

America as a Baseline

I. The American System

A. Critical Historical Junctures

B. Culture and Identity

C. Governance and Policy-Making

D. Representation and Participation

E. Political Economy

II. American 'Exceptionalism'

A. How America is Different

B. Why America is Different



A. Critical Historical Junctures

- The American Revolution
 - Life and Politics in Colonial America
 - Seven Years [French and Indian] War (1756-63)
 - British Debt and American Taxes
 - “No taxation without representation”
- Articles of Confederation and Turmoil
- Constitutional Convention, Philadelphia 1787

America's 'Balanced Constitution'

- Separation of Powers
 - Separate branches with separate personnel chosen by different methods of election and constituencies
- Checks and Balances
 - Division of authority and control across executive, legislative and judicial branches
- Federalism
 - Division of authority between national and state governments

A. Critical Historical Junctures

- The Civil War and Reconstruction
 - Dominance of federal over state government
 - National citizenship
- The New Deal
 - Increased economic regulation and vastly expanded government activity
- The Cold War
 - America as an active player on the world stage
- (Temporary) Retreat of Big Government
 - Regan Revolution through Clinton's Welfare Reform, but..
 - Back with a vengeance under Bush and Obama

B. Culture and Identity

- The 'American Creed' – A belief in....
 - Democracy
 - Political and legal equality
 - Limited government
 - Individual values over collective values
 - Free market capitalism
 - Upward mobility (The 'American Dream')
 - America as an example

C. Governance and Policy-Making

- President
 - Formal v. Informal Powers (Persuasion)
- Congress
 - Constitutional Basis
 - Legislative Process
- Independent Judiciary
- Federalism and State Powers (EX: Education)
- Combined = Comparatively WEAK national government

D. Representation and Participation

■ Political Parties

- Two Party system from electoral system (single member plurality districts) and incorporation of third party ideas
- Party Weakness (Primaries and Campaign Finance)

■ Interest Groups

- Money and Influence

E. Political Economy

- Low Social Welfare Spending (Health, Education, Unemployment)
- Indirect Economic Control (Fiscal and Monetary)
- Pro-Market Regulation

Total Government Spending as Percentage of GDP :

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
US	39.0%	41.6%
Germany	44.0%	47.1%
UK	48.1%	52.4%
France	52.7%	55.4%
Sweden	51.9%	57.0%

II. American Exceptionalism

A. How America is Different:

■ Culture

- Dominance of 'American Creed'
- Low Political Involvement

■ Institutions

- Separation of Powers and Divided Government
- Weak Political Parties (Primaries)

■ Public Policy

- Government Expected to Do Less

II. American Exceptionalism

B. Why America is Different:

- Wealth
 - Upward Mobility/Low Salience of Social Class
 - Immigration
- Culture
- Institutions
 - Weak and inefficient state reduces desire for government activity