

Chapter 1

Political Thinking and Political Culture: Becoming a Responsible Citizen

Multiple Choice

1. The citizens of which of the following countries pay the lowest tax rates relative to the country's gross domestic product (GDP)?
 - a. Germany
 - b. Canada
 - c. France
 - d. the United States
 - e. Great Britain

Answer: d

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2. Which one of the following is NOT true of cultural or political beliefs in America?
 - a. America's origins as a wilderness society led to the belief that government is responsible for providing material assistance to its citizens.
 - b. Americans place a greater emphasis than Europeans on personal advancement through education.
 - c. Never has an American majority expressed a willingness to entrust health insurance fully to the government.
 - d. America has a strong individualistic culture.
 - e. America's individualistic culture has not proven to be an absolute barrier to government assistance programs.

Answer: a

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3. The United States has certain rules in place to keep politics within peaceful bounds. These rules include all of the following EXCEPT
 - a. autocracy.
 - b. democracy.
 - c. constitutionalism.
 - d. free markets.
 - e. None of these answers is correct.

Answer: a

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4. In a constitutional system,
- there are no restrictions on the lawful uses of power, as long as this power is obtained by majority rule.
 - there are lawful restrictions on a government's power.
 - the economy is based on the free enterprise system.
 - officials govern according to the traditions established by their predecessors.
 - all citizens have absolute free speech rights.

Answer: b

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5. West Virginia, the state with the lowest percentage of college graduates in the United States,
- is indicative of Americans' relative indifference to higher education.
 - is evidence of the general truth that the states with the highest percentage of college graduates are located between the Rockies and the Mississippi River.
 - is one of seven U.S. states with fewer than five institutions of higher learning.
 - demonstrates how closed higher education in the United States is compared to the rest of the world.
 - has a higher proportion of college graduates than most European countries.

Answer: e

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6. According to political scientist Louis Hartz, the United States
- constitutes a "corporate dictatorship."
 - was "born free."
 - formed a perfect union.
 - is basically a monarchical state.
 - "perfected" socialist democracy.

Answer: b

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7. A government's authority
- is evidenced when government officials use their right to exercise power.
 - is by definition not coercive.
 - does not include the power to arrest and imprison.
 - ensures that lawlessness prevails most of the time.
 - is based on pluralism.

Answer: a

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8. The process by which a society settles its conflicts and allocates the resulting benefits and costs is called
- politics.
 - government.
 - elitism.
 - socialism.
 - communism.

Answer: a

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9. _____ is the ability of persons, groups, or institutions to influence political developments.
- Apathy
 - Politics
 - Power
 - Liberty
 - Political culture

Answer: c

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10. The Greek words *demos* and *kratis* together mean
- majority rule is sacred.
 - the people rule.
 - government is good.
 - politics is immoral.
 - the king is good.

Answer: b

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11. Sociologist C. Wright Mills was a proponent of the theory of
- pluralism.
 - elitism.
 - majoritarianism.
 - bureaucratic rule.
 - None of these answers is correct.

Answer: b

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12. John Stuart Mill believed that any form of government should be judged on its ability to
- offer the individual a “plethora of policy options” in the democratic process.
 - transfer power peacefully from one set of governing officials to the next.
 - provide social services for its citizenry.
 - maintain peace and order in the territory over which it has control.
 - promote the individual as “a progressive being.”

Answer: e

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13. What is the major barrier to political thinking?
- unwillingness of citizens to make the effort
 - lack of access to governmental institutions
 - elite control of political power resources
 - failure of politicians and government institutions to communicate policy details to the public
 - lack of access to news media sources outside sensationalist television or Internet content

Answer: a

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14. What type of government suppresses individuality, forcing people to think and act in prescribed ways or risk punishment?
- communistic
 - socialistic
 - authoritarian
 - egalitarian
 - republican

Answer: c

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15. In a democratic society, who or what is responsible for personal development?
- the education system
 - political parties
 - the progressive being
 - the individual
 - parents, ministers, and political leaders

Answer: d

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16. A totalitarian government
- admits to no limits on its power.
 - may control the media and direct the economy, but maintains public support by allowing such social rights as freedom of religion.
 - controls through one-party rule, though it may allow some semblance of party opposition.
 - controls through multi-party rule, in which it controls the electoral process to ensure its own party always achieves a majority.
 - is often overthrown by opposition political parties or popular movements because it lacks legitimacy.

Answer: a

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17. In an oligarchy,
- the state is run by corporate interests and companies instead of individuals.
 - control rests with a small group of popularly elected individuals.
 - control rests with a single individual, such as a dictator.
 - control rests with a small group, such as military officers or a few wealthy families.
 - the state controls all aspects of individuals' lives, including family relations and the practice of religion.

Answer: d

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18. In a survey of college students, the Intercollegiate Studies Association found that the best predictor of a student's later participation in the nation's civic and political life is
- a college degree.
 - a solid understanding of public affairs.
 - participation in student government.
 - participation in Greek life.
 - attending a school with a residential campus versus a "commuter" campus.

Answer: b

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19. Pluralism contends that, on most issues,
- corporate elites have more control over economic policy than do "the politicians in the visible government."
 - the will of the majority of the voting public determines government policy.
 - it is the preference of the special interest that largely determines what government does.
 - true authority lies with the elected politicians, and not with the public that put them in office.
 - the diverse nature of the citizenry enhances the democratic process in policymaking.

Answer: c

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20. Enormous concentrations of wealth and power exist in the U.S. private sector, primarily in the hands of
- the top 1 percent.
 - elite political families such as the Kennedys and the Bushes.
 - middle class Americans.
 - small businesses.
 - large corporations.

Answer: e

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21. What new policy was established by the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark *Gideon v. Wainwright* ruling?
- the right to trial by jury
 - the need to charge an arrested suspect with a specific crime within 24 hours of arrest
 - the requirement that police read a suspect his rights before or during arrest
 - government provision of free legal counsel to the accused if they are too poor to hire a lawyer
 - the practice of allowing a suspect out on bail until the time of the trial

Answer: d

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22. Which of the following describes socialism as practiced today in Sweden?
- The government does not attempt to manage the overall economy, but owns a number of major industries and provides for people's basic economic needs.
 - The government manages the overall economy through ownership of most major industries, and does not allow private property.
 - The economy operates almost exclusively on private transactions.
 - The government does little to manage the economy and owns no major industries, serving mainly to provide for people's basic economic needs.
 - Firms are largely free to make their own production, distribution, and pricing decisions, and individuals depend largely on themselves for economic security.

Answer: a

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23. Roughly two-thirds of all lobbyists in the nation's capital represent
- activist organizations.
 - labor unions.
 - business firms.
 - foreign-based political action groups.
 - nonprofit organizations.

Answer: c

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24. Which of the following has democracy come to mean in practice?
- pluralistic government through the combination of popularly elected representatives and the influence of interest groups
 - oligarchic government through a legislature chosen through popular election
 - elitist control through interest group politics
 - pluralism through the election of representatives and the influence of corporate interests
 - majority rule through the free and open election of representatives

Answer: e

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25. French philosopher Michel Foucault referred to politics as “_____.”
- like making sausage
 - the burden of citizens
 - a means to an end
 - war by other means
 - a necessary evil

Answer: d

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26. What is a major limit on majoritarianism suggested by the text?
- The public as a whole takes an interest in only a few of the hundreds of policy decisions that U.S. officials make each year.
 - The public lacks access to the information required to take informed political action on most issues dealt with by the government each year.
 - The actions of special interest groups are ultimately more influential than the voting power of the public.
 - The rapid turnover of government officials and members of the legislature prevents the majority public from making a sustained effort for any single issue.
 - The most power tends to reside with a wealthy minority of the voting public, preventing the majority public from setting the issue agenda.

Answer: a

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27. Which of the following is an accurate description of the prevalence of college education in the United States?
- Among adults twenty-one years of age and older, roughly half are college graduates
 - Among adults twenty-one years of age and older, roughly one in four is a college graduate.
 - Every U.S. state has at least twenty colleges or universities within its borders.
 - Despite having a much higher rate of colleges and universities per capita than European countries; the U.S. has a lower rate of college graduation per capita.
 - Although the U.S. has a lower number of colleges and universities per capita than Europe, it has a much higher rate of college graduation per capita.

Answer: b

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28. Research suggests which of the following is primarily to blame for the increase in faulty perceptions of news items among the public?
- changes in the forms of communication
 - a failure of government officials to communicate truthfully
 - a growing disinterest in seeking out news items
 - the growing public gap in access to more advanced forms of media transmission, such as the Internet
 - the increasing political polarization of elected politicians

Answer: a

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29. As described in the text, “political thinking”
- is the reflection of an individual’s ideological position when applied to political issues.
 - results from an individual allowing personal bias to inform all thoughts about political issues, instead of doing objective learning or research to form an opinion.
 - involves the careful gathering and sifting of information in the process of forming a knowledgeable view about a political issue.
 - is the result of an individual’s attempts to seek out news media that reinforce a pre-existing political bias.
 - is a strategy taken by those seeking election to public office in which their publicly stated positions are designed to maximize their attractiveness to the widest voting bloc.

Answer: c

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30. Which of the following characterizes journalist Walter Lippmann’s views on democracy?
- He felt that well-funded private interest groups and lobbyists had taken the true majoritarian power of democracy away from the voting public.
 - He felt that modern democratic government had become an unhealthy, pluralistic enterprise.
 - He believed that among forms of government, only democracy could provide a citizen with the ability to be a “progressive being.”
 - He worried that most citizens are too uninformed to play the role democracy assigns them.
 - None of these answers is correct.

Answer: d

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31. The average incomes of minimum-wage workers in the United States and Europe reflect a greater influence of which of the following in the United States, when compared to Europe?
- majoritarianism
 - elitism
 - corporate power
 - judicial action
 - constitutionalism

Answer: c

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32. How many lawyers does the United States have in comparison to Britain, Germany, and Italy?
- The U.S. has twice as many lawyers on a per capita basis.
 - The U.S. has roughly the same amount of lawyers on a per capita basis.
 - The U.S. has roughly twice as many lawyers, in terms of total numbers.
 - The U.S. has roughly five times as many lawyers on a per capita basis.
 - The U.S. has roughly half as many lawyers on a per capita basis.

Answer: a

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33. Which of the following is a difference between communism and socialism, as described by the text?
- Under socialism, the government owns some firms, but under communism, the government does not own any major assets.
 - Under communism, the government assumes total management of the economy, whereas under socialism, the government does not try to manage the overall economy.
 - Under socialism, the economy operates mainly through private transactions, but under communism, the government owns a number of major industries and tries to provide for people's basic economic needs.
 - Under communism, the government manages the economy completely but does not attempt to provide for people's basic needs; under socialism, the government does not manage the economy completely, but does attempt to provide for people's basic needs.
 - Under socialism, the government owns more industries than a communist government, but provides less direct benefit for individuals' welfare.

Answer: b

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34. To what aspect of America were William Watts and Lloyd Free referring when they labeled it "the country of individualism par excellence"?
- the majoritarian nature of the voting and election system
 - the ability of any individual to aspire to high political office
 - the judicial nature of American politics, in which any individual can challenge powerful interests
 - the emphasis that Americans place on economic self-reliance and free markets
 - the ability of the individual to join in labor unions and interest groups to pursue his or her political and financial self-interests

Answer: d

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35. In which of the following ways is the U.S. free-market system distinct from European economies?
- its lack of regulatory intervention
 - its lack of intervention through taxation
 - its lack of intervention through spending policies
 - the extent to which private transactions determine the allocation of economic costs and benefits
 - the extent to which it exercises regulatory intervention by altering interest rates

Answer: d

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36. In which of the following policy areas does the U.S. spend more than European nations?
- social welfare
 - military policy
 - subsidized housing for the poor
 - public works
 - public health care

Answer: b

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37. Europeans have a greater acceptance than Americans of
- tax and social policies that redistribute wealth.
 - the strength of the executive branch of government.
 - the majoritarian system of government.
 - the influence of corporate special interests in the legislative process.
 - the influence of corporate money in the election process.

Answer: a

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38. The Bill of Rights added to the Constitution, among other things,
- a guarantee of freedom of speech.
 - a division of governmental authority into three branches.
 - checks and balances among the three branches of government.
 - restrictions against the power of corporations to influence the election process.
 - term limits for elected officials to reduce their power.

Answer: a

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39. The Bill of Rights
- reduced the restrictiveness of constitutionalism.
 - enhanced the powers of the executive.
 - further checked the power of the majority.
 - enhanced the majoritarian nature of government.
 - restricted the power of corporate influence in the government.

Answer: c

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40. The fact that farmers have more influence over agricultural price-supports than do other groups is an example of
- majoritarianism.
 - pluralism.
 - elitism.
 - constitutionalism.
 - corporate power.

Answer: b

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Essay/Short Answer

41. To what degree is American democracy majoritarian, and what are the limits to that majoritarianism?

Answer: Majoritarianism exists where the majority effectively determines what government does. The American democratic system of government is designed to give the people, through popular election of their representatives, control over the issues dealt with by the government and how the government responds to those issues. There are, however, limits to majoritarianism; the larger public takes an interest in only a few of the many issues dealt with by the government. Most policies result from pressure by the few groups that are directly affected by that issue. Also, elected leadership can choose to make decisions that are unpopular with the majority—such as President Obama’s escalation of troop levels in Afghanistan.

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42. Define *politics*, *power*, and *authority*.

Answer: *Politics* is the means by which society settles its conflicts and allocates the resulting benefits and costs. Those factions or people who prevail in getting their values accepted are said to have *power*. When power is exercised through the laws and institutions of government, authority is involved. *Authority* is defined as the recognized right of an official or institution to exercise power.

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43. Describe the differences between how Americans define themselves and how other, older nations define what it means to be a part of their nations’ cultural identity.

Answer: Other people take their identity from the common ancestry that led them gradually to gather under one flag. Long before there was a France or a Japan, there were French and Japanese people, each a kinship group united through ancestry. Even today, it is kinship that links them. There is no way to become fully Japanese except to be born of Japanese parents. On the other hand Americans are a multitude of people from different lands. Thus, Americans are linked not by a shared ancestry but by allegiance to a common set of ideals.

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44. What are some of the barriers to political thinking in the United States?

Answer: The major barrier to political thinking is the unwillingness of citizens to make the effort to educate themselves. Democratic government works best if the citizenry works to develop political thinking, but most individuals do not make the effort. Another major barrier is the changing nature of media. The rise of cable television news networks and Internet blogs have provided many of those individuals that do pay close attention to the news with unproductive avenues. Most of these new outlets provide very biased news reporting, and individuals that seek them out tend to gravitate toward those sources that reinforce their own personal beliefs.

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45. How could one argue that America is not run by a small power elite?

Answer: One could argue that due to the diversity of group structures in America and the fierce competition over whose values will emerge victorious on any particular issue, it would be difficult for one homogeneous group to consistently control policies and all other competing political forces in the United States. Power in America is also dynamic; whereas once women and minorities were severely restricted from the exercise of power, many of those barriers have been removed, and the influence of women and minorities has grown considerably.

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