

Political Ideologies

Ideologies shape how people think about and see the world.

Ideologies are worldviews that contain assumptions and value judgments.

Political ideologies assume things about human nature, freedom, and equality. The particular ideology that shapes your political worldview will determine your understanding of what freedom and equality consist of.



Republicanism

Republicanism promotes civic virtue and active participation in the political process.

Republicanism argues that political participation is an important form of education for the individual. Republicans believe that self-fulfillment and self-perfection require active participation in the affairs of the community. Furthermore, cooperation with others in self-government is a means to achieving the common good of the community.

Republicanism, as an ideology, was influential in republics.

Historically, republics were small and existed at the city-state level.

The founding of the United States was an experiment in republicanism on a large scale.



Liberalism

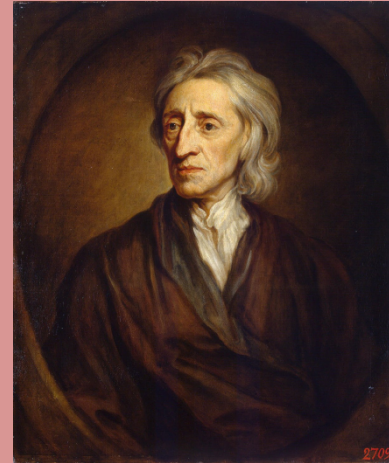
Liberalism promotes individual liberty, limited government, and rationalism/empiricism.

Liberalism argues that individuals are rational and capable of governing themselves, therefore, government should maximize the individual's freedom to do so. Liberals promote equal opportunity and equal protection.

Liberalism, as an ideology, was influential in the American Revolution French Revolution.

Historically, liberal societies have legal and political equality, religious toleration and pluralism, freedom of press and speech, and healthy literary and scientific communities.

The U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights are examples of how liberal principles are used to govern society and promote individualism.



Liberalism Divided

Liberalism has always contained a tension between individual liberty and equal treatment/opportunity.

For example, economic freedom in the marketplace may have to be curtailed in order to guarantee equal treatment (ex: racial discrimination).

The liberals of the early 19th century adhered to a *laissez-faire* approach to economic policy. The government should have a minimal role in regulating the marketplace in order to maximize individual freedom.

After the Industrial Revolution, liberals began to split over the degree to which the government should continue to prioritize freedom in the marketplace over other types of freedom: freedom to learn and receive education, freedom to enjoy good health and recreation, freedom to experience a quality life that meets basic needs of shelter, clothing, and food, freedom to have dignity in old-age, etc.

By the late 19th century and early 20th century, liberals were split into two camps: *laissez-faire classical* liberals and *welfare state* liberals.

Liberalism Divided

The United States is a constitutional republic/representative democracy that is characterized as a liberal democracy.

Liberalism influenced the *design* of the government, while republicanism influenced the political *culture* and the political process.

The political disagreements between American “conservatives” (Republican Party) and American “liberals” (Democratic Party) are actually a debate **WITHIN** the tradition of liberalism.

Politically, Republicans and Democrats are **LIBERALS** in the historical sense.

Philosophically, Republicans are influenced by conservatism and liberalism.

Philosophically, Democrats are influenced by liberalism and progressivism/socialism.

Conservatism (Republican Party)

Classical conservatism: Monarchy, aristocracy, and state religion.

Burkean conservatism: Critical of liberalism's promotion of individualism at the expense of the community and tradition. Favors incremental, empirical change over radical, idealistic schemes.

Individualist (libertarian) conservatism: Opposed to government's increased regulation of the marketplace. Opposed to the rise of welfare state liberalism. Favors maximizing individual freedom and minimizing government power.

Neo-conservatism: Disenchanted welfare state liberals who think that government's attempt to fix social problems has only created more problems. Skeptical, like Burkeans, of welfare liberal plans to fix everything through government initiatives. Believe that liberalism has emphasized individualism too much and that "liberal culture" must be reigned in (do NOT like the 1960s). Believe that democracy should be spread throughout the world (supported the Iraq War in 2003).

Social conservatism/Religious Right: Christians who share the neo-conservative concern that "liberal culture" is undermining shared values. Support using the powers of government to legislate morality, which can be at odds with the individualist (libertarian) conservative goal of maximizing individual freedom.

Liberalism (Democratic Party)

Welfare liberalism: Believes that the government must regulate the marketplace in order to create equal opportunity and guarantee equal protection. Accepts that economic freedom may need to be curtailed in order to create equal opportunity (ex: tax everyone to fund education, health care, etc.)

Progressive liberalism/social democracy: Insists that the government should increasingly regulate the marketplace in order to achieve desirable social, economic, and environmental outcomes. Specific industries may be heavily regulated or run by the government. Levels of taxation will be higher in order to subsidize child care, college, health insurance, etc.

Progressives and social democrats support a transition from “liberal democracy” to the “social democracy” that exists in Western and Northern Europe (ex: Great Britain, France, Germany, Scandinavia).