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Austin Ranney: Governing: Study Guide

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AUSTIN RANNEY: GOVERNING: STUDY GUIDE, 1996 Steven Alan Samson

Chapter One: Politics in Human Life

1. How is "politics" used in everyday conversation? How does the book define it? What are some alternatives, for example, to the acid rain problem?
2. Why is politics based on conflict? What are values? What is a political interest? What kind of group is of special concern to political scientists?
3. Identify some tactics of political action.
4. What are satyagraha and dharma?
5. Identify some characteristics of political conflict.
6. According to Jean Jacques Rousseau, what creates the social bond?

Chapter Two: Governments and Governing

1. What are sanctions? Define government. What does anarchy mean?
2. How does government differ from other social organizations?
3. Identify some of the tasks and tools of government.
4. What was the Roe v. Wade (1973) decision and why does it remain so controversial? What is a "zero-sum game"?
5. What are the characteristics of nations? How may nations be born? How may they die? How did the Soviet Union disintegrate?

Chapter Three: Political Psychology, Socialization, and Culture

1. What is a "cognitive map"? What are its three elements?
2. Define perception. What are "perceptual screens"? Define conceptual frameworks. Identify four levels of conceptualization. Define affect.
3. What is a primary group? How do groups preserve their identity? What are some types of influential group memberships? Define ethnic group. Define social

class.

4. Define political socialization. What are the different stages of the socialization cycle and how do they relate to political socialization?
5. What are the chief agents of socialization?
6. Define political culture. Distinguish between cognitive and affective orientations. What are some components of political culture? How do political cultures differ from each other?

Chapter Four: Modern Political Ideologies

1. Identify four criteria of a full-fledged ideology and its intellectual components. What are some types of ideologies?
2. How is constitutionalism related to classical liberalism? Identify some of the ideals expressed by John Locke and John Milton. Identify the characteristics of totalitarianism.
3. Compare and contrast laissez faire capitalism and socialism with regard to private property. Where do socialists and communists agree or differ? How did communism collapse in the USSR and Eastern Europe?
4. Compare and contrast modern American conservatism and liberalism.

Chapter Five: Democracy and Authoritarianism: Principle and Models

1. Identify four principles of democracy. Why are equality and majority rule controversial?
2. What are some social science models and how are they used?
3. Compare and contrast the participatory and accountable-elites model [also known as pluralism vs. elitism]; the presidential and parliamentary models; the majoritarian and consensual models.
4. What are the chief characteristics of authoritarianism? What areas and types of regimes have been especially affected by the surge of democracy?

Chapter Six: Public Opinion in Democratic Systems

1. What is public opinion and what are its dimensions?

2. How did polls originate? What are tracking polls? How much influence do polls have?

3. What are ideologies divided along a left-right or liberal-conservative continuum? What ideological difference does college make?

4. What are the chief policy concerns of the American people? Based on the description in Ranney, brief describe a typical conservative and a typical liberal. What would they be like in terms of race, gender, religion, income and age?

5. Compare and contrast the nature and effect of public opinion on both domestic policy and foreign policy. What is the public more concerned about? Why? In what area can elites often ignore public opinion? What would change that?

Chapter Seven: Political Communication

Political communication is designed to elicit four different kinds of response: initiation, conversion, reinforcement and activation. Demonstrate in a speech about the abortion issue how each of these responses might take place.

1. In terms of regulation of the media how does the United States differ from France, Great Britain and Canada? In what nations does the government play the largest role? In what nations the least? Which system seems to offer the best access to unbiased and reliable news broadcasting?

2. Critics of the media often point to the political and structural bias of the media as a problem. What are these two concepts and how do they differ? What kind of problems does each type of bias produce? In what ways might each be corrected?

3. What are the three major requirements the FCC imposes on broadcasters? What is the reason the FCC feels justified in regulating the electronic media in ways that don't apply to the print media? What is the current status of the Fairness Doctrine? Why has the policy changed in recent years?

4. What is a news leak? Why will politicians deplore them but continue to use them? Do these in the media know they are being manipulated by leaks? How is the Watergate affair and "Deep Throat" an example of leaks being used by the press?

Chapter Eight: The Electoral Process

1. Survey Ranney's eight Essential Characteristics of Free Elections and briefly describe each characteristic. Then apply the principles to the United States today and indicate how well we meet his criteria.

2. Ranney discussed four major qualifications for voting. Explain the four criteria and then discuss how flexible you would be in those criteria for a truly democratic nation. For example, many nations have a voting age set at 18. What if it were 21? 25? 35? 40 or higher? At what point would that nation cease to be democratic? What if a nation allowed anyone to vote but had a very complicated registration system that deterred many prospective voters? Would it still be democratic?

3. In many political ratings the United States is commonly criticized for having a very low voting turnout (typically around 55% for presidential elections) compared to other democratic nations. Explain why, according to Ranney, this comparison may be wrong and that the U.S. may be more typical than is commonly assumed.

4. Assume you were in charge of designing your state's primary election system. Discuss the several options available to you, (such as the open, closed, cross-over or blanket primaries). What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? Which would you prefer and why?

5. Briefly explain the four basic types of referendum discussed in Ranney. Then indicate why a nation might find it worthwhile to use a referendum to make a decision. Use examples to illustrate the main purpose of using referendum in decision-making. What are some disadvantages to the referendum process?

Chapter Nine: Voting Behavior

1. In recent decades ticket-splitting has become more and more common in the United States. Why is this more true now than in the past and what have been the implications for policymaking?

2. In order for an issue to have impact on voting behavior three criteria must be met. Describe and explain the three criteria and give an example of how an issue rises to the public attention in this fashion.

3. Using Figure 9.1 explain the great electoral success of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. In particular why does the vote for President fluctuate so much more than that of the U.S. House or the party identifiers?

4. Why do the personalities of presidential candidates seem to matter more in the United States than in other nations? Is this changing in other nations? Why?

5. Ranney notes that "even in the heyday before 1968, party identification was obviously never the sole determinant of voting behavior." What were the other determinants or variables? What happened in the 1960s to change the mix?

Chapter Ten: Political Parties and Party Systems

1. Define and differentiate between broker and missionary parties. Explain the goals and purposes of each using the major parties and several minor parties in the United States as examples.
2. What does it mean to have a centralized nomination process? Explain and discuss this concept in terms of how the United States and Israel choose their candidates for office. Under what system do local interests have a larger voice?
3. In terms of party discipline compare and contrast the United States and the British party system. What powers of discipline does the leadership of an American political party have compared to those of Great Britain? What interests receive the most attention in each nation?
4. Survey and explain the “characteristics of the less fractionalized systems” as described by Ranney. What nations generally exhibit these characteristics and how do they differ from the nations that have the more fractionalized parties?
5. Outline and describe the three types of one-party systems described in the chapter. Offer examples of each type of system and indicate how they differ from each other.