

Chapter 1: Principles of Government

Section 3

Lecture Notes



AMERICAN
GOVERNMENT

PEARSON

► Objectives

1. Understand the foundations of democracy.
2. Analyze the connections between democracy and the free enterprise system.

▶ Key Terms

- **majority rule:** the principle that the will of the majority controls the actions of government
- **compromise:** the process of blending and adjusting competing views and interests
- **citizen:** one who holds certain rights and responsibilities within a state
- **free enterprise system:** an economic system characterized by the private ownership of capital goods, private investment, and a competitive marketplace that determines success or failure

- What are the basic concepts of democracy?
 - Recognition of the fundamental worth and dignity of every person
 - Respect for the equality of all persons
 - Faith in majority rule and an insistence upon minority rights
 - Acceptance of the necessity of compromise
 - Insistence upon the widest possible degree of individual freedom

▶ Worth of the Individual

- Democracy is based on a belief in the dignity and worth of every individual.
- Individuals can be forced to do things that serve the good of the many, like paying taxes.
- Respect for individuals means that serving the many should not be a case of simply benefiting the majority over the minority, but of trying to meet the needs of *all* individuals in society.

► Equality of All Persons

- Checkpoint: To what are citizens entitled under the democratic concept of equality?
 - All citizens are entitled to equality of opportunity and equality before the law.
 - This means that no person should be held back based on gender, race, color, or religion.



▶ Equality of All Persons, cont.

- Every person must be free to develop as fully as they wish. Achieving this goal of equality is an ongoing process.
- For example, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ruled that segregated schools were unequal.



► Majority Rules, Minority Rights

- Democracy holds that the majority will be right more often than it is wrong and will be right more often than any small group.
- The majority will not always make the best decisions or even the right decisions, but in a democracy their choices can be improved or changed over time.
- The majority must respect the rights of minorities and listen to their viewpoint.

▶ Necessity of Compromise

- Compromise is a key part of the democratic process.
 - In a society made of many equal individuals with different opinions and interests, public decisions require compromises.
 - Most public issues can be addressed in several ways.
 - Determining which way best meets the needs of the public also requires compromise.

► Necessity of Compromise, cont.

- Compromise is a way of reaching majority agreement. Not all compromises are good or necessary.
 - Who do the chefs represent in this cartoon?



▶ Individual Freedom

- Democracy cannot allow complete individual freedom, which would lead to anarchy and lawlessness.
- Democracy does require that each individual be as free as possible without interfering with the freedom of others.
- Democratic government works constantly to find the balance between individual freedom and government authority.

► Citizenship

- Every democratic citizen has duties that they *must* obey.
- Each citizen also has responsibilities that they *should* fulfill to improve the quality of their government and community.



► Citizenship Overview

Duties	Responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serving on a jury• Serving as a witness• Attending school• Paying taxes• Obeying local, state, and national laws• Draft registration• Respecting the rights of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Voting• Volunteering• Participating in civic life• Understanding the workings of our government

▶ How Free Enterprise Works

- Free enterprise, also called capitalism, is an economic system based on private ownership, individual initiative, profit, and competition.
- Individuals, not the government, decide what to make, how to make it, at what price to sell it, and whether to buy it.
 - Greater demand tends to increase prices, while lower demand tends to decrease them.

▶ Government and Free Enterprise

- Both democracy and free enterprise are based on the idea of individual freedom.
- U.S. government involvement in the economy is aimed at protecting both the public and private enterprise.
- The government regulates many economic activities to encourage competition and protect public welfare.
- The government also offers many essential services, such as public education and transportation.

► Review

- Now that you have learned about the basic concepts of democracy, go back and answer the Chapter Essential Question.
 - Is government necessary?