The American Dream is rarely achieved in the first generation.

We have conflicting ideas about immigration - celebrate our immigrant past, but close our borders to the future.

Proposition 187 - passed in California in 1994, restricting the public services to illegal immigrants.

Albert Einstein said that most people are incapable of expressing opinions that differ much from the prejudices of their social upbringing.

Ethnocentrism - belief in the superiority of your own nation or ethnic group. Based on your background, attitudes and biases.

Our social environment explains, or at least shapes, our opinions and prejudices.

A LAND OF DIVERSITY

US holds a promise of religious, political, and economic freedom. A place of opportunity for the enterprising - our economic system has provided widespread opportunity for individuals to improve their economic standing.

Some elements of our diversity have political significance.

Political Socialization - the process by which parents and others teach children about political values, beliefs and attitudes. It strongly influences how individuals see politics and which political party they prefer. Where we live, who we are in terms of age, education, religion, and occupation affect how we vote.

Demographics - study of the characteristics of population (age, wealth, etc.)

Political Predispositions - persons in certain demographic categories tend to vote alike and to have certain predispositions in common which sometimes predict political behavior.

When social and economic differences coincide, they reinforce each other and make the differences between groups more important.

Reinforcing Cleavages - divisions within society that reinforce one another - making groups more homogenous or similar.

Cross-Cutting Cleavages - instances where differences among people do not reinforce each other but rather create counterpulls.

PG. 111- IMMIGRATION/CENSUS DEBATE

In some societies politics centers largely on passions over economic and religious differences.

We Americans often prefer to associate only with people “like us” and are suspicious of people “like them.”

For much of our history, minorities have been excluded from full participation in American political and economic life.

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Sexual Orientation

The homosexual community has become important politically in several cities, especially San Francisco.

Both parties have openly gay members in Congress.
2000-Vermont became first state to enact legislation granting a gay and lesbian couples “civil union” status.

- Massachusetts ruled in summer, 2003 it would be discriminating to not allow gay marriages.
- “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy of US military.
- Human Rights Campaign- advocate group for eliminating restrictions based on sexual orientation.
- Policies relating to sexual orientation are among the most contentious in our society.

Family Structure
- Traditional family- mother, father married with children in the home –changing to a wide variety of living arrangements lately.
- Americans are much more likely to accept premarital sex than in the 1970s.
- Cohabit- live with someone of the opposite sex to whom you’re not married. This is more accepted, almost expected now.
- Cohabitation raises public policy questions as whether live-in partners should be eligible for employment benefits and welfare payments.
- People now marry later in life- 50% of marriages today end in divorce, the average marriage lasts 7.2 years.
- Birthrates have steadily declined in the US since the 1960s- career is more important.

Religion
- Jews have often been the target of religious discrimination and persecution (anti-Semitism) – Holocaust.
- The US has not been immune from such hatred, despite its principle of religious freedom.
- Our government is based on the premise that religious liberty is more likely when there is not one predominant or official faith.
- Politicians frequently refer to God in their speeches or demonstrations.
- 3/4 of Americans attend houses of worship at least several times a year, 50% at least once a month, and 42% weekly.
- Shared Identity- religion identify themselves with more than one at times- Baptist, catholic, Buddhist, etc.
- [www.ipl.org/ref/RR/static/hum80.10.00.html](http://www.ipl.org/ref/RR/static/hum80.10.00.html)
- One defining characteristic of religion in the US is the tremendous variety of denominations.
- The largest Protestant denomination is Baptist, followed by Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians
- Catholics have the largest single membership in the US
- Religion is important in American politics in part because of the concentrations of people of particular religions in a few states.
- In recent presidential elections, a majority of Protestants voted Republican, while majority of Catholics and Jews voted Democratic.
- Jews have the highest rate of reported voter turnout- 93% in 2000
- Those who claim no religious affiliation have the lowest voter turnout, 47%
Wealth & Income
- Unequal distribution of wealth and income still results in important political divisions and conflicts.
- Wealth (total value of possessions) is more concentrated than income (annual earnings)
- Concentrated wealth fosters an aristocracy
  - Primogeniture- the eldest son used to inherit the father’s estate.
- Most college students come from the top quarter of American families- those earning $50,000 a year or more.
- Education is in turn one of the most important means to achieve upward economic and social mobility.
- Americans remain divided politically among economic lines. Aside from race, income is the single most important factor in explaining views on issues, partisanship and ideology.
- Rich people are Republicans, poor people are Democrats.
- Poverty classification is intended to identify persons who cannot meet minimum standards in housing, food, and medical care.
- The poor are a minority who lack political power, and vote less.
- The distribution of income in a society can have important consequences for democratic stability.
- Income is related to participation in politics.

Occupation
- Gross Domestic Product- GDP- the total output of all economic activity in the nation, including goods and services. GDP rose after adjusting for inflation, by more than 392% from 1960-2000.
- A post-industrial society, being primarily a technical society, awards less on the as is of inheritance or property than on education and skill.
- Knowledge is most important.
- There has been a tremendous growth in the white-collar sector of our economy.
- A dramatic decline in the number of people engaged in agriculture and a more modest decline in the number of people in manufacturing.
- Governments are among the biggest employers in this country.
- The majority of blue-collar jobs are held by men, while women hold over 62% of jobs in the service sector.
- “Glass ceiling”- as women advance in their careers, they encounter a barrier to advancement

Social Class
- Proletariat- those who sell their labor
- Bourgeoisie- those who own or control the means of production
Socioeconomic Status (SES)- a division of the population based on occupation, income and education.

What constitutes “middle Class” in the US is highly subjective- some think it is the working class individuals, other say it is based on income.

Elements of the American dream that involve upward mobility

Class divisions in the US are less defined and less important to politics.

Age-

“Graying of America”- Americans are living longer, and are increasing the elderly population.

Persons over the age of 65 constitute less that 13% of the population, yet account for 31% of total medical expenditures.

28% of all 18-20 year olds voted in recent presidential elections, compared to 67.6% of Americans 65 and over.

“Gray Lobby”- those over 65 who not only vote in large numbers, but also further political goals of their group and form powerful interest groups.

Top 4 issues: disposable income, discretionary time, a clear focus on issues, and effective organization- things that the elderly population have that make them politically powerful.

Life-cycle effects have shown that as people become middle-aged, they become more politically conservative, less mobile, and more likely to participate in politics.

Generational effects- arise in politics when a particular generation has had experiences that make it politically distinct.

Education

CHART p. 128- distribution of education

Over half of all Americans have not gone to college

Education is the one most important variable in predicting political participation

Education is also related to the acquisition of democratic values