

# **From Ancient Ideas to Modern Governance**

Political Theory and Policy

POSC 315: Introduction to Public Policy

Lecture 1 (Part 2 of 3)

Summer 2025

California State University, Fullerton

# Political Theory, Quickly

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## **Why Political Theory Matters for Public Policy:**

- Provides a foundation for understanding governance
- Reveals competing values in policy debates
- Helps us understand the purpose of policy
- Frames how we conceptualize problems and solutions

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- Sets the stage for Western ideas about hierarchy and authority

# The Greeks: Foundations of Political Philosophy

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Ethics and justice in  
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## Aristotle

Empirical approach to politics; governments must promote virtue and balance

# Renaissance & Early Modern Thinkers

**Machiavelli**

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Politics as power; pragmatism  
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*The Prince* (1513)

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Knowledge as power; science and governance intertwined

*New Atlantis* (1627)

# The Enlightenment

Hobbes

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Social contract; strong authority  
prevents chaos

*Leviathan* (1651)

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Separation of powers to avoid tyranny

*Spirit of Laws* (1748)

# The American Regime

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- Key principles: liberty, equality, and a government of the people
- Continuing influence: Lincoln, Roosevelt(s), King, and others, interpreting liberalism in different eras

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# 20th Century Theorists

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Justice as fairness; prioritizing the least advantaged

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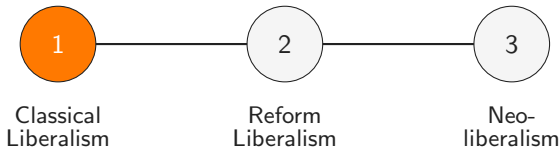
Pragmatism and the role of public engagement in policy

### Lasswell

“Who gets what, when, and how”—the essence of politics

# The Evolution of Liberalism

Liberalism evolves as a response to changing societal needs and economic conditions:



## Classical Liberalism

Rooted in the Enlightenment, emphasizing individual freedoms, limited government, and free markets

*18th - 19th Century*

# The Evolution of Liberalism

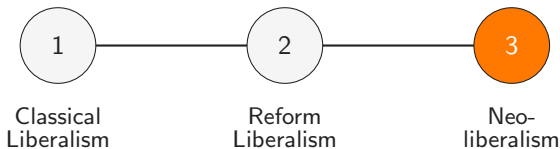


## Reform Liberalism

Emerges in response to industrialization; advocates for government intervention to address inequality and promote welfare

*Early - Mid 20th Century*

# The Evolution of Liberalism



## Neoliberalism

Reacts to perceived inefficiencies of the welfare state; prioritizes market solutions with reduced government roles

*Late 20th Century - Present*

This progression reflects ongoing debates about liberty, equality, and the proper role of the state.

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## 4. Framework

Reveal fundamental beliefs about the state that frame policy debates

# Reflection Activity

## Example: Climate Change Policy

### Classical Liberal Approach

- Market-based solutions
- Property rights protection
- Limited regulation

### Reform Liberal Approach

- Government intervention
- Regulatory frameworks
- Public investment

# Key Takeaways

- **Historical Evolution:** Political thought has evolved over centuries, shaping how we understand government's role
- **Competing Values:** Different theories emphasize different values (liberty, equality, community)
- **Modern Framework:** Liberalism in its various forms provides the framework for most contemporary policy debates
- **Foundation for Policy:** These theories guide how we identify problems and propose solutions

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## Coming Up Next

In Part 3, we'll explore policy as a tool for pursuing the common good and expressing societal values.