AP & US Government   
Political Attitudes and Economic Systems Cheat Sheet

**Political Attitudes**

Reactionary – support rapid and drastic retrogressive change

* Significant distrust of government
* Believe government has violated the national sovereignty of the individual, given by God
* Seek to roll back or reverse power of government in a way that’s revolutionary and drastic
* Willing to use illegal and violent means to do so

Conservative – support either little/no change (status quo) or gradual and modest retrospective change

* Support similar values as reactionaries but are less drastic about change
* On economic policy: support less government intervention
  + Economic values: individual freedom, property rights, self-responsibility, strong work ethic
  + Values lead to the following policies: roll back or at least limit restrictions on business and industry; no new regulations
  + Seek to limit taxation on businesses, personal property, and incomes
  + Rationale: by cutting back on taxes and red-tape regulations, businesses and industry have more incentive to produce more goods
  + Cut government spending to encourage investment in the economy
* On social policy: seek more government involvement to ensure respect for authority and tradition, support for decency and morality
  + Leads to conservative policy views on abortion, school prayer, Internet censorship, obscenity, etc.
  + Also stress the values of order and security – freedom and liberty in regards to speech, press, religion, war protesting, criminal due process, etc. are important but these freedoms must be tempered and can be limited due to the need for order and security

Moderate (centrists) – most content with the status quo

* May call for some change, but changes are generally minor
* A blend of liberal and conservative ideology
* Place more emphasis on pragmatism than pure ideology

Liberal – support more gradual and modest progressive change

* Liberal values: greater open-mindedness, acceptance, tolerance for diversity and differences
* Equality and empowerment of the less fortunate and less powerful
* Optimistic view of human nature – belief that humans will do the right thing if given the chance; humans are able to serve the common good
* Classic liberalism and economic policy (17th, 18th, mid-19th centuries): wanted to liberate masses from tyrannical authority/monarchs; empower common masses with more wealth and property; supported private ownership of property – this led to greater equality and empowerment of the masses
* Modern liberalism and economic policy (mid-19th century to present): industrialization produced more distinct and divided socio-economic classes and a tendency for labor to be exploited and taken advantage of by private industry; thus, individuals need government protection from potential abuses of big businesses and industry
* Modern liberalism policy examples: environmental protection, price controls, increased public spending for education, health, etc.
* Liberals do support capitalism and basic free enterprise as long as business is regulated to protect basic consumer and labor needs
* When fairness and equality in capitalism is achieved, economic prosperity and growth will follow (by closing income inequality gaps, all will prosper)

Radical – support drastic and rapid progressive change

* Like reactionaries, radicals are willing to resort to illegal or violent methods to achieve goals.
* Like reactionaries, radicals have an intense dislike and distrust of government
* Radicals believe that government has conspired or collaborated to keep the wealthy economic/corporate elites in control to suppress the less powerful masses. The collective working masses (most of the people) have been kept down by government, which is in alliance with major economic industries – oil companies, defense contractors, energy companies, etc.
* Seek to drastically redistribute wealth and create more class equality
* Share many core liberal views, like equality, faith in human goodness, and tolerance, but are willing to go to extremes to achieve them