a great deal of attention to terrorism. In fact, the Federal Bureau of Investigation describes protecting against terrorism its top priority.

Terrorism involves the use of political violence but not all political violence is terrorism. It is important to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate uses of political violence. During the colonial era, mob actions were part of the American political experience with direct, participatory democracy. The Boston Tea Party in December 1773 was direct action intended to protest against British policies and to intimidate the British. Shays’ Rebellion in the winter of 1786 and 1787 was an armed uprising by citizenry who demanded that the government be more responsive to the economic problems of average Americans who facing mortgage foreclosures.

The Tea Party movement played an important role in the 2010 mid-term elections. Conservatives and Republican candidates for national and state offices did very well. One controversy surrounding the Tea Party movement is the fact that individual members of the movement and Tea Party groups either implied or explicitly stated that the American political tradition includes demanding change through means other than the ballot box and regular elections. These alternative methods include violence and the threat of violence. The references to “Second Amendment” remedies for political problems are a reminder that the American political tradition includes famous examples of when political violence was accepted as a legitimate way to achieve political change or to oppose advocates of political change. Members of the Tea Party movement and advocates of gun rights, such as the National Rifle Association, remind the American public and government officials that the Declaration of Independence explained why individuals or organizations can take up arms when the government is tyrannical, exceeds its authority, or is not responsive to demands.

9.60 | Why only two major ideologies in the U.S.?

Individual freedom of choice is a powerful idea in American culture. In economics, freedom of choice means a preference for a free marketplace of goods and services where consumers choose what to buy based on their preferences. The government does not decide what goods and services are available in the marketplace. It is considered a good thing for economic consumers to have a broad range of options from which to choose when purchasing a car, a house, health care, an insurance plan, or any other good or service. Having lots of consumer choice is also believed to create competition to continually improve products and services. Americans consider economic choice a good thing. And today’s economic consumers certainly have a great variety of goods and services from which to choose. At one time, television viewers had only three broadcast networks to watch: CBS, NBC, and ABC. Now there is a seemingly endless menu of viewing choices. At one time, car buyers were mainly limited to the big three American
automobile manufacturers: Chevrolet, Ford, and Chrysler. Today car buyers can also choose from many foreign manufacturers. Why is there so much more economic consumer freedom of choice than political freedom of choice? Why are economic consumers presented with so many choices of goods and services, but political consumers are for all practical purposes limited to choosing either a conservative or a liberal, a Republican or Democrat? Must individuals, issues, and parties be either conservative or a liberal? In a nation of more than 300 million people, is it possible to fit everyone into only two boxes?

9.61 | WHAT ARE YOU?

Two-dimensional frameworks for thinking about ideologies and political parties are useful because they help organize and simplify the political world by sorting or categorizing information. But simplifying the political world by labeling everything as either conservative or liberal can also be a simplification that distorts political reality. The political world is actually multi-dimensional, not two-dimensional. The limitations of the conservative and liberal framework have prompted searches for ways of thinking about ideology that provide for more than two options. One alternative framework that provides more than two categories is the World’s Smallest Political Quiz. It makes a distinction between views on economic issues and views on personal issues. Take the quiz to see which of four ideological labels best describes you. What do you think of the quiz? Do you think the results accurately label you? Do you think the quiz is biased toward a particular ideology? The Pew Research Center has also developed a “Political Typology” quiz that provides more political colors than red and blue. Do you think the results accurately label you?

Another familiar two-dimensional framework for simplifying American politics is the Red State (conservative and Republican) and Blue State (liberal and Democratic) framework. It describes states and regions of the country based on voting behavior and public policies. These ideological frameworks are scientific in the sense that they are based on social science. Cognitive scientists have also made important contributions to understanding thinking about politics. For instance, George Lakoff’s Moral Politics (2016) explains thinking about politics by contrasting strict father morality with feel-good liberalism. Individuals who identify with the strict father morality believe that hierarchical authority is important whereas individuals who identify with feel-good liberalism value egalitarian toleration. Table 9.61 below describes Lakoff’s understanding of the conservative hierarchy of value preferences. Lakoff, who predicted Donald Trump’s victory in the 2016 election, explains “your brain on Trump.” According to Lakoff, liberals (that is, progressives and Democrats) think of human behavior in terms of logic and reason. Therefore they study political science, law, economic theory (but not business), and public policy. Conservatives think of human behavior in terms of emotion, clear images of right and wrong, and compelling narratives. Therefore conservatives study marketing. Donald Trump, the master of marketing and branding knew what he was doing when he repeatedly told the American public: “When I was young, we were always winning things in this country. We’d win with trade, we’d win with wars.” There’s going to be so much winning, you’re gonna be sick and tired of winning.” The appeal of Donald Trump’s campaign narrative, like the appeal of Ronald Reagan’s
campaign narrative in 1984, was more emotional and narrative than logical reasoning. But both proved to be winning campaign strategies because their emotion and narrative appeal reinforced some conservative hierarchies of values.

Table 9.61: Lakoff’s Hierarchy of Conservative Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right over Wrong</th>
<th>God over Man</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man over Nature</td>
<td>Strong over Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich over Poor</td>
<td>Employers over Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America over Other Countries</td>
<td>Western Christian Civilization over Non-Western Civilizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men over Women</td>
<td>White over Non-white</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.70 | Is Ideology A Good Influence or A Bad Influence?

It is not easy to provide simple definitions of complex terms such as conservatism and liberalism and describe their role in American government and politics. It is even harder to assess whether their role is positive or negative, whether ideologies are good or bad influences on government and politics. It is hard to objectively—that is, neutrally or without bias—assess an ideology’s role because ideologies are prescriptive rather than descriptive terms. A prescriptive term is a normative or value-laden term. A prescriptive term is one that has a value judgment about its worth, whether it is desirable or undesirable, whether it is good or bad. A descriptive term is not a normative or value-laden term. The following illustrates descriptive and prescriptive statements that are (mostly) familiar to politics.

**Descriptive Statements**

Democracy is government of the people, by the people, and for the people.
Freedom is the right to do what you want.
Equality means treating everyone the same.
Conservatism is an ideology that values social order more than individual liberty.
Liberalism is an ideology that values individual liberty more than social order.
Socialism is an ideology that values equality.
Terrorism is the political use of violence.

**Prescriptive Statements**

Democracy is a good form of government.
Freedom is preferable to slavery.
Chocolate is better than vanilla.
Conservatism is preferable to liberalism.
Liberalism is preferable to conservatism.
Capitalism is a good economic system.
Socialism threatens freedom.
Violence is not a legitimate means to a political end.
Terrorism is unacceptable.
There are too many lawyers and laws in modern American society.

It is hard to objectively assess conservatism and liberalism because ideologies are commonly considered prescriptive rather than descriptive terms. A prescriptive term is a normative or value-laden term. A descriptive term defines or explains without making a value judgment about worth. However, people think of conservative or liberal or socialist in prescriptive terms, as good or bad rather than merely as labels that describe different sets of beliefs and programs for acting on them. As a result, candidates for public office, government officials, public policies, and political events are viewed through prescriptive, ideological lenses. Capitalism and democracy are considered good; other economic and political systems are considered bad. Similarly, the Republican and Democratic parties are not merely described, they are assessed as good or bad based on ideological or policy preferences.

Prescriptive terms are biased either for or against something. This makes it harder to study them objectively. This is particularly the case with terrorism. Studying terrorism is complicated because terrorism is a prescriptive, value-laden term. To call a person a terrorist, or to describe an action as terrorism, is to condemn the person or the action. A descriptive definition of democracy is that it is a political system where people control their government through elections or other means. But democracy is commonly used in a prescriptive sense: “Democracy is a good (or bad) form of government.” To say that democracy is a good form of government is a positive normative statement. To say that democracy is a bad form of government is a negative normative statement. Attaching prescriptive labels to political terms sometimes makes it harder, not easier, to understand what is being described. The fact that the terms liberal and conservative, which are so important for understanding American politics and government, are so often used as prescriptive labels that are attached to individuals, parties, or policies can make it harder to understand American government and politics. When thinking about ideology, it is important to try to separate the descriptive thinking about the terms from the prescriptive or normative assessment of whether the ideology is good or bad. Doing so will increase the likelihood that ideology—the systems of beliefs and policies for acting on them—can increase understanding of government and politics and the public policies that emerge from the process.

Take the 20 question “Political Typology” quiz and then think about it! Are your Red or Blue?
http://people-press.org/typology/quiz/
Think About It!
One way to think about the government, the size of government, and big government, is by looking at the number of government employees. The Office of Personnel Management employment data indicate that the federal government has about 2.7 million civilian employees and that in 2017 there were 21.8 million total government employees. The following are the U.S. executive departments with the largest number of employees in 2014. What do they suggest about what the federal government does?
The Department of Defense 723,000
The Department of Veterans Affairs 340,000
The Department of Homeland Security 186,000
The Department of Justice 114,000

9.80 | Summary
An ideology is a set of beliefs (or values) and a plan for acting on them. Ideologies can be useful because they provide a way for people to try to make sense of the political world. Ideologies can increase understanding of politics, government, and public policy by simplifying the political world. For instance, individuals and ideas and public policies can be organized as either conservative or liberal. This simplifies the world of politics. Ideology can also inspire or motivate people to organize to act together to achieve desirable goals. In this sense, ideologies unite individuals with shared beliefs. But ideologies can also complicate politics. Ideologies divide people and create an “us” versus “them” framework that can make it harder for government to do what governments are created to do: solve the problems that the people put on the government agenda. Ideologies also complicate the world by strengthening the tendency to hold tightly to closely held beliefs despite empirical evidence to the contrary.

Chapter 9: Key Terms
- Ideology
- Traditional conservatism
- Modern conservatism
- Liberal
- Classical liberalism
- Terrorism
- Libertarianism
- Socialism
- Communism
- Anarchism
- Feminism
- Environmentalism
- Fundamentalism

Chapter 9: Study Questions
1. What is the role of religion in ideology?
2. What is ideology?
3. How do liberalism, conservatism, and libertarianism likely influence thinking about stem cell research?
4. Briefly discuss the problems with the conservative and liberal labels.
5. Is ideology good or bad?
6. Describe some of the differences between conservatism and libertarianism.
9.9 Additional Resources

The Center for Voting and Democracy has links to articles related to elections and democracy including voter turnout, links to organizations and ideas related to reforming the electoral system, and analysis of electoral returns. www.fairvote.org/

The World’s smallest political quiz uses ten questions to place a person on the economic and social ideological spectrums. http://www.theadvocates.org/quiz

The Gallup Organization provides historical and current information about American public opinion. www.gallup.com

9.91 In the Library


2http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/jefferson-to-thomas-law/
4http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/uscode18/usc_sup_01_18_10_I_20_118.html