

## AP US Government: Origins/Constitutional Government Test Study Guide

### American Creed – 6 things we believe in

1. **Liberty** – can act, speak and think as want as long as we don't infringe on someone else's liberty.
  - DOE – discussed life, liberty, pursuit of happiness (Lockian ideals)
  - Constitution – preamble discussed liberty
  - Bill of Rights – safeguard personal liberty from fed. govt.
2. **Equality** – all entitled to equal protection under law, access to prosperity
3. **Self-Government** – people source of governments' power
  - DOI – Deriving just powers from consent of governed. We have to and usually are okay w/ giving up power and being governed.
  - Govt. protects general welfare of the nation
  - Idea of self govt. born out of colonial experience- far from home
4. **Individualism** –
  - Personal initiative- become self-sufficient/a self starter
  - Individual has right to have his/her own way, but have to work for it.
  - Individual is backbone of American society.
5. **Diversity** –
  - Individual differences need to be respected/accepted
  - Diversity should be basis of how our govt. works – govt. works with conflict
6. **Unity** –
  - Even though diversity need to be acknowledged, we are all one—Americans 😊!
  - We are unified, indivisible nation.

### **What is an American?**

- Acknowledges American creeds

- We all believe in 6 things to some extent or another
- Is 6 lofty ideas- rely on govt. for perfection w/ ideas
- Are guidelines/ideals (we hoe for)
- They wouldn't work if they were rules and as such they are in flux.
- From time to time, not wholly compatible with each other- does not always work, but have to make it
  - Self-govt. and Individualism – do not work together, we have to accept majority rule (needs/will of majority will always outweigh that of the minority)
- Jefferson said ideal of liberty comes from individual freedoms
- Adams – liberty comes from freedom of nation as whole

### **Powers and Limits of our ideals**

- Adam Smith – everyone acts out of self-interest
- Federalist Papers – written to support adoption of Constitution
  - Federalist #10 – Madison surprised at “willingness of people” to oppress others, rather than work for “common good.”
- Slavery created out of self-interest – 250 years of slavery cannot be for common good as split nation apart
- No nation has more competing interests that govt. has to balance than US. Competing interests lead to conflict and out of conflict comes resolution (need conflict to get things done.)

**Politics** – a process through which a society settles its conflicts and decides the policies that will be governed.

#### 2 primary sources of (political) conflict in country

1. Scarcity of resources – ex. Public education
2. Difference in values – ex. Abortion, where \$ should be allocated, crime and punishment

**Government** – the institutions, process, and the rules designed to facilitate the control of a geographic area and its inhabitants. (No mention of common good.)

**Enlightenment Philosophies** – founding fathers were not original

1. Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan*, Social contract) – In state of nature everyone equal and has same rights, but does not work
2. John Locke – Liberty and property necessary
3. Charles de Montesquieu – separation of power into three branches of government
4. Jean Jacques Rousseau

**See** *Functions of Government*

**2 Common Factors (of Government)**

1. Capacity to raise revenue – taxation
2. Coercion – ability of the government to compel individuals to follow its rules

**Power** – ability of a person or institution to control policy decisions



**Authority** – the recognized right of an individual or institution to make binding decisions (is necessary for structure, is when power is exercised through law)



**Policy** – instrument by which government exercises its authority to demonstrate its power/ any broad course of action undertaken by government.

**The Game of Politics**

**Rule #1 – Democracy**

**Rule #2 – Constitutionalism**

**Rule # 3 – Capitalism**

## Democracy

- In order for there to be a true democratic process you need five basic principles
  1. Equality in voting – 1 person, 1 vote
  2. Effective participation – truly representative
  3. Informed electorate (us) with enlightened understanding – people have to be informed
  4. Citizen control of agenda
  5. Inclusion
- **3 Contemporary theories of Democracy**
  1. Pluralists
  2. Elite class
  3. Hyper pluralism

**2 and 3 are dangerous**

## Constitutionalism

- Democracy(will of majority) and liberty(do what want) cannot go together
- How do we prevent tyranny of the majority?
- Prevent from becoming dangerous
  1. Cannot remove causes b/c destroys liberty and impractical, cannot get rid of factions, communism does not work
  2. Control its effects
- Democracy way to go

## **Part 2: Constitutional Democracy**

**\*\*\*On test – The framers guaranteed (consistent republic?), true democracy, because made it answerable to the people – ensured continuous government and made government democratic**