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

- Seymour Martin Lipset’s ‘American Creed’ – A belief in.....
  - **Liberty**: Democracy and Limited Government
  - **Egalitarianism**: Political, legal, NOT economic equality, BUT with upward mobility (The ‘American Dream’)
  - **Individualism**: Individual values over collective values
  - **Populism**: Rule of the People
  - **Laissez-Faire**: Free market capitalism
- All adds up to “American Exceptionalism”
- America as an Example (‘Shining City on a Hill’; ‘The Last, Best Hope for Mankind’)
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
  - Persistent Myths and Changing Patterns
Major PAC Contributors to Congress (last election cycle)

Source: www.OpenSecrets.org

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAC Name</th>
<th>Total Amount</th>
<th>Dem Pct</th>
<th>Repub Pct</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Assn of Realtors</td>
<td>$3,773,296</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>43%</td>
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<td>Honeywell International</td>
<td>$3,645,200</td>
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<td>AT&amp;T Inc</td>
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<td>National Auto Dealers Assn</td>
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<td>International Assn of Fire Fighters</td>
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<td>18%</td>
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<td>Credit Union National Assn</td>
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<td>Teamsters Union</td>
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<td>American Fedn of St/Cnty/Munic Employees</td>
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<td>American Federation of Teachers</td>
<td>$2,302,250</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carpenters &amp; Joiners Union</td>
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<td>Plumbers/Pipefitters Union</td>
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E. Political Economy

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

Total Government Spending as Percentage of GDP:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2010</th>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
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Source: OECD
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**
  - Always a Wealthy Nation
  - Upward Mobility (Still?)
  - Immigration

- **Culture**

- **Institutions**
  - Weak and inefficient state reduces desire for government activity