**Module 3 Notes**

**3.01**

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| We are largely a land of immigrants. We attract the poor and oppressed from all over the world. The "American Dream" is one-reason folks come to America. Some of the elements of our diversity become traditions that have political significance. Political scientists study voting and try to make predictions based on **demographics**. A political predisposition is a characteristic of individuals that is predictive of political behavior. |

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| **Race/ Ethnicity** | | | | | |
| **Percent of the Population by Race and Hispanic Origin** | | | | | |
|  | **1990** | **1995** | **2005** | **2010** | **2015** |
| **White** | 83.9% | 82.9% | 80.2% | 79% | 78.4% |
| **African-American** | 12.3 | 12.6 | 12.8 | 13.1 | 13 |
| **American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut** | 0.8 | 0.8 | 1 | N/A | N/A |
| **Asian and Pacific Islander** | 3.0 | 3.7 | 4.5 | 5 | 5 |
| **Hispanic** | 9.0 | 10.2 | 14.4 | 15.5 | 16.6 |
| Source 2005 data: U.S.Census Bureau, " [Annual Estimates of the Population by Sex, Age, and Race for the United States](http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/usinterimproj/" \t "_blank): April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2005 (NC-EST2005-04)," published 10 May 2006  Source 2010–2015: U.S. Census Bureau, " [U.S. Interim Projections by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin](http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/usinterimproj/" \t "_blank)," published March 2004  Percentages do not equal 100 because Hispanics may include members of other listed races. | | | | | |

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| **Gender: Women and Politics**  For most of U.S. history, politics was men's business. Not so today—"soccer moms" and women's issues are in the forefront of American politics.  Issues that typically concern women: family issues, the environment, peace, reproductive rights, sexual harassment, health insurance. The issues that divide men and women are called the**gender gap.**   Instead of a voting bloc, women have typically divided their vote between the two major political parties. Since 1976, women have voted at nearly the same rate as men, meaning that in recent elections, because females in the population outnumber males, the female vote has outnumbered the male vote.  In the 110th Congress that lasts from 2007-2009:   * 87 women serve in the U.S. Congress   + 16 Senators   + 71 Representatives   Another interesting fact: Women in recent elections have more often tended to vote for the eventual presidential winner than men.  **Religion**  When John F. Kennedy ran for president, much was made of his Roman Catholic background. Most presidents have had a Protestant background.  **Wealth and Income**  Who are the poor in America today?  Two-thirds of families living in poverty are women heads of households and their children.\* About one in every five children in the United States lives in poverty. These figures describe what has been labeled the "feminization of poverty." Clearly, poverty is closely related to the family structure.  Blacks and Hispanics experience poverty in a much greater proportion than whites.  The declining poverty rate among elderly people is a relatively recent occurrence. Continuing increases in Social Security benefits over the years are largely responsible for this singular "victory" in the war against poverty.  \*For reference, the government set the poverty level in 2007 for a family of four with two adults and two children at $21,027. |

**3.02**

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| Even if you have not spent much time thinking about politics, you have already been predisposed to have certain political beliefs. Your parents/family are the number one agent of socialization. However, in recent years, education, especially higher education, has been seen as an increasingly influential factor in political socialization. |

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| **Agents of Socialization** | **Examples** |
| **Family** | Dinner table talk, family discussions—usually informal, parental comments about the news, events, etc. |
| **School** | Patriotic songs, American history, The Pledge recited every morning. (Think back to third grade.) |
| **Job** | Union, stocks |
| **Other agents** | Educational level, race, ethnicity, religion, crisscrossing interests |

**3.03**

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| **Public Opinion Polls**  The best way to measure public opinion is by taking a poll. A **poll**, or survey, is a way to get information or opinions by asking people questions.  The first polls in the 20th century were not scientific. Pollsters of that time simply asked the same question to a large number of people. This method is called a **straw vote**. It can be unscientific because it may not be representative of the whole population. For example, most opinion polls on the internet are straw polls. The pollsters have no control over who participates so there is no way to prove that a representative number of men/women, old/young, etc. answered the poll.  By the 1930s polls became more reliable and scientific due to random sampling. A **random sample** is one in which members of the universe are picked for the sample by chance. Basically any individual has an equal chance of being included in the poll. The text goes into some detail explaining random sampling so make sure that you review this information. **This method is very accurate.** |

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| **Steps in Taking a Poll**   1. Choose the population (ex. all registered voters) 2. Get a random sample 3. Prepare valid questions 4. Control polling process 5. Report results   **Public Opinion and Campaigns**  Public opinion can influence how politicians campaign and run for office. It can also affect policy makers as they attempt to satisfy the majority. However, it is always important that politicians remember that even though satisfying the majority can help them win elections, the needs of the minority must be considered. Powerful minorities can change the course of a Congressional or Presidential campaign. |

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| **The Famous Gallup Poll Mistake** | |
| As the 1948 election drew near, few people gave **President Harry S. Truman** a chance to defeat his Republican opponent **Thomas E. Dewey**. Polling was still new, and virtually all the early polls showed Dewey ahead. Most organizations simply stopped polling weeks before the election. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* believed the polls and proclaimed Dewey the victor. Later it was revealed that the few polls taken closer to the election day showed Truman catching up to Dewey. Polls estimate the vote only at the time they are taken. Note that in this century *The Gallup Poll*has incredible accuracy. The Truman/Dewey calculation was the only error. All other predictions came in correctly—within the 3-point margin of error. |  |

**3.04-**

**Election Day Reporting**

Competition for ratings among the news media creates a great deal of pressure to be the first to report on big news stories. Few stories are bigger than calling the winner of a presidential election. Because of the pressure to be first, news media rely upon a variety of strategies to obtain information on voting results, even before the votes have all been counted. This information allows the news media to project the winner of each state’s Electoral votes and often name the next president even before the polls have all closed.

**Exit Polling**

One such strategy is exit polling. Exit polls are taken as voters leave their polling places, right after they have cast their vote. Voters are asked to reveal who they voted for as well as other information. These polling results are used by the news media to make an early projection about which candidate has won an election.

**The 2000 Presidential Election**

Exit polls are useful to the media, but may have other repercussions in our political system. There is concern that early projections made by the news media impacts voter turnout negatively.  The general line of thinking is that if a voter believes the winner of an election has already been determined, he or she is less likely to go to the polls and vote. Most major news organizations vowed after the election of 2000 that they would not project races while polls were still open. In that election, major networks “called,” or projected the winner in Florida, shortly after 7 p.m. Eastern time. However, polls in the western panhandle of Florida are in the Central Time Zone, so those votes were not taken into account. Later in the evening, Florida looked to be much more of a toss-up after all votes were counted, and news networks were forced to recant their predictions.

**The 2004 Presidential Election**

The 2004 election presented a different type of challenge. There was a significant difference between the exit poll data, which indicated a victory for Democrat John Kerry, and the final results, which produced the reelection of Republican George Bush. The results of the election were far outside the normal margin of error (discussed in Lesson 3.03) for such a poll. Additionally, the poll used a much larger-than-normal sample, which should have lessened the possibility of error. For more on polling and the 2004 election, read [The 2004 Presidential Election: Who Won The Popular Vote? An Examination of the Comparative Validity of Exit Poll and Vote Count Data](http://freepress.org/images/departments/PopularVotePaper181_1.pdf" \t "_blank) from the FreePress.org web site.

**3.06-**

In the Washington Reporter, Stephen Hess called the media the fourth estate or the fourth branch of government. He implies that the press and media act as part of the government even while they criticize it.

Members of Congress and of the Presidential Administration seek to enhance their power and advance their programs by cultivating press relations to gain publicity for themselves and their ideas.

**Two types of Media**

1. Print media—magazines, newspapers
2. Electronic media—Cable TV, network TV, radio, internet   
     
   **$$—The Media lives off profit**.  
   **$$—Profit relies on audience ratings.**

Contrary to earlier thought, recent data shows that the media has little to do with influencing events. The media is only reporting what is already happening in politics (society). With that said, the media has an enormous amount of power in **selecting** what is and is not news. If major media outlets choose to spend a lot of time and effort on a story or alternatively ignore a story, this will influence how people perceive the importance of these stories/events.

**How Politicians Use the Media**

* Leaks. By leaking information to the media, politicians often hope to change public attitude about a specific issue, bill, or position.
* Free media coverage of events. This "free press" helps incumbents and can help increase public awareness and affect public attitudes about specific issues.
* The President and the Oval Office: the bully pulpit. This term came from President Theodore Roosevelt. The word bully in this instance means superb. The Oval Office provides the president with a superb platform from which he can hope to change public opinion and advance his own agenda.
* Photo opportunities. The use of images in print and electronic media can help keep a politician's name in the limelight while also help advance issues and agendas.
* Spin doctors. Spin is a word used to describe what public relations experts do to help put a positive spin on situations and events.

**Electronic News Media vs. Print Media**

* Print Media tends to be more conservative
* TV news cuts across age groups.
* Print audiences tend to be higher educated.
* TV news has more vividness and drama.
* Print audiences have more in-depth knowledge.
* TV news—news filtering—only a short amount can be shown due to time constraints.

**Two important rules land acts that you should remember in reference to the media:**

**Freedom Of Information Act (1967)**

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is a bill designed to give the public greater access to government records. Exemptions are made in specific areas such as national defense and law enforcement files. However, in most cases government records are open to the public for examination and publication.

**Fairness Doctrine**

This Federal Communications Commission (FCC) doctrine was introduced in 1949 and required broadcast media to cover issues of public importance so as to reflect differing points of view. However, the FCC abolished this doctrine in 1987 as the Supreme Court had ruled against its use if it in any way impeded free speech.

**3.07-**

**Analyzing Political Cartoons**

Political cartoons date back to the days of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation and were used as visual propaganda. Early examples of political cartoons can be found in the Colonial period of United States history with Benjamin Franklin's sketch of a snake whose severed parts represent the Colonies and the caption, "Join or Die." From the Civil War down to the present, political cartoons have been used to inform, persuade and entertain the public.

Political and editorial cartoons are drawings used to present opinions, comments or criticisms of a situation, event or people. These cartoons help viewers to understand information by presenting it in a visual way. Studying cartoons is a good way to understand current and historical political issues, and to quickly see how there are many views on different political concerns. Cartoonists attempt to present important issues in a picture and very few words. The cartoonist, with his or her drawings, can say more in one cartoon than can be said by an editorial writer in a multi-page article, or a politician in a speech. World and national events, social issues such as education, government and poverty, and political figures are subjects of editorial cartoons.

**Cartoonists use many different techniques to present their message**

* Caricature: exaggerating one or more physical feature such as a large nose or ears. Another example of caricature: someone who speaks out loudly on an issue might be drawn with an exaggerated mouth.
* Symbols: using an easily recognizable item to communicate an idea—a donkey to represent the Democratic Party, or an elephant to represent the Republican Party, Uncle Sam to represent the United States of America, a dove for peace, etc.
* Captions: having the characters talk using balloons or summarizing the message in a few words above or below the cartoon.

**Purpose**

The purpose of political cartoons is to motivate people to think about issues of politics, government and subjects of national or international importance. They

* help provide readers with additional points of view
* assume the viewers have enough information about the issues to understand the message
* emphasize one side of an issue or concern
* rely on humor
* depend upon the picture to convey the point
* are found in newspapers and magazines

**3.08-**

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| How much influence does the media have? Do some politicians use the media better than others? How does media coverage of campaigns contribute to the "horse race" or "beauty pageant" view citizens have of the contest?  Let's examine a few terms and concepts. Then we will apply them in a study of political advertising.   * **Selective Exposure**: The process by which most individuals screen out messages that do not conform to their own biases. * **Selective Perception**: The process by which individuals perceive what they want to in media messages and disregard the rest. * **Issue Ad**: Commercials advertising on TV or radio advocating a particular position on an issue, paid for by the interest group, and designed to influence voters' choices on election day. * **Political Agenda**: A list of issues that are identified as needing government attention. |

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| Scholars agree that more than being biased, the media's greatest effect on the public is setting the political agenda. For example: The nightly news may decide to cover one story to the exclusion of another. In a very limited time frame the media decides what issues get the most attention.  **Why do candidates value news coverage?**   * It’s Free * Americans believe it to be objective   The television networks know their audience and their audiences don't like politics nor can they focus on more than one thing at a time. As a result, in an average campaign story, the candidates is allowed to speak for an average of 7 seconds and the reporter speaks for 74% of the time.   How is a candidate supposed to get their views across in 7 seconds? They can't. Therefore they seek other outlets like entertainment shows.  Since we know the media can be biased and time is limited, candidates rely a lot on advertising. An interesting fact is that many Americans cannot name their U.S. Senators or Representatives. However, they can identify them from a list….i.e., a ballot.   Therefore, name recognition is the first objective of paid advertisements. Secondary to name recognition is negative campaigning using political attacks. |

**3.10-**

**Americans participate in politics by:**

* calling or emailing their elected officials
* becoming involved in an interest group
* giving money to candidates
* participating in marches or political rallies
* attending a city council meeting
* protesting
* voting

The above list is just a sample of the possible ways that people can become involved. Political participation can be divided into two types:

**Conventional Participation:** Routine political behavior that uses institutional channels and is acceptable to the dominant culture. The most obvious example is that of **voting**.   
  
**Unconventional Participation:** relatively uncommon political behavior that challenges or defies established institutions and norms. The Civil Rights Movement used unconventional participation to great effect. For example, **sit-ins** were staged where individuals would peacefully sit until removed, typically by force.

**Boycotts** are another effective form of unconventional participation. The **Montgomery Bus Boycott** lasted for over a year to fight against forced segregation on the city's public transit system.

**3.11-**

**Sectional Voting**

One voting trend that has been widely tracked is sectional voting. This occurs when voters of a specific section of the country tend to share voting patterns.

* **South:**Prior to 1980 the South was Democrat territory; now the South is more Republican.
* **West:**The West has developed an identity of individualism and hostility to government intervention.
* **Sun Belt vs. Frost Belt:** It is important to note that the Sun Belt is gaining population while the Frost Belt is losing population. The Sun Belt is the Southern portion of the United States; approximately south while the Frost Belt includes the Northeast, Great Lakes Region, and the Upper Midwest.
* **National Voting**
* While sectional voting does occur, national voting can occur when states/sections cannot resist a popular national candidate. For example, Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) and Dwight Eisenhower (Ike) both had a huge amount of support across the United States.
* **Coattail Effect**
* This is the effect that a popular candidate for office can create for other candidates of the same party seeking election. In other words, when similar voting occurs for different offices. If a candidate is popular for president (or another office) he can possibly help carry other candidates in the party seeking election. Presidents with low approval ratings do not have long coattails.

Over time three different types of elections have occurred.

* Most elections are **maintaining elections**—existing pattern of partisan support persists. Not a lot of surprises occur in these elections. Individuals typically do not cross party lines in these elections.
* **Deviating election**: These elections, as their name implies, deviate from the norm. The "out" party wins due to attractive presidential candidate or loss of public confidence in the current administration.
* **Realigning election**: These elections are rare and result in a basic and lengthy transformation of party loyalties. In these elections, a large number of voters experience a shift in their party loyalty based on the development of new coalitions.The term comes from the work of political scientist V. O. Key. However, political scientists are not always in agreement about what constitutes a realigning election. Examples of realigning presidential election years: 1800 (Jefferson won), 1828 (Jackson won), 1860 (Lincoln won), 1896 (McKinley won), and 1932 (FDR won).

**3.12-**

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| Why is it that so few Americans who are eligible to register to vote actually do so … and such a small percentage of those [actually go to the polls](http://people-press.org/report/292/who-votes-who-doesnt-and-why" \t "_blank)? In fact approximately 70% of eligible adults register to vote and voter turnout typically hovers close to 50% of all voters old enough to vote.  Many non-voters say they don't have time or aren’t interested. However, the most significant reason for the non-voting in America may very well be described as a lack of **Political Efficacy**. Does this term sound familiar? It should. We were introduced to this term back in Module 2.  Political efficacy involves the way citizens view their own political belief systems and the way they understand and interact with the political system. Political efficacy also involves citizens’ beliefs about whether their actions can influence the political system and whether that system can impact or improve their individual lives.  **Internal efficacy** - confidence in one’s own ability to shape and take part in politics. This level has remained fairly stable since the 1950s.  **External efficacy** - belief that the system will respond to what citizens do. This level has declined since the 1960s and 1970s. Events such as the Vietnam War and the Watergate Scandal contributed to this feeling of relative powerlessness on the part of individual citizens.  Factors that influence political beliefs and voting behavior in addition to political efficacy include family and religious backgrounds, gender, ethnicity, education, and economic status.   |  | | --- | | © 2003 clipart.com |   In spite of what you may have heard, the involvement of Americans in the political process has remained relatively constant over time. This is a result of **internal efficacy**. However, **external efficacy** has dropped sharply. Since the Civil Rights era of the early 1960s, the Vietnam Era of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the Watergate Scandal of the 1972 election, citizens in the United States have less trust in their government. These and other subsequent events have caused people to feel that their elected officials are not working in the general interest of the public.  When fewer people trust their government to do what is best for them and stop voting, who is then choosing the leaders? Are the radical minority groups who are more effective at “getting out the vote” gaining control of the political system? If mainstream Americans sit back believing that their vote doesn’t count, then less centrist governments will be formed. The result will be more radical programs, which will, in turn, make citizens feel even less confident in the system and the future. Frustration with bureaucracy, massive social problems, the sense that the media and party insiders have too much control are all factors that contribute to less external efficacy. This is compounded by the sense that the political leaders listen only to those with wealth and influence.  There are positive aspects to the voter turnouts, however. They reflect a comfort level with the overall system of government, and a trust in the freedoms established by the Constitution. Limits on governmental action demonstrate protection of individual rights built into our system. The personal and financial lives of individual citizens are relatively stable and the country continues to create wealth and security. Elections do not create major change in society; political parties are relatively centrist and their platforms are largely constant. Those with more radical agendas cannot change the system without first amending the Constitution. Thus, in many ways, low voter turnout can be interpreted to mean that people feel relatively comfortable with and safe in their lives in this country. Let's examine who votes in America The following graphic breaks down the percentage of eligible voters who actually voted in terms of age, gender, and race.  **Gender**  "Although women gained the right to vote in 1920, it was not until the 1980s that politicians began to widely recognize a discrete pattern in women's voting habits.  The presidential election of 1980 signaled a turning point in women's political participation. Previously, a lower percentage of women than men had voted; in 1964, for example, 72 percent of men but only 67 percent of women voted. Beginning in 1980, however, women began to outnumber men at the ballot box, a trend that has endured, despite the overall drop in voter turnout. It is estimated that women in 2000 comprised 53 percent of the electorate, while men accounted for only 48 percent."- By Sonya Abrams, Editorial Intern, The Commonwealth  Read The Commonwealth's [Women & Voting](http://www.commonwealthclub.org/archive/02/02-02steinem-editorial.html" \t "_blank).  **Age**  According to the United States Census Bureau, here is the breakdown of voting by age. |

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| **1996** | **2000** | **2004** | **2008** |
| 18–24 = 54.2% 25–44 =   32.4% 45–64 = 49.2% 65 and older = 64.4% | 18–24 = 32.3% 25–44 =   50% 45–64 = 64% 65 and older = 68% | 18–24 = 41.9% 25–44 = 52.2% 45–64 = 66.6% 65 and older = 70.8% | 18–24 = 49% 25–44 =   55% 45–64 = 69% 65 and older = 70% |

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| **Race**  According to the United States Census Bureau, here is the breakdown of voting by race. |

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| **1996** | **2000** | **2004** | **2008** |
| Whites = 56% Blacks = 50.6% Asians = 25.7% Hispanics = 26.8% | Whites = 56.4% Blacks = 53.5% Asians = 25.4% Hispanics = 27.5% | Whites = 60.3% Blacks = 56.3% Asians = 29.8% Hispanics = 28% | Whites = 66% Blacks = 65% Asians = 47.6% Hispanics = 49.9% |

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