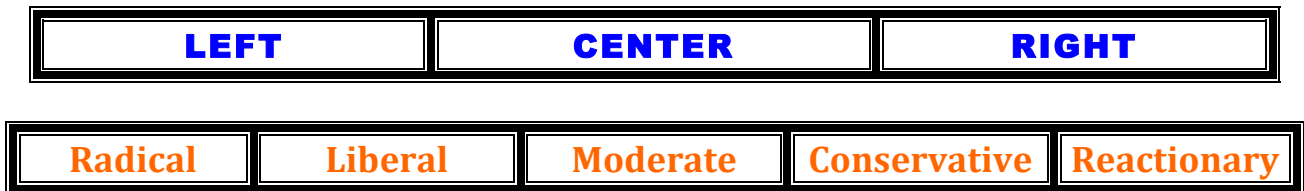


IDEOLOGY AND THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SPECTRUM

An “ideology” is a worldview or way of life that impacts how beliefs held by an individual, party, class or group are articulated.

Key dimensions of an American political ideology are related to what is often termed the “American Political Spectrum.” Graphically the spectrum looks something like this.



Description and Characteristics

Liberal

Government can be a positive force for assisting with social and economic problems
Government has responsibility for public betterment
Opposes intrusion into personal matters (abortion, contraception, privacy)
High proportion Democrats

Radical

Extreme change advocate sometimes including behavior beyond the bounds of established law

Moderate

Middle of the road
Swing effect
Dominant identification according to survey research

Conservative

Better off without government social and financial assistance
Free-market perspective with strong individual responsibility emphasis
State and local support preferable to federal support
Support government intrusion in some areas (moral conduct, security issues)
High proportion Republicans

Reactionary

Extreme status quo advocate sometimes including behavior beyond the bounds of established law