

Chapter 1 : An Overview of the American Political System

The modern political party system in the United States is a two-party system dominated by the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. These two parties have won every United States presidential election since and have controlled the United States Congress since

Civil Disobedience In this class, and the next we will be focusing on civil liberties and civil rights, both important concepts, inseparable from the idea of citizenship. We will look at the idea of civil liberties through some of the most important figures in American history, all fierce champions of liberty, ready and willing to call out the abuses of government. It means breaking the law and thus challenging the authorities, but usually in a non-violent fashion. He was bailed out the next day by his friend and famous poet Ralph Waldo Emerson. Supposedly, there was an exchange between the two, where Emerson questioned Thoreau on why he was in jail. To passively accept a corrupt society, Thoreau argues, makes you as guilty as the people who actually oppress others and do violence to people. It is even worse in a democracy because here the citizens actually have some ability to alter the course of laws and government. This idea is also a core component of the civil religion, and refers to the higher authority that is referred to in the Declaration, as "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights," in other words, a form of law based on natural rights higher than the laws of political states. Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first and subjects afterward" p. Thoreau was very conscious in which respect for laws or traditions and mores can easily turn into a mechanical and unthinking submission to whatever the authorities may be: The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgement of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such command no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses and dogs. Yet such as these even are commonly esteemed good citizens p. Government is only as good or bad as the people who run it. Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it" p. As long as the machine functions properly and maintains justice in society but what happens if the machine is creating injustice: If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go: Let you life be a counterfriction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn p. The sociologist, Alvin Gouldner, spoke of a "culture of critical discourse" developing from the 18th century, establishing certain norms for how political debate, or any intellectual debate should take place. Gouldner addresses many issues connected with this, but George Orwell goes right to the heart of the matter in his essay "Politics and the English Language," where he speaks of the political uses or misuses of language, especially how language is used to mystify and deceive people. Anyone familiar with his novel, , is aware of how the totalitarian government uses language to deceive the population. He even outlines six guidelines for writing that I think are important, and very counter-intuitive for how people are usually taught to write in college, where they are always thinking about page length and things like that: Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print. Never use a long word where a short one will do. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out. Never use the passive where you can use the active. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous. Elizabeth Cady Stanton , Susan B. Elizabeth Cady Stanton Susan B. They shared leadership of the movement, with Stanton being more of a writer, and Anthony being more of an orator. Douglass in his fourth of July speech, points to a glaring gap in the creed of America, which according to Chesterton is embodied in the Declaration of Independence. Douglass here indicates an essential contradiction in all universal ideologies or beliefs. Every belief that claims to include all of humanity and can be said to be universal always in reality excludes somebody, and that these exclusions are concealed and made invisible: Frederick Douglass But such is not the sate of the case. I sat it with a sad sense of disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the

immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought light and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak to-day? If so, there is a parallel to your conduct. And let me warn you that it is dangerous to copy the example of a nation whose crimes, towering up to heaven, were thrown down by the breath of the Almighty, burying that nation in irrevocable ruin! I can to-day take up the plaintive lament of a peeled and woe-smitten people! What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour. He refers to the Free Soil Party founded in of former Democrats and some radical abolitionists. The Democratic Party at the same time which was so powerful in the South and New York has become the party of slavery. Although scientific reason was opposed to slavery it did create the "cautious" attitude that you do not do things too radically"this is a good example of that mentality. Douglass is equally opposed to the Garrison Abolitionists, named after William Lloyd Garrison , a New England journalist who became one of the most well known abolitionists. Garrison favored total abolition, but he was apolitical, in other words he thought the best way to fight slavery was not to deal with it or people who benefit from it. Douglass saw this as little better than closing your eyes to a problem, and like the Republicans, favored political involvement, but like Garrison, wanted total abolition. The NWSA was formed after the breakup of the earlier American Equal Rights Association between , which split over the issue of granting voting rights suffrage to women and freed slaves. Women would not win the right to vote in the country until after Stanton and Anthony had died with the passage of the 19th amendment. They also illustrate the importance of third parties in the US, which although it is common knowledge the US is a two party system, the history of third parties like the Liberty Party in the s, the Communist Party in the s, and arguably the Green Party today, or Democratic Socialists of America as well as others , have all had a tremendous impact on public policy and even how we talk about politics, even if they failed to win at electoral politics. Also, civil liberties which, of course, include freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press. Anthony was arrested in after attempting to vote in New York. The excerpt here is from the closing statements of the trial United States v. All my prosecutors, from the 8th Ward corner grocery politician, who entered the complaint, to the United States Marshal, Commissioner, District Attorney, District Judge, your honor on the bench, not one is my peer, but each and all are my political sovereigns; and had your honor submitted my case to the jury, as was clearly your duty, even when I should have had just cause of protest, for not one of those men was my peer; but native or foreign, white or black, rich or poor, educated or ignorant, awake or asleep, sober or drunk, each and every man of them was my political superior; hence, in no sense, my peer. Anthony argues quite clearly that her arrest and trial clearly contradict her rights as defined by this amendment in the Constitution. Social norms can sometimes prevent change as they become dogmatic, but because of the struggles of people, civil disobedience itself is an established norm in American culture, in other words, somewhat paradoxically, a tradition of opposing authority. Next class, we will talk more about rights, without which there would be no public sphere and no civil disobedience.

Chapter 2 : The American Political System:

An important feature of the American political system is that the two major parties - the Democrats and the Republicans - hold a system of primaries to determine who will be their candidate in the general election.

The American political system explained Who are the Democrats and Republicans? What are caucuses and primaries? What is the electoral college? Delegates, superdelegates, electoral college, primaries: In the Philippines, the election period formally starts in early January, on a date set by the Commission on Elections Comelec. Prior to this, however, are the filings of candidacy, party meetings, and eventual party nominations that would determine the final roster of presidential candidates. By early February, the campaign period officially starts. The US presidential elections, meanwhile, consist of two distinct phases whose rules and dynamics are not so straightforward. Then there is the general election period, when the eventual president of the United States is elected. Two major parties dominate the US political sphere: There are minor parties, such as the Libertarian and Green parties, but these have yet to gain the same sizeable influence as the dominant parties. Party politics and loyalty greatly influence elections in the US for reasons dating back to the Founding Fathers and the Civil War. Here, let us look at the basic principles governing the US presidential elections and perhaps chart its differences with the elections we have here in the Philippines. The US follows a two-party system. This means that, although more than two parties can campaign and hold office, two political groups, the Democrats and the Republicans, hold majority of the power. Of the 43 US presidents that have served, 15 were Democrats and 18 were Republicans. Who are the Democrats and Republicans? Supporters cheer during a primary night gathering for democratic presidential candidate former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the Philadelphia Convention Center on April 26, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Members of this party are also known as liberals or progressives because of their association with libertarian values, like freedom of choice and self-determination, social justice, and social liberalism. This party usually focuses on providing social services, healthcare, and jobs, and so it tends to borrow large sums of money and rely heavily on taxes. The current Democratic candidate is Hillary Clinton. The Republicans, on the other hand, are a relatively younger party, founded in by anti-slavery activists. They are known as conservatives because of their preference for conservatism, promoting individual rights and limited government. This party is also known for being corporatist, endorsing economic liberalism, less government spending, and lower taxes. The current Republican candidate is Donald Trump. What are the other parties? These third parties have a much harder time winning offices in government simply because they are so much smaller in both size and power. In the history of the US, no third party candidate has ever won the presidential election. In fact, third party candidates usually have to get thousands of signatures just to be on the ballots. The way the US election process is structured perpetuates the two-party system. Like in the Philippines, candidates in the US win by gaining a plurality “ more votes than any of their competitors “ rather than a majority. This makes it a lot easier for the two large parties to secure votes, since each one already has a long-established following. Additionally, the winner-take-all system of US elections means that there are no positions offered to candidates that finish second. This means that smaller parties never get the opportunity to build a large following for themselves in the legislature. In these functions, citizens vote for their preferred party candidate. Both caucuses and primaries serve this purpose, but their dynamics are different. Caucuses, which usually happen in smaller states like Iowa, are party meetings in which attendees publicly vote by grouping themselves according to their preferred candidate. In primaries, which happen in bigger states like California, citizens cast their votes by secret ballot. No one rule prescribes the method each state should follow. Even in a single state, different precincts could use different methods. It all depends on state or party laws. For example, one distinct state law in Iowa is that no other state may hold caucuses or primaries before it does. This is why the first caucus always happens in Iowa. There are also states that hold closed primaries, which are only open to those who are registered either as Democrats or Republicans. Such regulation is one of the reasons why these two parties continue to have great influence in US politics to this day. What happens when a candidate wins a caucus or a primary? To win a caucus or primary is no typical plurality win. What the candidates vying

for party nomination actually get are pledged delegates, party members either chosen or elected at the local or state levels. These delegates vote on behalf of their constituencies during national conventions, which we will get to later on. The Democratic party has so-called superdelegates who, unlike pledged delegates, vote based on party interests and not constituencies. There are 4, Democratic delegates, with at least 2, needed to be assured of party nomination. On the other hand, there are 2, Republican delegates, and a candidate needs at least 1, to get the party nomination. The number of delegates a candidate gets is proportional to the number of votes he or she gets in caucuses and primaries. The parties have their respective formulas for computing these. For this election cycle, the magic numbers were won by Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, respectively. What becomes of the other candidates from each party? Caucuses and primaries, as well as debates and other party gatherings, all happen in a span of approximately 5 months. In this amount of time, some candidates may express withdrawal from the race. The turnouts at the first caucuses and primaries are valuable in assessing whether a candidate even has a chance at getting the party nomination. By the time national conventions approach, often only two candidates for each party are left vying for delegates. The primary season culminates in party conventions, in which the national parties assemble to formally declare their nominees and ratify their platforms. Conventions are considered as mere formalities because the likely party candidate is often determined after the last caucuses or primaries, once the number of delegates won has been totaled. General elections begin after the national party conventions. When is election day? Once the party candidates have been declared, their official platforms will have to be ratified. Candidates will have to choose their running mates. From early August until late October, they go from state to state to win voters over. Election day is always on a Tuesdayâ€” to be specific, the first Tuesday of November. This is due to a tradition that dates back to the late 18th century. Much like during primaries, Americans cast their votes at polling booths. Although they indicate their desired president-vice president ticket, they are actually voting for who will vote on their behalf in the electoral college. Electoral votes are cast by so-called electors a month later, in December, in their respective state capitals. These electors â€” in total â€” comprise the electoral college. A candidate needs at least electoral votes to clinch the presidency. The number of electors per state varies according to population size. Electors are expected to vote according to the turnout of the November polls in their state. There is no law that compels them to do so, however. There have been very few cases in the past where electors voted differently from their constituents. The person who clinches electoral votes will then become the next President of the United States. There are two senators per US state. Meanwhile, the number of congressmen depends on the number of districts in a state, which in turn is determined by population. Janelle Paris and Paco Tantoco are Rappler interns.

Chapter 3 : Politics of the United States - Wikipedia

The American political system is broken. Far from being the " world's greatest democracy," to quote President Obama, representative democracy in the United States seems further hollowed out.

History[edit] A plan to strengthen and unify the nation, the American System, was advanced by the Whig Party and a number of leading politicians including Henry Clay , John C. Calhoun and John Quincy Adams. The System included such policies as: Support for a high tariff to protect American industries and generate revenue for the federal government Maintenance of high public land prices to generate federal revenue Preservation of the Bank of the United States to stabilize the currency and rein in risky state and local banks Development of a system of internal improvements such as roads and canals which would knit the nation together and be financed by the tariff and land sales Clay protested that the West , which opposed the tariff, should support it since urban factory workers would be consumers of western foods. This last argument was the weak link. The South never strongly supported the American System and had access to plenty of markets for its cotton exports. The Second Bank of the United States was rechartered in for 20 years. High tariffs were first suggested by Alexander Hamilton in his Report on Manufactures but were not approved by Congress until the Tariff of Tariffs were subsequently raised until they peaked in after the so-called Tariff of Abominations. After the Nullification Crisis in , tariffs remained the same rate until the Civil War. However, the national system of internal improvements was never adequately funded; the failure to do so was due in part to sectional jealousies and constitutional squabbles about such expenditures. The American System did not enjoy overall success, however; in , President Jackson rejected a bill which would allow the federal government to purchase stock in the Maysville, Washington, Paris, and Lexington Turnpike Road Company, which had been organized to construct a road linking Lexington and the Ohio River, the entirety of which would be in the state of Kentucky. Congress passed a tariff in which made European goods more expensive and encouraged consumers to buy relatively cheap American-made goods. The establishment of a national bank would promote a single currency, making trade easier, and issue what was called sovereign credit , i. Poor roads made transportation slow and costly. Polk , Franklin Pierce , and James Buchanan prior to the Civil War, often on the grounds that the points of it were unconstitutional. Among the most important internal improvements created under the American System was the Cumberland Road. This "System" consisted of three mutually reinforcing parts: Funds for these subsidies would be obtained from tariffs and sales of public lands. Clay argued that a vigorously maintained system of sectional economic interdependence would eliminate the chance of renewed subservience to the free-trade , laissez-faire "British System.

Chapter 4 : US politics The American political system explained

The other answers thus far mostly represent in more or less detail the ideal of how the "American political system" is supposed to work, based on its documented foundations (Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights, etc.).

State governments of the United States have the power to make laws that are not granted to the federal government or denied to the states in the U. Constitution for all citizens. These include education , family law , contract law , and most crimes. Unlike the federal government, which only has those powers granted to it in the Constitution, a state government has inherent powers allowing it to act unless limited by a provision of the state or national constitution. Like the federal government, state governments have three branches: The chief executive of a state is its popularly elected governor , who typically holds office for a four-year term although in some states the term is two years. Except for Nebraska , which has unicameral legislature , all states have a bicameral legislature, with the upper house usually called the Senate and the lower house called the House of Representatives , the House of Delegates , Assembly or something similar. In most states, senators serve four-year terms, and members of the lower house serve two-year terms. The constitutions of the various states differ in some details but generally follow a pattern similar to that of the federal Constitution, including a statement of the rights of the people and a plan for organizing the government. However, state constitutions are generally more detailed.

Urban politics in the United States

The United States has 89, local governments, including 3, counties, 19, municipalities, 16, townships, 13, school districts, and 37, other special districts that deal with issues like fire protection. Typically local elections are nonpartisan—local activists suspend their party affiliations when campaigning and governing. City governments are chartered by states, and their charters detail the objectives and powers of the municipal government. The United States Constitution only provides for states and territories as subdivisions of the country, and the Supreme Court has accordingly confirmed the supremacy of state sovereignty over municipalities. For most big cities, cooperation with both state and federal organizations is essential to meeting the needs of their residents. Types of city governments vary widely across the nation. Cities in the West and South usually have nonpartisan local politics. There are three general types of city government: These are the pure forms; many cities have developed a combination of two or three of them.

Mayor-council[edit] This is the oldest form of city government in the United States and, until the beginning of the 20th century, was used by nearly all American cities. Its structure is like that of the state and national governments, with an elected mayor as chief of the executive branch and an elected council that represents the various neighborhoods forming the legislative branch. The mayor appoints heads of city departments and other officials, sometimes with the approval of the council. The council passes city ordinances, sets the tax rate on property, and apportions money among the various city departments. As cities have grown, council seats have usually come to represent more than a single neighborhood.

Commission[edit] This combines both the legislative and executive functions in one group of officials, usually three or more in number, elected citywide. Each commissioner supervises the work of one or more city departments. Commissioners also set policies and rules by which the city is operated. One is named chairperson of the body and is often called the mayor, although his or her power is equivalent to that of the other commissioners. The answer has been to entrust most of the executive powers, including law enforcement and provision of services, to a highly trained and experienced professional city manager. The city manager plan has been adopted by a large number of cities. Under this plan, a small, elected council makes the city ordinances and sets policy, but hires a paid administrator, also called a city manager, to carry out its decisions. The manager draws up the city budget and supervises most of the departments. Usually, there is no set term; the manager serves as long as the council is satisfied with his or her work.

County government[edit] The county is a subdivision of the state, sometimes but not always containing two or more townships and several villages. New York City is so large that it is divided into five separate boroughs, each a county in its own right. In other cities, both the city and county governments have merged, creating a consolidated city—county government. In small counties, boards are chosen by the county; in the larger ones, supervisors represent separate districts or townships. The board

collects taxes for state and local governments; borrows and appropriates money; fixes the salaries of county employees; supervises elections; builds and maintains highways and bridges; and administers national, state, and county welfare programs. In very small counties, the executive and legislative power may lie entirely with a sole commissioner, who is assisted by boards to supervise taxes and elections. In some New England states, counties do not have any governmental function and are simply a division of land. Municipal government [edit] Thousands of municipal jurisdictions are too small to qualify as city governments. These are chartered as towns and villages and deal with local needs such as paving and lighting the streets, ensuring a water supply, providing police and fire protection, and waste management. In many states of the US, the term town does not have any specific meaning; it is simply an informal term applied to populated places both incorporated and unincorporated municipalities. Moreover, in some states, the term town is equivalent to how civil townships are used in other states. The government is usually entrusted to an elected board or council, which may be known by a variety of names: The board may have a chairperson or president who functions as chief executive officer, or there may be an elected mayor. Governmental employees may include a clerk, treasurer, police and fire officers, and health and welfare officers. One unique aspect of local government, found mostly in the New England region of the United States, is the town meeting. Once a year, sometimes more often if needed, the registered voters of the town meet in open session to elect officers, debate local issues, and pass laws for operating the government. As a body, they decide on road construction and repair, construction of public buildings and facilities, tax rates, and the town budget. The town meeting, which has existed for more than three centuries in some places, is often cited as the purest form of direct democracy, in which the governmental power is not delegated, but is exercised directly and regularly by all the people. Campaign finance in the United States Successful participation, especially in federal elections, requires large amounts of money, especially for television advertising. Both parties generally depend on wealthy donors and organizations—traditionally the Democrats depended on donations from organized labor while the Republicans relied on business donations. Even when laws are upheld, the complication of compliance with the First Amendment requires careful and cautious drafting of legislation, leading to laws that are still fairly limited in scope, especially in comparison to those of other countries such as the United Kingdom, France or Canada. Fundraising plays a large role in getting a candidate elected to public office. Without money, a candidate may have little chance of achieving their goal. Attempts to limit the influence of money on American political campaigns dates back to the s. Recently, Congress passed legislation requiring candidates to disclose sources of campaign contributions, how the campaign money is spent, and regulated use of "soft money" contributions. In Federalist Papers No. In addition, the first President of the United States, George Washington, was not a member of any political party at the time of his election or during his tenure as president. Washington hoped that political parties would not be formed, fearing conflict and stagnation. Hamilton and Madison ended up being the core leaders in this emerging party system. In modern times, in partisan elections, candidates are nominated by a political party or seek public office as an independent. Each state has significant discretion in deciding how candidates are nominated, and thus eligible to appear on the election ballot. Typically, major party candidates are formally chosen in a party primary or convention, whereas minor party and Independents are required to complete a petitioning process. Political parties in the United States The modern political party system in the United States is a two-party system dominated by the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. These two parties have won every United States presidential election since and have controlled the United States Congress since The Democratic Party generally positions itself as left-of-center in American politics and supports a modern American liberal platform, while the Republican Party generally positions itself as right-wing and supports a modern American conservative platform. Third parties and independent voters have achieved relatively minor representation from time to time at local levels. The Libertarian Party is the largest third party in the country, claiming more than , registered voters in ; [29] it generally positions itself as centrist or radical centrist and supports a classical liberal position. Other contemporary third parties include the left-wing Green Party, supporting Green politics, and the right-wing Constitution Party, supporting paleoconservatism. Elections in the United States Unlike in some parliamentary systems, Americans vote for a specific candidate instead of directly selecting a particular

political party. With a federal government, officials are elected at the federal national, state and local levels. On a national level, the President, is elected indirectly by the people, through an Electoral College. In modern times, the electors virtually always vote with the popular vote of their state. All members of Congress, and the offices at the state and local levels are directly elected. Various federal and state laws regulate elections. The United States Constitution defines to a basic extent how federal elections are held, in Article One and Article Two and various amendments. Organization of American political parties[edit] See also: Political party strength in U. The two major parties, in particular, have no formal organization at the national level that controls membership, activities, or policy positions, though some state affiliates do. In the United States, one can often become a "member" of a party, merely by stating that fact. A person may choose to attend meetings of one local party committee one day and another party committee the next day. The sole factor that brings one "closer to the action" is the quantity and quality of participation in party activities and the ability to persuade others in attendance to give one responsibility. Party identification becomes somewhat formalized when a person runs for partisan office. A party committee may choose to endorse one or another of those who is seeking the nomination, but in the end the choice is up to those who choose to vote in the primary, and it is often difficult to tell who is going to do the voting. The result is that American political parties have weak central organizations and little central ideology, except by consensus. Once in office, an elected official may change parties simply by declaring such intent. At the federal level, each of the two major parties has a national committee See, Democratic National Committee, Republican National Committee that acts as the hub for much fund-raising and campaign activities, particularly in presidential campaigns. The exact composition of these committees is different for each party, but they are made up primarily of representatives from state parties and affiliated organizations, and others important to the party. However, the national committees do not have the power to direct the activities of members of the party. Both parties also have separate campaign committees which work to elect candidates at a specific level. The most significant of these are the Hill committees, which work to elect candidates to each house of Congress. State parties exist in all fifty states, though their structures differ according to state law, as well as party rules at both the national and the state level. Despite these weak organizations, elections are still usually portrayed as national races between the political parties. By the 1790s, however, most joined one of the two new parties, and by the 1800s parties had become accepted as central to the democracy. Men who held opposing views strengthened their cause by identifying and organizing men of like mind. The followers of Alexander Hamilton, were called "Federalists"; they favored a strong central government that would support the interests of national defense, commerce and industry. The followers of Thomas Jefferson, the Jeffersonians took up the name "Republicans"; they preferred a decentralized agrarian republic in which the federal government had limited power.

Chapter 5 : American System (economic plan) - Wikipedia

Puzzle Videos. The American political system is very complex and can be difficult to understand. In this video, author Ken Kollman (University of Michigan) introduces the text's themes of collective dilemmas and institutions.

Conclusion INTRODUCTION The United States is - by size of electorate - the second largest democracy on the globe India is the largest and Indonesia comes third and the most powerful nation on earth, politically, economically and militarily, but its political system is in many important respects unlike any other in the world. This essay then was written originally to inform non-Americans as to how the American political system works. What has been striking, however, is how many Americans - especially young Americans - have found the essay useful and insightful. There is considerable evidence that many Americans know and understand little about the political system of their own country - possibly more than is the case with any other developed democratic nation. It has found that the two worst subjects for American students are civics and American history. On one of my trips to the United States, I was eating cereal for breakfast and found that the whole of the reverse side of the cereal packet was devoted to a short explanation of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the American government. I find it hard to imagine that many democratic nations would feel it necessary to explain such a subject in such a format. So I hope that this explanation helps But this is a fundamental necessity in the case of the American political system. This is because the Constitution of the United States is so different from those of other nations and because that Constitution is, in all material respects, the same document as it was over two centuries ago. The United States had just fought and won a bloody War of Independence from Britain and it was determined to create a political system that was totally different from the British system in which considerable authority still resided in a hereditary King George III at the time or Queen and in which Parliament was increasingly assertive in the exercise of its growing powers. Therefore the new constitution deliberately spread power between the three arms of government - executive, legislature and judiciary - and ensured that each arm was able to limit the exercise of power by the other arms. The United States was already a large country with problems of communications and a population of varied background and education. Therefore, for all the intentions to be a new democracy, it was seen as important to limit the influence of swings in public opinion. So the election of the president was placed in the hands of an Electoral College, rather than the subject of direct election, and the terms of office of the president and the two chambers of the legislature were all set at different lengths. The United States was the creation of 13 individual states, each of which valued its traditions and powers, and so the overarching federal government was deliberately limited in its powers compared to the position of the central government in other nations. The original 13 states of the USA were of very different size in terms of population and from the beginning there was a determination by the smaller states that political power should not be excessively in the hands of the larger states. This is why today six states have only one member in the House of Representatives but two members in the Senate. So originally the legislature was seen as the most powerful arm of government it is described first in the Constitution but, over time, both the Presidency starting with the time of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War and the Supreme Court especially on social issues like desegregation, marriage and abortion have assumed more power. The Declaration of Independence of and the Constitution of form the foundations of the United States federal government. The Declaration of Independence establishes the United States as an independent political entity, while the Constitution creates the basic structure of the federal government. Further information on the thinking expressed in the Constitution can be found in the Federalist Papers which are a series of 85 articles and essays published in promoting the ratification of the Constitution. The United States Constitution is both the longest-lasting in the world, being over two centuries old, and one of the the shortest in the world, having just seven articles and 27 amendments the constitutions of Jordan, Libya and Iceland are the shortest in the world running to a mere 2,, words. As well as its age and brevity, the US Constitution is notable for being a remarkably stable document. The first 10 amendments were all carried in - the same year as the original constitution - and are collectively known as the Bill of Rights. If one accepts that these first 10 amendments were in effect part of the original constitutional settlement, there have only

been 17 amendments in almost 200 years. In fact, famously the 27th Amendment took over 200 years to achieve ratification, having been originally proposed at the same time as the 10 that make up the Bill of Rights but having only reached ratification in 1992. The last new and substantive amendment - reduction of the voting age to 18 - was in 1971, almost half a century ago. One of the major reasons for this relative immutability is that - quite deliberately on the part of its drafters - the Constitution is a very difficult instrument to change. First, a proposed amendment has to secure a two-thirds vote of members present in both houses of Congress. Then three-quarters of the state legislatures have to ratify the proposed change this stage may or may not be governed by a specific time limit. This was first written in 1791, shortly after women were given the vote in the USA. The proposed amendment was introduced in Congress unsuccessfully in every legislative year from 1789 until it was finally passed in 1971. It was then sent to each state for ratification but, by 1971, it was still three states short of the minimum of the 38 needed to add it to the constitution. Various attempts since to revive the amendment have all failed. Not only is power spread between the different branches; the members of those branches are deliberately granted by the Constitution different terms of office which is a further brake on rapid political change. So the President has a term of four years, while members of the Senate serve for six years and members of the House of Representatives serve for two years. Members of the Supreme Court effectively serve for life. The great weakness of the system is that it makes government slow, complicated and legalistic which is a particular disadvantage in a world - unlike that of - in which political and economic developments are fast-moving and the USA is a - indeed the - super power. Since the Constitution is so short, so old and so difficult to change, for it to be meaningful to contemporary society it requires interpretation by the courts and ultimately it is the Supreme Court which determines what the Constitution means. There are very different approaches to the interpretation of the Constitution with the two main strands of thought being known as originalism and the Living Constitution. Originalism is a principle of interpretation that tries to discover the original meaning or intent of the constitution. It is based on the principle that the judiciary is not supposed to create, amend or repeal laws which is the realm of the legislative branch but only to uphold them. This approach tends to be supported by conservatives. Living Constitution is a concept which claims that the Constitution has a dynamic meaning and that contemporary society should be taken into account when interpreting key constitutional phrases. Instead of seeking to divine the views of the drafters of the document, it claims that they deliberately wrote the Constitution in broad terms so that it would remain flexible. This approach tends to be supported by liberals. The President is the head of the executive branch of the federal government of the United States. He - so far, the position has always been held by a man - is both the head of state and the head of government, as well as the military commander-in-chief and chief diplomat. The President presides over the executive branch of the government, a vast organisation numbering about four million people, including one million active-duty military personnel. The so-called Hatch Act forbids anyone in the executive branch - except the President or Vice-President - from using his or her official position to engage in political activity. Who is eligible to become a President? To be President, one has to: The President is elected for a fixed term of four years and may serve a maximum of two terms. Originally there was no constitutional limit on the number of terms that a President could serve in office and the first President George Washington set the precedent of serving simply two terms. Following the election of Franklin D Roosevelt to a record four terms, it was decided to limit terms to two and the relevant constitutional change - the 22nd Amendment - was enacted in 1951. Elections are always held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November to coincide with Congressional elections. So the last election was held on 8 November and the next election will be held on 3 November. The President is not elected directly by the voters but by an Electoral College representing each state on the basis of a combination of the number of members in the Senate two for each state regardless of size and the number of members in the House of Representatives roughly proportional to population. The states with the largest number of votes are California 55, Texas 38 and New York 33. The states with the smallest number of votes - there are seven of them - have only three votes. The District of Columbia, which has no voting representation in Congress, has three Electoral College votes. In effect, therefore, the Presidential election is not one election but two. The total Electoral College vote is 538. This means that, to become President, a candidate has to win at least 270 electoral votes.

The voting system awards the Electoral College votes from each state to delegates committed to vote for a certain candidate in a "winner take all" system, with the exception of Maine and Nebraska which award their Electoral College votes according to Congressional Districts rather than for the state as a whole. In practice, most states are firmly Democrat - for instance, California and New York - or firmly Republican - for instance, Texas and Tennessee. Therefore, candidates concentrate their appearances and resources on the so-called "battleground states", those that might go to either party. The three largest battleground or swing states are Florida 29 votes , Pennsylvania 20 and Ohio 20. This system of election means that a candidate can win the largest number of votes nationwide but fail to win the largest number of votes in the Electoral College and therefore fail to become President. Indeed, in practice, this has happened four times in US history: On the last occasion, the losing candidate Hillary Clinton actually secured 2. The same Constitution, however, enables each state to determine how its members in the Electoral College are chosen and since the states have chosen their electors by a direct vote of the people. The United States is the only example in the world of an indirectly elected executive president. In the event that the Electoral College is evenly divided between two candidates or no candidate secures a majority of the votes, the constitution provides that the choice of President is made by the House of Representatives and the choice of Vice-President is made by the Senate. In the first case, the representatives of each state have to agree collectively on the allocation of a single vote. In the second case, each senator has one vote. This has actually happened twice - in 1800 and 1824. In 1800, the House of Representatives, after 35 votes in which neither Thomas Jefferson nor Aaron Burr obtained a majority, elected Jefferson on the 36th ballot. In 1824, neither John Quincy Adams nor Andrew Jackson was able to secure a majority of the votes in the Electoral College and the House of Representatives chose Adams even though he had fewer Electoral College votes and fewer votes at the ballot boxes than Jackson. What are the powers of the President? Within the executive branch, the President has broad constitutional powers to manage national affairs and the workings of the federal government. The President may issue executive orders to affect internal policies. The use of executive orders has varied enormously between presidents and is often a controversial matter since, in effect, it is bypassing the Congress to achieve what would otherwise require legislation. Very few such orders were issued until the time of Abraham Lincoln the Emancipation Declaration was such an order ; use of executive orders was considerable and peaked during the terms of the seven presidents from Theodore Roosevelt to Franklin D Roosevelt ; but, since the Second World War, use has been more modest with Democrats tending to issue them a bit more than Republicans. Barack Obama has made very sparing use of this power, notably to reform immigration law and to tighten gun controls. Executive orders can be overturned by a succeeding President. The President has the power to recommend measures to Congress and may sign or veto legislation passed by Congress. The Congress may override a presidential veto but only by a two-thirds majority in each house. The President has the authority to appoint Cabinet members, Supreme Court justices. The President has the power to pardon criminals convicted of offences against the federal government and most controversially President Gerald Ford used this power to pardon his predecessor Richard Nixon. The President can declare war for 60 days but then has to have the approval of Congress although it can be difficult to withdraw troops once they have been committed. Since 1947, there has been an Executive Office of the President EOP which has consistently and considerably expanded in size and power. Besides the formal powers of the President, there are informal means of exercising influence. Currently Donald Trump uses his personal Twitter account to issue several messages a day to as at summer some The President may be impeached which means that he is removed from the office. The House of Representatives has the sole power of impeaching, while the Senate has the sole power to try all such impeachments. Presidents have been impeached by the House of Representatives but acquitted at the trials held by the Senate: Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton

Chapter 6 : Quiz On The American Political System - ProProfs Quiz

Senate, House of Representatives and more explained AS Americans vote in the US election today, here is a look at the complex political system in the US.

But for the most part, they see the country falling well short in living up to these ideals, according to a new study of opinion on the strengths and weaknesses of key aspects of American democracy and the political system. The perceived shortcomings encompass some of the core elements of American democracy. Despite these criticisms, most Americans say democracy is working well in the United States – though relatively few say it is working very well. At the same time, there is broad support for making sweeping changes to the political system: The public sends mixed signals about how the American political system should be changed, and no proposals attract bipartisan support. Yet in views of how many of the specific aspects of the political system are working, both Republicans and Democrats express dissatisfaction. To be sure, there are some positives. On 23 specific measures assessing democracy, the political system and elections in the United States – each widely regarded by the public as very important – there are only eight on which majorities say the country is doing even somewhat well. It was supplemented by a survey conducted March among 1, adults on landlines and cellphones. Among the major findings: Mixed views of structural changes in the political system. The surveys examine several possible changes to representative democracy in the United States. Most Americans reject the idea of amending the Constitution to give states with larger populations more seats in the U. Senate, and there is little support for expanding the size of the House of Representatives. A majority says Trump lacks respect for democratic institutions. These views are deeply split along partisan and ideological lines. Government and politics seen as working better locally than nationally. In addition, there is substantial satisfaction with the quality of candidates running for Congress and local elections in recent elections. However, the public is more divided in general views about tone and discourse: In addressing the shortcomings of the political system, Americans do not spare themselves from criticism: Cynicism about money and politics. Most Americans think that those who donate a lot of money to elected officials have more political influence than others. Varying views of obligations of good citizenship. Large majorities say it is very important to vote, pay taxes and always follow the law in order to be a good citizen. Most are aware of basic facts about political system and democracy. Overwhelming shares correctly identify the constitutional right guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution and know the role of the Electoral College. A narrower majority knows how a tied vote is broken in the Senate, while fewer than half know the number of votes needed to break a Senate filibuster. Take the civics knowledge quiz. When asked to compare the U. Four-in-ten say it is working not too well or not at all well. Republicans have more positive views of the way democracy is working than do Democrats: More Democrats than Republicans say significant changes are needed in the design and structure of government. Republicans are evenly divided: About four-in-ten say the U. Several other national institutions and aspects of life in the U. Republicans are about twice as likely as Democrats to say the U. As recently as four years ago, there were no partisan differences in these opinions. And there is bipartisan sentiment that the military leadership in the U. In most cases, however, partisans differ on how well the country lives up to democratic ideals – or majorities in both parties say it is falling short. Some of the most pronounced partisan differences are in views of equal opportunity in the U. There also is skepticism in both parties about the political independence of judges. Partisan gaps in opinions about many aspects of U. But there are some notable differences: The differences are even starker in evaluations of how well the country is doing in fulfilling many of these objectives. Democrats – particularly politically engaged Democrats – are critical of the process for determining congressional districts. And fewer Democrats than Republicans consider voter turnout for elections in the U. Still, there are a few points of relative partisan agreement:

Chapter 7 : The Public, the Political System and American Democracy | Pew Research Center

The Public, the Political System and American Democracy. Most say 'design and structure' of government need big changes. Survey Report. At a time of growing stress on democracy around the world, Americans generally agree on democratic ideals and values that are important for the United States.

Continue to article content For political observers, feels like an earthquake – a once-in-a-generation event that will remake American politics. The Republican party is fracturing around support for Donald Trump. On left and right, it feels as though a new era is beginning. And a new era is beginning, but not in the way most people think. The partisan coalitions that defined the Democratic and Republican parties for decades in the middle of the twentieth century broke apart long ago; over the past half century, their component voting blocs – ideological, demographic, economic, geographic, cultural – have reshuffled. The reassembling of new Democratic and Republican coalitions is nearly finished. The type of conservatism long championed by the Republican Party was destined to fall as soon as a candidate came along who could rally its voters without being beholden to its donors, experts and pundits. The future is being built before our eyes, with far-reaching consequences for every facet of American politics. The race is a sign that American politics is changing in profound and lasting ways; by the s and s, partisan platforms will have changed drastically. You may find yourself voting for a party you could never imagine supporting right now. What will that political future look like? And in both parties, that gap between voters and policies is being closed in favor of the voters – a slight transition in the case of Hillary Clinton, but a dramatic one in the case of Donald Trump. During the Democratic primary, pundits who focused on the clash between Clinton and Sanders missed a story that illuminated this shift: But by , Webb lacked a constituency, and he was out of place among the politicians seeking the Democratic presidential nomination, which included one lifelong socialist Bernie Sanders and two candidates who had been raised as Republicans Hillary Clinton and, briefly, Lincoln Chafee. On the Republican side, the exemplary living fossil was Jeb Bush. Like his brother, Jeb pushed a neo-Reaganite synthesis of support for a hawkish foreign policy, social conservatism, and cuts in middle-class entitlements to finance further tax cuts for the rich. In March of this year, a Pew Research Center poll showed that 68 percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning voters opposed future reductions in Social Security benefits – almost the same amount of support found among Democrats and Dem-leaning voters 73 percent. Republicans who supported Trump were even more opposed to Social Security benefit cuts, at 73 percent. And even among those who supported Kasich, 62 percent opposed cuts in Social Security benefits – even though Kasich, himself, is in favor of cutting entitlements. Not increase the age and leave it as is. If Trump is defeated, what is left of the GOP establishment might try to effect a restoration of the old economic dogma of free trade, mass immigration and entitlement cuts. Most culture-war conflicts involve sexuality, gender, or reproduction for example, abortion, contraception, LGBT rights, and same-sex marriage. The centrality of culture-war issues in national politics from the s to the present allowed both major parties to contain factions with incompatible economic views. For a generation, the Democratic Party has included both free traders and protectionists – but support for abortion rights and, more recently, gay rights have been litmus tests for Democratic politicians with national ambitions. Conversely, Republicans have been allowed to disagree about trade and immigration, but all Republican presidential candidates have had to pay lip service to repealing Roe v. Wade and outlawing abortion. Social issues spurred a partisan realignment by changing who considered themselves Democrats and Republicans. Over decades, socially conservative working-class whites migrated from the Democratic Party to join the Republican Party, especially in the South. Socially moderate Republicans, especially on the East Coast, shifted to the Democratic coalition. Liberal Republicans are as rare as Reagan Democrats. In its absence, we are able to see a transformed political landscape. But while there is overlap between nationalists and racists, the two are not the same thing. Nationalism is different than white nationalism, and a populist American nationalism untainted by vestiges of racial bigotry might have transracial appeal, like versions of national populism in Latin America. The rise of populist nationalism on the right is paralleled by the rise of multicultural globalism on the center-left. For multicultural globalists, national boundaries are increasingly

obsolete and perhaps even immoral. According to the emerging progressive orthodoxy, the identities that count are subnational race, gender, orientation and supranational citizenship of the world. This difference in worldviews maps neatly into differences in policy. Nationalists support immigration and trade deals only if they improve the living standards of citizens of the nation. For the new, globally minded progressives, the mere well-being of American workers is not a good enough reason to oppose immigration or trade liberalization. The disagreements within both parties on trade is a living example of the inchoate policy realignment. Every major Republican presidential candidate supported free-trade agreements with the sole and major exception of Donald Trump, the presumptive nominee, who routinely slams free-trade deals and has called for the reintroduction of certain tariffs on foreign goods. Likewise, the current opposition of many Democratic politicians to free-trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership reflects the residual influence of declining manufacturing unions within the party. According to a March study by the Pew Research Center, by a margin of 56 percent to 38 percent, Democratic voters believe that free-trade agreements have been good for the U. Among Republicans, those numbers are almost reversed: Among younger Americans, who tend to prefer Democrats to Republicans, support for free trade is high: Even progressives who campaign against trade deals feel obliged by the logic of ethical cosmopolitanism to justify their opposition in the name of the labor rights of foreign workers or the good of the global environment. The Republicans will be a party of mostly working-class whites, based in the South and West and suburbs and exurbs everywhere. They will favor universal, contributory social insurance systems that benefit them and their families and reward work effort—programs like Social Security and Medicare. But they will tend to oppose means-tested programs for the poor whose benefits they and their families cannot enjoy. They will oppose increases in both legal and illegal immigration, in some cases because of ethnic prejudice; in other cases, for fear of economic competition. These are guys that shift paper around and they get lucky. They will think of the U. Many younger progressives will take it for granted that moral people are citizens of the world, equating nationalism and patriotism with racism and fascism. The withering-away of industrial unions, thanks to automation as well as offshoring, will liberate the Democrats to embrace free trade along with mass immigration wholeheartedly. The emerging progressive ideology of post-national cosmopolitanism will fit nicely with urban economies which depend on finance, tech and other industries of global scope, and which benefit from a constant stream of immigrants, both skilled and unskilled. In the expensive, hierarchical cities in which Democrats will be clustered, universal social insurance will make no sense. Payroll taxes on urban workers will be too low to fund universal social insurance, while universal social benefits will be too low to matter to the urban rich. So the well-to-do in expensive, unequal Democratic cities will agree to moderately redistributive taxes which pay for means-tested benefits—perhaps even a guaranteed basic income—for the disproportionately poor and foreign-born urban workforce. As populist labor liberalism declines within the Democratic party, employer-friendly and finance-friendly libertarianism will grow. The Democrats of may be more pro-market than the Republicans. Of the two coalitions, which is likely to prevail most of the time? While progressives claim that nonwhite Americans will become a majority, this is misleading for two reasons. To begin with, according to the Census Bureau, from this point until, there will be only limited growth in the African-American population a rise from The growth of the nonwhite category by is driven overwhelmingly by the increasing Latino share of the population, from

Chapter 8 : This Is What the Future of American Politics Looks Like - POLITICO Magazine

The US follows a two-party system. This means that, although more than two parties can campaign and hold office, two political groups, the Democrats and the Republicans, hold majority of the power.

Introduction to the American Political System Puzzle Videos The American political system is very complex and can be difficult to understand. The workings of American government and politics often seem puzzling. How can basic concepts in political science help us to understand the complexities and apparent contradictions of the American political system? The American political system is very complex and sprawling, and it seems hard to understand sometimes. It seems difficult to understand the puzzling behaviors and kinds of patterns that, that, that occur. And they expect the government to do things like stimulate the economy and spend money to do this. Why do they, why do we see conflict between the parties? So, so we have these kind of behaviors and patterns that seem counterintuitive to us, and, and, and! Political science and political scientists provide a set of concepts and analytical tools to help us understand these. And they give us a way to provide an intellectual framework for making sense of this very complex political system. So, in this chapter we, we lay out the main themes of this book. And there, there are two parts to it. The first is that society and groups in society face collective dilemmas and delegation problems. It matters for society. It matters for who gets what. He pushes forward legislation and provides policies that, that lead to enormous government expenditures, that have, that, that are going to distribute government grants and programs to governments and people all over the country. And at the same time, the stimulus package created deficits. And we see this situation where voters are frustrated with the deficits, but they want lower taxes and they also want the stimulus package. So there seems all these contradictory things all at once. Well, the tools help us understand this. They help us understand that, that, that people have distinct interests and conflicting interests across different groups in society. But also, they have their individual interests which might differ from the interests of the society as a whole. So these tools give us some insight into why we might see these preferences among voters. At the same time, knowledge of the institutions and knowledge of the specific details help us understand who gets what and why. Why does the process of decision making, give us, it gives us insight into how the, the various aspects of the stimulus package, play out and how they distribute resources in society. Norton and Company, Inc.

Chapter 9 : Politics of the United States - Simple English Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

two-party system: A two-party system is a system where two major political parties dominate voting in nearly all elections at every level of government and, as a result, all or nearly all elected offices are members of one of the two major parties.

The Executive Branch The executive branch of the United States consists of the President and the federal bureaucratic agencies, of which the President is officially the head. Of course no person can do all this by him or herself, so the purpose of the federal bureaucracy is to do the actual enforcement and international representation while the President oversees the operation of this machinery of government and tries to set policy, with as much freedom from congressional direction as he or she can manage. The president serves a 4 year term. Since ratification of the 22nd Amendment in 1951, presidents have been limited to 2 terms of office. This allows a President to serve up to a maximum of 10 years in office, although in practice this has never happened. Presidential Responsibilities and Powers The Constitution gives the President a number of responsibilities, Congress has added to that list, and some others presidents have successfully claimed over the years. This is an important principle in American politics, ensuring that the military is always under civilian control. The President is the last line in the federal criminal justice system, able to pardon people who have been convicted of crimes against the U. The purpose of this power is to prevent miscarriages of justice, but at times it has appeared to be used to protect presidential allies from facing the just consequences of their alleged crimes. There is no check on this power. As the representative of the U. Neither Congress nor the Courts can require the President to negotiate a treaty or forbid him from doing so. This power also enables presidents to choose between two rival factions claiming to be the legitimate government of a country, such as our recognition of the anti- communist Kuomintang as the internationally recognized government of China in the late 1940s even though they had lost a civil war with the communists and been forced off the mainland, controlling only the small island of Formosa, and our subsequent shift to recognition of the communist government on the mainland in 1949. Convening and Adjourning Congress: The president has authority to adjourn Congress if the two chambers cannot agree on a time of adjournment, and may also convene one or both houses for special purposes if they are not currently meeting. When the Constitution was drafted, Congress was expected to meet only a few months each year, but now that Congress meets almost year- round, the exercise of either of these powers is exceedingly rare. Most laws passed by Congress give the executive a good deal of leeway in figuring out how to implement them. Congress finds it difficult to specify precisely how laws should apply, so often they focus on the general outcomes they hope to achieve and authorize the executive branch agencies under the direction of the President to write the specific regulations that make the laws effective. Although these regulations are not technically law they have the force of law. As we saw above, Congress has the constitutional authority and duty to pass a federal budget. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Congress found it increasingly difficult to manage this task on their own, so with the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921 they required the President to submit a budget proposal for Congress to consider. This shifted considerable agenda-setting power to the President, as they get the first shot at defining the issues and where public spending should be directed. Presidentially Claimed Inherent Powers Inherent are powers that are not listed in the Constitution, nor granted to presidents by Congress, but that are claimed to be inherent to the nature of executive authority. Because these are not constitutionally nor statutorily specified, and because presidents have an incentive to try to expand their power, these claims are often controversial. But unless checked by Congress or the judiciary, they gain legitimacy through use and custom. Presidents are the head of the executive branch of the government, but often they have little direct control over what federal agencies do. Presidents sometimes try to exert control by issuing executive orders to the agencies. These orders may be about reorganizing certain agencies, or about how they will implement rules. For example President Reagan issued an executive order requiring that all agencies had to get approval for new federal regulations from the Office of Management and Budget OMB before the rules could take effect—previously the agencies did not need approval from a higher authority than their own director, and because the OMB is closely controlled by

the President, this gave the President more control over which regulations were approved. The key point about executive orders is that they apply only to the executive branch—they are not laws and do not have the effect of laws. They also do not bind future presidents, who can ignore or revoke them simply by drafting a new executive order. Executive agreements are agreements made by the President with other countries that, unlike treaties, do not normally need Senate approval. They are often used as an end-run around the difficulty of getting Senate approval. Because they are not official, as treaties are, executive agreements do not always have the force of law, and are more easily ignored or revoked. Executive privilege is the claim that presidents do not have to reveal to Congress personal communications with advisers.

Growth of Presidential Power

The presidency has grown tremendously in power in the past century, transforming its role in the American political system. The Framers of the Constitution separated the executive from the legislative because they were worried about congressional dominance and wanted a check on it, and in the late 19th century Congress still dominated the president enough for future president Woodrow Wilson to write his PhD dissertation as a critique of Congressionally dominated governance. This change worries many presidential scholars. At present there appears to be no end to or effective means of countering this unbalancing of the American government.

The Judiciary

The judicial branch of the U. S. All members of the federal judiciary are appointed by the President, with the approval of the Senate, and serve for life, or until they choose to resign or retire. Each state has at least one, with larger states having two. There is also a District Court just for Washington, D. C. The territories of the U. S. Virgin Island, Guam, and the Northern Marianas Islands have federal courts that function as, but technically are not, District Courts, with judges who serve ten-year terms instead of life. And the territory of American Samoa has no federal court. Also at this level are the specialized courts, the U. S. Court of International Trade, The U. S. Court of Federal Claims, and the U. S. District Courts. The District Courts are the entry level of the federal judicial system. Citizens involved in federal lawsuits—whether suing the federal government, being sued by it, or suing a citizen of another state or country—or charged with a federal crime, will have their cases heard in a federal district court. Congress determines how many federal courts there shall be and from time to time adds new ones as needed. At the next level are 13 Circuit Courts of Appeal. Those who lose their cases in the District Court can appeal the decision if they believe the law was applied wrongly in the lower court. District Court and the specialized courts. Congress also determines how many Circuit Courts there shall be, and can add to that number. For many years there has been an effort to split the 9th Circuit, consisting of nine states in the West and Pacific Ocean into two circuits. Congress has not yet done so, but has the authority to do it any time. At the top is the U. S. Supreme Court. The Court consists of nine members, a number determined not by the Constitution but by Congress. The number has varied in the past, but has not changed since 1789, creating a strong tradition. The last serious effort to change the number was in 1913 when President Roosevelt proposed to temporarily increase the number, in an effort to get a majority that would uphold his legislative proposals. Although his party had a strong majority in Congress, his effort was seen as political manipulation of the Court and was rejected.

Judicial Federalism

Federalism is present in the American legal system, as the U. S. The federal judiciary handles legal cases that deal with the Constitution, federal laws, and treaties; with lawsuits between citizens of different states; and between citizens and foreign countries or their citizens. For example, in 1832 a Florida man named Clarence Gideon was arrested and convicted of robbery. In fact he was wrong, because at that time states did not have to provide a lawyer for all poor defendants. But convinced that he was right, he appealed to the U. S. Supreme Court, which took his case and ruled that the Constitutional right to have an attorney meant that states did have to provide lawyers for all poor defendants.

Roles of the Judiciary

The judiciary serves three critical roles in the political system: Judging the Execution of the Law The executive branch enforces federal law, but there is no guarantee that they will do so in a way that is compliant with the law, or that applies the law correctly. This can happen at any level of the judiciary, but is most commonly applied when an adverse judgement is appealed to the Circuit Courts or Supreme Court. Judicial Review Judicial Review is the authority to rule a law unconstitutional, and therefore null and void. The theory behind it is simple—the Constitution limits government, so government, even if the people desire it to do so, cannot go beyond its constitutional boundaries, and somebody has to enforce that rule, so the job falls to the judicial branch. The Constitution does not explicitly authorize the judiciary to exercise this power, but there are hints

of it in the record of debates at the Constitutional Convention and in the Federalist Papers. The Court first exercised the power in , in the case of *Marbury v. Madison*, then did not exercise it again until the infamous *Dred Scott* case in . But in the late 19th and throughout the 20th century the exercise of judicial review became a normal practice. For example, in the internet was new but already being used to disseminate pornography. Congress passed the Communications Decency Act to try to restrict internet pornography, and the law was immediately challenged by free speech advocates, including a coalition of pornographic film companies. The organization argued that this was a violation of their right to free speech, and in a case that is still hotly debated the Supreme Court agreed. The judiciary can also strike down actions of the executive branch as unconstitutional. Those cases generally look very similar to the cases where they strike down a law, so all the details explained above apply in those cases as well. Because the Constitution creates a system of separated institutions sharing powers, as Richard Neustadt argued, there is sometimes conflict between Congress and the President over who rightly exercises particular powers, and when one branch has overstepped its bounds. It is natural that each branch should try to expand its power and its control over public policy, so these cases arise occasionally. They are often complex, and are generally not as exciting as cases dealing with judicial review and civil rights or liberties, but are crucial to maintaining the constitutional checks and balances of power. There was a law that he could have used to work toward this end, although perhaps less effectively. Another important case involved a technique developed by Congress called the legislative veto. In the particular case, the Immigration and Nationality Act authorized the Attorney General of the United States to suspend the deportation of a person who was in the U. But the Attorney General then had to submit the list to Congress, where either house could veto the act. The Court ruled that Congress had authorized the Attorney General to act, and if it wanted to overrule an authorized action by the executive branch it had to pass legislation saying so in the proper manner. Just as separation of powers pits competing branches of government against each other in their attempts to exert power, so federalism sets the federal government against the states, and the boundaries of federalism are regularly challenged. For example, in the Supreme Court struck down part of a federal gun control law that required state officials to conduct background checks on gun purchasers. The Court ruled that the federal government did not have authority to force the states to spend their own resources to implement a federal law. Going the other direction, concerning a state encroachment on federal turf, in the Court struck down an Arkansas that attempted to set term limits on U. Representatives and Senators from the state. The Court ruled that the Constitution set the standards of eligibility to serve in Congress, and states did not have authority to add to those standards. In each of these areas a large number of cases could be discussed at great length, and argued endlessly because frequently there are reasonable arguments on each side. If you take some constitutional law courses you will have that opportunity, but here just a few are given to demonstrate the concepts.