

## Variations on Democracy: U.S. vs. England

- England – parliamentary
- U.S. – Congress & Constitution
- English Parliament
  - Rubber stamps legislation
  - No regular elections
  - Cannot sue the government
  - Only national laws, no local laws

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## U.S. vs. England

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| ■ U.S.                              | ■ England                              |
| ■ Schools controlled at local level | ■ Schools controlled at national level |
| ■ Anyone can run for office         | ■ Party leaders decide                 |
| ■ Unions less powerful              | ■ Unions more powerful                 |
| ■ Religion important in politics    | ■ Religion plays a minimal role        |
| ■ Activist Courts                   | ■ Decisions by leg.                    |
| ■ Treaties ratified by Senate       | ■ Prime Minister's signature           |

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## Structure of U.S. Gov't

- Congress – Legislative – makes laws
  - Senate & House of Representatives
- President – Executive – enforces laws
- Courts – Judicial – interprets laws

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## Key Political Concepts

- **Government** – Government consists of those institutions that have the authority to make decisions binding on the whole society.
- **Politics** – Politics is the activity generated by the conflict over who will run the government and what decisions it will make.

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## Key Political Concepts, continued

- **Power** – The ability of one person to cause another person to act in accordance with the first person's intentions.
- **Authority** – The right to use power.
- **Legitimacy** – What makes a law or constitution a source of right.

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## Meaning of Democracy

- **Democratic Centralism** – serves the true interests of the people
  - Soviet Union, Cuba
- **Direct Democracy** – all citizens participate in making laws.
  - New England town hall meetings
- **Representative Democracy** – We elect people to represent us and vote on our behalf.
  - United States

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## Why Choose Rep. Dem. over Direct Democracy

- Practicality
  - Cannot get everyone involved
- Less vulnerable to emotions
- Easier to reach compromise

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## Conditions Necessary for Rep. Democracy to Exist

- Freedom of speech
- Freedom to organize
- Access to political resources
- Respect for other's opinions
- Political legitimacy

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## Forms of Representative Democracy

- Parliamentary System
  - Power vested in a legislature
  - Prime Minister chosen by legislature
  - Centralized power
- Presidential System
  - Power vested in separate institutions
    - President, Congress, Courts.
  - President chosen by the people
  - Power decentralized

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## Failures of the Presidential System

- Too many road blocks
  - Congress
  - President
  - Courts
  - States
- No one held accountable

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## Theories of Who Governs

- **Marxism** – People who believe that those who control the economic system also control the political one.
  - Focus is on the means of production
  - Gov't is controlled by a dominate social class

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## Theories of Who Governs, continued

- **Power Elite** – A theory that states that the government is run by a core of elite wealthy individuals.
  - Less emphasis on economics than Marxism
  - Three core groups
    - Corporate leaders
    - Top military leaders
    - Key political leaders

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### Theories of Who Governs, continued

- **Bureaucratic** – The government is run by appointed bureaucrats who have life terms, and do not have to answer to anyone.
  - Political & social aspects
  - Career specialists

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### Theories of Who Governs, continued

- **Pluralist** – The belief that political resources are divided among different kinds of elites.
  - Different institutions within gov't & society

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