

Hampton

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Political Science

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### The New American Democracy

#### Terminology

- Principal- who wants something done (but can't do it)
  - Agent- "expert" hired to try to do the job
  - Slippage is possible
    - Can't monitor
    - Agent has unique expertise
    - Outcome doesn't necessarily reflect effort
  - Principal must either
    - Cancel the project
    - Gamble on the agent's good will
    - Impose wasteful/tedious monitoring mechanisms
  - Things we have agents do
    - Regulate banks
    - Control obscenity on TV
      - ❖ Federal Communications Commission found on CBS
  - "Take away" info
    - we usually assume that intention = result
    - that's generally not true when the PA problem exists
  - Permanent campaign- campaigning never ends
  - "red" states are republican, conservative
  - "blue" states are democratic, liberal
  - "The disadvantage of free elections is that you can never be sure who is going to win them."
- Joseph Stalin
- Majority- 50% plus 1

#### Governmental Power

- "The state is a monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force." --Max Webster
  - appropriate people's property
    - ❖ Taxing them
    - ❖ Taking their private property

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--restrict their movements

- ❖ Imprisoning them
- ❖ Prohibiting certain kinds of behaviors

--take their lives

- ❖ Executing them

- "Government is not reason, it is not eloquence—it is force." --George Washington
- "If men were angels, no government would be necessary." --James Madison
- A world without government would be "a war of all against all." Life would be "brutish, nasty, and short." --Thomas Hobbes
- Government
  - Protects citizens from unlawful activity
  - Regulates social and economic activity
  - Provides services
  - Defends the country from foreign aggression

## Classic Types of Government

- Direct democracy- all citizens participate personally in making government decisions
- Process of Participation- private to public & conflict to cooperation
- Representatives- have the authority to decide what governments do
- Prospective voting- look to future while voting
- Delegate- one who reflects the opinions of those who elected him/her to office
- A state representative might have taken a "no new taxes" pledge, but be faced with a budget crisis that requires new revenues.
- A member of Congress might have promised to slash defense spending, but a national emergency may require a larger military. According to this point of view, representatives do a disservice to the voters and their country if they hew to outdated campaign promises.
- Constituents- informed judgment about what policies are best
- Trustee- one who acts on behalf of the interests of the citizens rather than according to the citizens' past preferences
- Retrospective voting- looking at the results of past policies rather than guessing at which future policies are best

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### Types of Elections

- National
- State
- Local
- Recall- in which dissatisfied citizens try to remove incumbents from office before the completion of their terms
- Primary- a preliminary contest that narrows the number of the parties' candidate and determines who will be the nominees
- General- each party chooses a nominee who squares off against the nominees of other parties
- Nonpartisan- candidate does not run with party labels

### Nominating Candidates & Deciding Issues

- Propositions- initiatives and referenda enable citizens to bypass or overrule elected officials and decide budgets, taxes, laws, & amendments to state constitutions directly
- "Americans take the existence of their elections industry for granted. Some like it; others do not; most may be bored by it except in its most entertaining moments. But they are all conscious of it, the same way that they are conscious of Mobil, McDonald's, *Larry King Live*, Oprah Winfrey, the Dallas Cowboys, Ford Motor Company, and all the other symbols and institutions that go to make up the rich tapestry of American life. In a meaningful sense, America is about the holding of elections." -Anthony King

### Single-Issue-Voters

- Take only one issue into account

### Should American Democracy be Reformed?

- Electoral incentive- the desire to be elected & re-elected to office