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James Q. Wilson and John DiUlio: American Government: Study Guide

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JAMES Q. WILSON AND JOHN DI IULIO: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: STUDY GUIDE, 1997

Steven Alan Samson

Chapter One: The American System

Study Questions

1. List the two basic questions to be asked about American (or any other) government and show that they are distinct questions.
2. Explain what is meant by power in general human terms, and by political power in particular, relating the latter to authority, legitimacy, and democracy in the context of American government. Does a belief in the legitimacy of the political system imply trust in those running the government?
3. Distinguish among the three concepts of democracy (and give examples of each) mentioned in the chapter, explaining in which of three senses the textbook refers to American government as "democratic."
4. How is power distributed in a democracy? Differentiate between majoritarian politics and elitist politics, explaining the four major theories on the latter.
5. Explain how the phenomenon of political change tends to make political scientists cautious in stating how politics works, or what values dominate it. Why is a familiarity with history helpful in understanding how governments operate?

Identification

power
authority
legitimacy
democracy
democratic centralism
direct or participatory democracy
representative democracy
elite
Karl Marx and Marxism
C. Wright Mills and the power elite
plebiscite
Max Weber and bureaucracy
pluralism

Chapter Two: The Constitution

Study Questions

1. Compare the American and French revolutions of the same era with respect to the ideals

that motivated each.

2. Explain the notion of "higher law" by which the colonists felt they were entitled to certain "natural rights." List these rights.
3. Discuss the Declaration of Independence as a lawyer's brief prepared for court argument of a case.
4. Compare the basis on which the colonists felt a government could be legitimate with the basis of legitimacy assumed at the time in monarchies like the one in Great Britain.
5. List and discuss the shortcomings of government under the Articles of Confederation.
6. Discuss the background of the writers of the Constitution and explain why these men tended to be rather mistrustful of the notion of democracy.
7. Compare and contrast the Virginia and New Jersey plans, and show how they led to the "Great Compromise."
8. Explain why separation of powers and federalism became key parts of the Constitution. Hint: not to make the system more democratic. Another hint: not to make it more efficient, either!
9. Show how James Madison's notions of human nature played an important role in the framing of the Constitution.
10. Explain why a bill of rights was not included in the Constitution. Then explain why one was added.
11. Explain why the Founding Fathers failed to address the question of slavery in any definitive way.
12. Discuss the question of whether "women were left out of the Constitution."
13. Summarize Charles Beard's analysis of the economic motivations of the Framers, as well as counter-analyses of those who disagreed with Beard.
14. List and explain the two major types of constitutional reform advocated today, along with specific reform measures.

Chapter Three: Federalism

Study Questions

1. Explain the difference between federal and centralized (unified) systems of government, and give examples of each. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?
2. Show how competing political interests at the Constitutional Convention led to the adoption of a federal system, but one that was not clearly defined.
3. Outline the ways in which national and state powers were interpreted by the courts, and

how the doctrine of "dual federalism" came to be a dead letter of the law. What historic role has been played by "nullification?"

4. State the reasons why federal grants-in-aid to the states have been politically popular, and cite what have proved to be the pitfalls of such grants.
5. Distinguish between categorical grants and block grants or general revenue sharing.
6. Explain why, despite repeated attempts to reverse the trend, categorical grants have continued to grow more rapidly than block grants. Why have they generated rivalries among the states?
7. Distinguish between mandates and conditions of aid with respect to federal grant programs to states and localities. How have presidents and various states responded?
8. Discuss whether or to what extent federal grants to the states have succeeded in creating uniform national policies comparable to those of centralized governments.

Identification

Article VI
intergovernmental lobby
McCulloch v. Maryland
Tenth Amendment

Chapter Four

Study Questions

1. Define what scholars mean by political culture, and list some of the dominant aspects of political culture in the United States.
2. Discuss how American citizens compare with those of other countries in their political attitudes.
3. List the contributions to American political culture made by the Revolution, by the nation's religious heritages, and by the family. Explain the apparent absence of class consciousness in this country.
4. Explain why some observers are quite concerned about the growth of mistrust in government and why others regard this mistrust as normal and healthy.
5. Define internal and external feelings of *political efficacy*, and explain how the level of each has varied over the past generation.
6. Explain why a certain level of political tolerance is necessary to the conduct of democratic politics, and review the evidence that indicates just how much political tolerance exists in this country. Agree or disagree with the text's conclusion that no group is truly free of political intolerance.

Identification

Americanism
culture war
democracy
equality
equality of opportunity
liberty
rights
secular humanism

Chapter Twenty-Three: Who Governs?

Study Questions

1. Provide definitions and examples of the four types of policy outputs of government.
2. Explain the function of public opinion in the four types of policy outputs and indicate under what circumstances the public is most influential and least influential.
3. Describe the Marxist, elitist, bureaucratic, and pluralist theories. Explain the utilities and shortcomings of each theory as described by the text.

Identification

bureaucratic theory
client politics
elite theory
entrepreneurial politics
interest-group politics
legitimacy barrier
majoritarian politics
Marxist theory
pluralist theory

Chapter Twenty-Four: To What Ends?

Study Questions

1. Identify the key factors associated with the growth of government.
2. Describe the restraints on the growth of government.
3. Discuss the consequences of activist government.
4. Assess the influence of the political structure and of ideas on the process of serving some goals rather than others.
5. Explain how the political system has changed and evaluate proposals for reforming it.

Identification

line-item veto
New System
Old System
term limits

Chapter Twenty-Five: State and Local Government

Study Questions

1. Explain the differences between the "Jacksonian" and the "progressive" approaches to government, and show how these manifest themselves in state and local politics.
2. State why the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution has come to mean very little.
3. Differentiate between the standing of the states and of lower levels of government in the U.S. Constitution.
4. Compare and contrast state governors, legislatures, and political parties with their opposite numbers in the federal government.
5. Show how reformed and unreformed city governments differ from one another, and explain the resulting differences in policy outcomes.
6. Differentiate among the different structures used for smaller local governments.
7. Discuss the severe tax problems that states and cities face today, and analyze the historical and political sources of those problems.
8. Explain how state and local politics become federal politics, using crime control as an example.