4. Political Beliefs and Behavior
4.1 Processes By Which Citizens Learn About Politics
4.2 Political Participation
4.3 Public Opinion
4.4 Beliefs That Citizens Hold About Governments and Its Leaders

4.5 Political Culture

4.6 The Influence of Public Opinion on Political Leaders
4.1. Processes By Which Citizens Learn About Politics
Mass Media
Religious Institutions
Schools
Workplace
Community
Some political cultures stress citizen involvement.

Others try to exclude participation by the masses.
4.2. Political Participation
USCIS citizenship requirements:

1. Reside in the U.S.
2. Speak, read, write English
3. “Favorable disposition”
4. Commitment to Constitution

5. Knowledge of American government!
Voting Factors:

- Education
- Income
- Socioeconomic status
- Age
- Political party affiliation
Party affliction affected by generation

- Millennials tend to be Democrats
- Baby Boomers tend to be Republican
Party affliction affected by region

North more industrialized

South more agrarian
Most significant influence is the individual’s family

Party identification does not change much from youth
The “normal vote” predicts the number of votes Democratic and Republican candidates will receive.

Candidates can then predict where to concentrate their resources.
How USA voted 2016

The winning margin in thousands
Sociotropic voters
Valence issues
Issue salience
Self-interest principle
And some people don’t vote based on issues at all....
Name recognition also influences vote

- Eddie Murphy
4.3. Public Opinion
**Beliefs** – closely held ideas that support values & expectations about life & politics

**Attitudes** – the preferences we form based on our experiences & values

Beliefs and attitudes form opinions that can be measured.
[A] Are you:
1. [ ] Male  2. [ ] Female

[B] Are you:
1. [ ] White  4. [ ] Asian
2. [ ] Black  5. [ ] Other
3. [ ] Hispanic/Latino

[C] In today’s Democratic presidential primary, did you just vote for:
1. [ ] Bill Clinton
2. [ ] Other: Who?

[D] Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President?
1. [ ] Approve
2. [ ] Disapprove

[E] What was the last grade of school you completed?
1. [ ] Did not complete high school
2. [ ] High school graduate
3. [ ] Some college, but no degree
4. [ ] College graduate
5. [ ] Postgraduate study

[F] Are you:
1. [ ] Protestant  4. [ ] Jewish
2. [ ] Catholic  5. [ ] Something else
3. [ ] Other Christian  6. [ ] None

[G] Do you approve or disapprove of the way Hillary Rodham Clinton is handling her role as first lady?
1. [ ] Approve  2. [ ] Disapprove

[H] To which age group do you belong?
1. [ ] 17-24  5. [ ] 45-49
2. [ ] 25-29  6. [ ] 50-59
3. [ ] 30-39  7. [ ] 60-64
4. [ ] 40-44  8. [ ] 65 or over

[I] Do you think Bill Clinton’s positions on the issues are:
1. [ ] Too liberal
2. [ ] Too conservative
3. [ ] About right

[J] No matter how you voted today, do you usually think of yourself as:
1. [ ] Democrat  3. [ ] Independent
2. [ ] Republican  4. [ ] Something else

[K] On most political matters, do you consider yourself:
1. [ ] Very liberal
2. [ ] Somewhat liberal
3. [ ] Moderate
4. [ ] Somewhat conservative
5. [ ] Very conservative

[L] 1995 total family income:
1. [ ] Under $15,000  4. [ ] $50,000-$74,999
2. [ ] $15,000-$29,999  5. [ ] $75,000-$99,999
3. [ ] $30,000-$49,999  6. [ ] $100,000 or more

Please fold the questionnaire and put it in the box. Thank you.
Theory of polling:

Random selection

Size of poll

Variation
Types of opinion:
Consensus
Divided
Bimodal
Normal distribution
Table distribution
4.4. Beliefs That Citizens Hold About Government and Its Leaders
Ideology changes more quickly than beliefs and values.

Most Americans do not identify with a particular ideology.

If they do, it is usually either Conservatism or Liberalism.
Fascism

Authoritarianism
Capitalism: the people acquire wealth and keep the proceeds of their work (U.S.)

Communism: common ownership of property and production controlled by the government (former U.S.S.R.)
U.S. citizens have become less trusting of governmental institutions
We the People
4.5 Political Culture
Political culture can be defined as the shared attitudes of a people regarding a government
Political socialization

The processes by which we are trained to understand and join a country's political world

Primary principles

Structuring principles
Diffuse support

• High level of stability in politics

• Acceptance of the government as legitimate

• Common goal of preserving the system
Why don’t people vote?

Elite theory
Low political efficacy
Decline in social capital
Rational choice theory
4.6. The Influence of Public Opinion on Political Leaders
Horserace coverage – The media calls out the candidate’s every move

Bandwagon effect – the media pays attention to candidates who poll well early… which gives those candidates momentum
The correlation between polling & elections is clearer than the correlation between polling & government officials.
Exit polls – are the last polls taken by the media controversial... do they convince people to stay home?