

# Political Philosophy

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An Introduction

## Before We Start

1. What do you think Political Philosophy is?
2. What are some topics/concepts you imagine we will cover in class?

# Preview: Some Concepts

1. Government
2. Power
3. Freedom
4. Public Life v. Private Life

# What is Political Philosophy?

Branch of Philosophy focused on (Encyclopedia Britannica):

1. Concepts and arguments regarding the functioning and practices of government and its institutions
2. Central Problem:
  - a. Public Power v. Private Power
    - i. Limits/Scope
    - ii. Source of power
    - iii. Survival of humans

Be Careful: Theories reflect the time and ideology of the writer

# Important Concepts

1. Source of Political Power
  - a. Knowledge
  - b. Divine Right of Kings
  - c. Social Contract
  - d. Force
2. Constitutional Politics
3. Types of Government
  - a. Where the power lies
  - b. Who rules
4. Socioeconomic Political Theories
  - a. Capitalism
  - b. Socialism
  - c. Communism
5. Anarchism

# 1. Source of Political Power

## Political Power

- a. (Broadly) The power to create laws, interpret them and enforce them over a group of people throughout a determined territory.

### A. Knowledge

- a. Source of Political Power
  - i. True/Philosophical knowledge
    - 1. Reality
    - 2. Human beings

### B. Divine Right of Kings

- a. Source of Political Power
  - i. God

### C. Social Contract

- a. Source of Political Power
  - i. Agreement among rational human beings

## 2. Montesquieu: Constitutional Politics (Enlightenment-XVIII)

### 1. Main ideas:

- a. Existence of a Constitution
  - i. Goal
    - 1. Defend from despotism
      - a. Achieved
        - i. Separation of Political Power in branches (Trias Politicas)
          - 1. Executive
          - 2. Legislative
          - 3. Judicial
        - ii. Different bodies
          - 1. Balance and stability

### 2. Reflected: American Constitution, French Republic and Modern Democracies

### 3. Types of Government

1. Where does the power lie?

- a. Republic
  - i. People
- b. Theocracy
  - i. God
- c. Autocracy
  - i. One person
- d. Tyranny
  - i. Force
  - ii. Usurpation



### 3. Types of Government

#### 1. Who rules?

- a. Democracy
  - i. The people
    - 1. Direct
    - 2. Representative
- b. Monarchy
  - 1. Hereditary
    - a. DRK: chosen by god
- c. Aristocracy
  - i. Nobility
    - 1. Select privileged group

## 4. Socioeconomic Political Theories: Capitalism

- a. Central Concept:
    - i. Private property
  - b. Services and Goods: Privately owned
    - i. Shift: public → private initiatives
  - c. Economic Planning
    - i. Markets
      - 1. Free Market theory
        - a. Supply and Demand
          - i. Adam Smith → Free Market Economy
            - 1. Laissez-Faire: no intromission of the government in economy
              - a. Ended after WWI
              - b. The Great Depression
- d. Goal: Accumulation of capital
  - i. Investment: enlarge productive capacity
    - 1. Create more capital
- e. Economic Inequality: justified
  - i. Work hard → Capital

## 4. Socioeconomic Political Theories: : Socialism

“From each according to his ability, to each according to his contribution” (Gregory Paul)

- a. Inception: exploitation of workers
  - i. Inequalities of capitalism
- b. Private Property: exists
  - i. Every citizen is given an equal share of factors of production
    - 1. Central Concept: Fairness
- c. Economic Planning: Government
- d. Goods and Services: Government-controlled
- e. Wealth Distribution:
  - i. Government
    - 1. According to level of contribution
- f. Social Classes: exist

## 4. Socioeconomic Political Theories: : Communism

“From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs” (Karl Marx)

- a. Inception: exploitation of workers
  - i. Critique of Capitalism
    - 1. Alienation
    - 2. Property as theft
    - 3. Division of classes: Bourgeoisie-Proletariat
- b. Private Property: does not exist
  - i. Classes do not exist
    - a. No inheritance
    - b. No nation
    - c. No religion
  - 2. History: Class Struggle
  - ii. Human value: intrinsic
- c. Economic Planning: Government
  - i. Central Concept: Equality
- d. Goods and Services: Government-controlled
  - 1. All facets of production
  - ii. Property and Resources
    - 1. Community-owned (not private citizens)
- e. Wealth Distribution:
  - i. Government
    - 1. According to needs

## 4. Anarchism

- a. Central Concept: Individual liberty
- b. Power and Authority: No legitimate political authority
  - 1. Apolitical
  - ii. Enemies of the state
    - 1. Slavery (Bakunin)
    - 2. State's tendency
      - a. Oppression
- c. Goal: Rule by no one or non-ruling
  - i. Rule by all
    - 1. Consensus and unanimity
      - a. Basis:
        - i. Non-coercive consensual building
          - 1. Human flourishing
- d. "The government of man by man (under whatever name it be disguised) is oppression. Society finds its highest perfection in the union of order with anarchy" (Pierre-Joseph Proudhon)

