Who is an American?

Can we define this?
Who are we as a people?

Who are we:

- Culturally?
- Gender, ethnicity?
- Politically?
- Religions?
- Education?
- Economics?
Very challenging question

- 1790 pop = 3.9 million
- 2015 = 320,090,857 people (U.S. Census Bureau)
- Third most populous country on the planet, behind only China (1.4 billion) & India (1.3 billion)
Some gloomy stats. from www.drugpolicy.org, etc.

- US = 5% of world’s population
- US consumes 20% of world’s resources
- US has 25% of the world’s prisoners
- US spends $40,000,000,000 annually in war on drugs
- 2,323,000 or 1 in every 99 adults behind bars in federal, state & local jails
- At least 1 gun murder every day

Jan. 2014 Yale U study - every hour a child is injured in a gun incident (7391 a year)
Stats cont’d.

- 2/3 of state prison population are blacks & Hispanics
- Their use of drugs is at similar rate to whites
- 200,000+ students lost fed. financial aid due to drug conviction
- 32,000 Americans infected annually with HIV/AIDS Hepatitis C thru sharing of contaminated needles.
● 75% of applicants between 18-24 years fail the military’s recruitment process
● 2008 total $ spent on Education = $858 bil
● S. Korea has 25 more school days that the US
● US students ranked 31st in Math
● US spend $15,171 per student, per year. per student compared to $7,400 among wealthy countries.
● US student debt is $1.2 trillion

(usgovernmentspending.com)
What % of Americans are perceived to be immigrants?

- 13% ?
- 20% ?
- 25% ?
- 30% ?
- 40% ?
- Perception is 39%
- Fact: 13%
Demographic Profile “a collision of histories”

- America is a land of immigrants
- Racially, linguistically and culturally divided
- Diverse religions
- Earliest European settlers in SE/SW were Roman Catholics from France & Spain
- 1798 Congress began restricting immigration & in fact began deporting several groups
- Between 1920-1960 immigration was only open to Mexicans
- In 1965 civil rights movements led to end of nationality restrictions
Anti foreign or nativist sentiments common throughout America history
Based on economic competition, or perceived threat from those with different culture, religions
Such sentiments peaks when immigration levels are high
Mid – 1800’s, 1920’s, 1990’s, early 2000’s, 2008-2009
Despite these resistances, each wave of immigrant has contributed to building America economically & culturally
American religious profile is changing
Many groups from Europe - Quakers, French Huguenots, Catholics, British Methodists arrived here in order to escape religious intolerance or persecution
American independence also saw a separation from the (Anglican Church of England
Today America still Predominantly Christian although 16% in every American is unaffiliated.
Several groups established communities based on religious groups: NJ, PA., Maryland provided religious freedom for different groups.

Rhode Island was founded by religious dissident Roger Williams.

6 of the founding states had established state religions.

Religious differences led to violence in 1843 against Catholics.

Led to creation of Catholic run school system which to his day remains an alternative to our public school system.
Economic disparity plays a role in how much Americans participate in the political process.

- Poor Americans not likely to participate.
- Those who vote Democratic.
- Well-off vote Republicans.
Regional Diversity

- Regional differences also play a factor in economic decisions. Eg. Farmers are more likely to support farm subsidy legislations, than city dwellers.
- The whole N-S conflict was fuelled by economic desire of the South to maintain slavery as a basis of their economic strength.
Age demography in diversity

- Age difference is also a factor in political orientation
- Older Americans tend to be involved in politics more
- Push for health care reforms, economic benefits, etc
While America has always been culturally diverse, politically the diversity was restricted & narrow.

Historically large segments were politically excluded—Women & Slaves, Native Americans.

- Women received suffrage in 1920.
- Native Indians in 1948.
- Puerto Rico became a territory in 1898.
Identity Politics

- 1970’s under Nixon adoption of race, gender, ethnic, preference policies contributed the importance of diversity in America politics
- Programs such as **affirmative action policies** introduced what we know as **identity politics**
- **Identity politics** is the organization on the basis of one’s sexuality gender, ethnic or racial identity in order to compete for resources & to influence public policies
Cornerstone Values

- **Liberty**: To have personal freedoms & Gov whose powers are limited by laws
- **Equality**: Each individual has the right, and is free to participate in political and social context equally.
- **Democracy**: Maintain political power in the hands of the people
- So while these are seriously held values, their practice could cause conflict.
- **Examples**: When security concerns overrule personal freedoms
What is your definition of politics?
What does political ideology mean to you?
What factors shape your political ideology?
Politics: how do you define this concept?

- Process to vie and maintain control of government
- Process of influencing/shaping policies which affect the public.
- Process by which decisions are made regarding a group of people (community)
- Rules designed to regulate group behavior
- Establish leadership positions and competition for such positions
What is the definition of Politics? (13)

- Rules for minimizing conflicts & disputes
- Means by which individuals & groups compete to influence how government acts
- Thru politics citizens relate & learn about each other
- Political participation allows us to pursue our interests/needs but with considerations of the needs of society as a whole
What would you consider a political act?

- Do you consider yourself political?
  - What does it mean to be political?
  - How is it expressed?
  - Do you need a structure, organizations, groups, community?
  - Role of family, education, personal experiences, religious/non-religious beliefs
What are some of the identifiers which determine what that is?

- What is an ideology?
- What is a political ideology?
- What is your political ideology?
- What factors shape your political ideology?
Political ideology defined:

A cohesive set of beliefs that forms a general philosophy about the role of government (p.147 Ginsberg)

Highly organized & coherent set of opinions (Welch p110)
Democracy

- Greek word- *dhmokratia*,
- *demos* = the people +
- *kratia* = to be strong, to rule
- “authority of the people”
Democracy (4, 10)

- A system of majority rule
- Government by the people, ruled exercised through elected representatives
- A form of government in which the supreme power is held and exercised by the people or those they elect to represent them
- Gov by the people; form of gov in which the supreme powers rests with & is directly exercised by the people
Democracy cont’d.

- A system where the citizen are considered as the primary source of political power
- A form of gov in which the supreme power rests with the people & is exercised through a system of representation of elected officials, called a representative democracy
- When a group of people collectively agree to hold power of governance
One who supports social & economic equality & direct government interventions in several institutions in order to achieve this equality

Principles of social equality & respect for the individual within a community

Democrats generally support progressive positions/changes, some of which include preference for diplomacy over military actions.

Support welfare programs meant to help the poor, affirmative action, balanced budget and unionized labor
Differences between these 2 concepts?
A country has one state which is the basis of the nation

State has 3 distinct characteristics:

- Territorial boundaries beyond their physical borders
- State comprises of institutions/structures equipped with certain powers; eg. Military, courts, education system which receive their powers from an elected bureaucratic body
- State has a monopoly of power over its citizens legitimately given to it by its citizens
Three Kinds of States

- Republic state
- Absolute Monarchy state
- Constitutional Monarchy state
Government

- An instrument/mechanism which aims at uniting competing/differing interests & which speaks on behalf of the country/national interests
- Usually also describes a group of people or body which holds power vested to it by the citizens, as a result of elections. Is this always true?
● Government then can be removed or dissolved. Not easily achieved with a state.

● Rules which govern elections belong to the state.

● Certain institutions belong to the state, not the Government; e.g., military.
The Opposition

- A political party elected to parliament with purpose to oppose the ruling party/government
- Acts as counter-balance & represents segment of population which may not support the government
- Sort of alternate government in waiting
- Holds the second largest electoral votes or seats in parliament
Western political philosophy

- This discipline of study originated in ancient Greece at a time when different groups began experimenting with different forms of governance:
  - Monarchy
  - Oligarchy
  - Democracy

- The ancient societies of China & India were also experimenting with political structures aimed at introducing political stability.
Examples of political philosophies
Libertarianism or Classic Liberalism

- Role of government is to protect its citizens from external invaders and domestic criminals who may violate our rights
- Otherwise let citizens be & lead their lives in abundant liberty
- Associated with late 19th century- Thomas Malthus, David Ricardo and drew from Adam Smith. Modern day proponent include Milton Friedman17th century John Locke & the 19th century John Stuart Mill
- Libertarians would not likely interfere in the economy; How would they react to Bail out package?
- They would likely disassemble such structures as Social Welfare, Medicaid, Medicare, etc.
- May not believe in common traditions, culture, religious cultures
- May likely support economic class system
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Socialism

- Opposite of Libertarianism
- Believe that citizens have certain inalienable rights: healthcare, food, shelter, work
- The idea that the economy should be run for everyone’s good
- Gov should intervene at many levels of society
Modern Liberalism /Social Liberalism

- 17th century John Locke & the 19th century John Stuart Mill
- A blend of libertarianism & socialism
- Emphasizes justice, fairness & freedom for its citizens
- Equitable distribution of goods & services
- Avoidance of social & economic inequalities for its citizens
Conservatism

- Commonly refers to the idea of maintaining things the way they are
  - Resisting change
- Conservatives would likely oppose the above political philosophies
- They value & maintain traditions, institutions but do support change when they perceive a need
- Big on fiscal responsibility, de-regulations
Differences not so clear cut

- Don’t confuse these political philosophies with our current political philosophies: Liberal, Democrat & Socialism
- Almost all the systems are some blends, or incorporate some liberal values
- Contain a role for the state in providing certain services such as education & securing individual rights
- Republicans tend to lean more towards libertarianism
- Democrats tend to be flavored more with socialist values
Key terms

- Autocracy
- Authoritarian Gov
- Oligarchy
- Pluralism
- Citizenship
- Democracy/Direct Democracy
- Gov
- Politics
- Political Culture
- Political Efficacy
- Popular Sovereignty
- Liberty
- Laissez-faire capitalism