

## Unit 1 - Key Definitions used.

**Politics** – the process of influencing the actions and policies of government

**Government** – the institutions that make up the system of policymaking

**Constitution** - a body of fundamental principles or established precedents according to which a state or other organization is acknowledged to be governed.

**Democracy** – a system of government where power is held by the people, including free and fair elections and civil rights and liberties [Greek demos meaning “people” and kratos meaning “power”]

**Natural Rights** – the right to life, liberty, and property, which government cannot take away

**Social Contract** – an agreement between the people and the government where the people give up some freedoms and allow their government to rule over them to ensure an orderly and functioning society

**Popular Sovereignty** – the idea that the government’s right to rule comes from the consent of the people

**Limited Government** – a system in which the authority of the government is not absolute

**Republican Government** – a system in which the people elect representatives to carry out their wishes

**Inalienable Rights** – rights the government cannot take away

**Liberty** – social, political, and economic freedoms

**The Participatory Democratic Theory** – a theory that widespread participation in politics and civil society is essential to democratic government. This includes Civil Society Groups - independent associations outside the government’s control.

**Ballot Initiatives and Referenda:** These are mechanisms where citizens can propose and vote on laws directly, bypassing the legislature in some cases. For instance, a state might hold a vote on whether to legalize recreational marijuana or on changes to environmental regulations.

**Town Hall Meetings:** These are opportunities for elected officials, both local and national, to engage with constituents, hear their concerns, and discuss proposed legislation.

**Online Participatory Platforms:** Digital tools are increasingly used to gather public input on various issues. Examples include online forums for budget allocation, where citizens can suggest how public money should be spent, or online platforms for community feedback on local development plans.

**Participatory Budgeting:** Some cities and towns have experimented with participatory budgeting, where citizens directly decide how to allocate a portion of the public budget.

**Citizen Involvement in Policy Development:** In some cases, citizens are directly involved in the development of policy proposals, such as through community workshops or public forums. For example, after Hurricane Katrina, plans for rebuilding New Orleans were drafted and approved by thousands of citizens.

**Pluralist Theory** – a theory of democracy that emphasizes the role of nongovernmental group-based activism in an effort to impact the policymaking process.

**Elite Theory** – A theory of democracy based on the premise that participation in politics and civil society is limited because elites have a disproportionate amount of influence in the policymaking process.

**Totalitarianism** is total governmental control

**Authoritarianism** is the micromanagement of citizens via government structure, military control, tyranny.

**Monarchy** is the rule of one; undivided rule; typically hereditary rule; backed by oligarchical power.

**Oligarchy** is the rule of a few (well-connected socially, financially, physically powerful), elites rule.

**Republic** is the indirect rule of citizens through representation; rule of law; limited government.

**Direct Democracy** is the rule of citizens; simple majority rule; no restraint on majority

**Anarchy** is when there is no order/control; no government structure; power vacuum.

**Unicameral** – having a one-house legislature

**Bicameral** – having a two-house legislature

**Ratification** is the process of formally approving and confirming something, often a treaty, agreement, or law, making it legally binding. It is essentially the act of giving something official validation and support. Nine of the Thirteen states had to ratify the Constitution for it to take effect.

**Federalists:** supporters of the proposed Constitution, who called for a strong, national government.

**Antifederalists:** those opposed to the proposed Constitution, who favored strong state governments.

**Federalism** is a system that divides power between the national and state governments.

**Implied Powers** are powers not granted specifically to the national government but implied from the **necessary and proper clause** to carry out the **enumerated** powers.

**Enumerated powers** are the powers granted to the Federal government, and specifically Congress, which are mostly listed in Article I, Section 8 of the U.S Constitution.

**Necessary and Proper Clause** – this grants the federal government the authority to pass laws required to carry out its enumerated powers. This clause is also called the Elastic Clause

**Reserved Powers** are not given to the national government; they are retained by the states and the people.

**Concurrent Powers** are when the states and the national government are given the authority to act in certain areas of public policy. The Constitution grants powers to both states and the federal government.

**Thirteenth Amendment:** the constitutional amendment that outlawed slavery.

**Fourteenth Amendment:** the constitutional amendment that provides that persons born in the United States are citizens and prohibits states from denying persons due process or equal protection under the law.

**Fifteenth Amendment:** the constitutional amendment that prohibits the denial of voting rights on the basis of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, which gave Black male citizens the right to vote.

**Grants-in-aid:** This is federal money provided to states to implement public policy objectives.

**Categorical Grants:** national funding to states where spending is specifically restricted to certain categories.

**Devolution** is when the federal government gives more authority to the states.

**Block Grants** are a type of grant preferred by states that give state officials more authority over how these federal funds can be spent. Block Grants reduce the federal influence over the states.

**Revenue sharing** is when the federal government apportions tax money to the states with no strings attached, they can be used for any governmental purpose.

**Full Faith and Credit Clause** mandates that each state must respect the "public acts, records, and judicial proceedings" of every other state. This means states are generally required to honor the laws, records, and court decisions of other states.