What is Politics…And Who Cares Anyway?

Introduction

Learning Outcomes and Connections to Course Outcomes

After you complete this lesson, you will be able to:

- Explain how personal actions can be viewed as political, with reference to examples.
- Distinguish the different positions one can take on the ideological spectrum.
- Discuss how individual perspectives on an issue will indicate ideological views.
- Explain how authoritarianism and libertarianism integrate with the right-left spectrum to pinpoint political views.
- Classify your own political views.

Main Topics

- Defining Politics
- Ideology: One Reality, Many Lenses
- Understanding the Ideological Spectrum

What is Politics?

Politics. It's a word that conjures up mixed reactions. For some, the word *politics* evokes images of stiff politicians giving grand, empty speeches, kissing babies and waving flags. For others, the term politics is associated with seemingly endless debate and stomach-churning conflict. Yet, for some, the subject of politics is an engaging, important arena of discussion, discovery and creation, tapping into deeply held values and beliefs about ourselves and the world in which we live. Regardless, whether we run from or toward contemplation of this complex force, we are all caught in its web. Politics infuses and envelops practically every aspect of human society. From the wages we earn and the tuition we pay, to the wars we fight and the climate we change, politics is everywhere.

It is important to recognize that the concept of politics is itself a matter of debate. Derived from the Greek term *polis*, meaning "city-state" or, more broadly, "political community," almost all definitions of politics make reference to the dynamics of power in human society.[1] Differences of interpretation most commonly have to do with how narrowly or broadly one applies the term. For some, there is a danger in defining politics so broadly that the term loses precision and, in effect, becomes useless as an analytical tool. For others, there is equal or greater danger in defining the term so narrowly that our understanding of "the political" is at the very least incomplete or, at worst, inaccurate [2].

A Matter of Perspective

Consider the example of coffee. Is buying a cup of coffee a political act? For those who define politics narrowly, in line with the view that politics involves intentional action within the public realm to achieve particular collective goals, there is nothing overtly political about exchanging $1.99 for a large Tim Hortons coffee. [3] Arguably, in purchasing a cup of coffee, your main concern is probably staying awake in class or at work, not mobilizing support for some kind of public campaign or even the corporation

selling you the coffee. From this perspective, how could buying a cup of coffee be described as political?

On the other hand, if we adopt a broader view of politics, one that rejects traditional distinctions between the public and private spheres of social life and accepts Harold Lasswell's classic definition of politics as the study of *"who gets what, when and how,"* then buying a cup of coffee is clearly a political act.[4] From this perspective, it is not conscious individual or collective intention within the public realm that makes an act political; instead, it is the complex *systems of power and distribution* within which an act occurs that make it political.

When you spend $1.99 on a large cup of coffee, an average of just two to four cents makes its way back to the person who actually grew and harvested the beans.[5] All coffee is grown in the developing world, with roughly 80% coming from smallholder coffee farmers and the remaining 20% grown on large plantations that primarily employ indigenous labourers for a wage far below the cost of living.[6] In many parts of the world, these smallholder coffee farmers and racialized, landless labourers are engaged in active and often life-threatening campaigns for redistributive social and economic justice.

The Fair Trade movement is a political response to the injustices and inequities of the global coffee industry. You may have noticed the Fair Trade logo (see image below) around campus. In fact, Humber's Lakeshore campus is the first Ontario college campus to receive the Fair Trade Campus Designation from the Fair Trade Labelling Organization (FLO), an international, independent and not-for-profit regulatory body.[7] Fair Trade seeks to improve the lives of coffee farmers and producers of other coveted products such as cocoa, bananas, crafts and textiles, by offering consumers an ethical alternative to mainstream trade networks. In particular, Fair Trade certification indicates that the relationship between producers and buyers is direct, that producers are earning a "living wage" and that a percentage of the earnings goes toward grassroots community development. [8]

For more information about Fair Trade and the certification process, check out the [Fairtrade Canada](#) and [Oxfam Canada](#) websites.

Whether or not we are aware of the complex realities, injustices and struggles involved, the broader perspective of politics holds that our participation in these networks as coffee consumers is political, because it has very real consequences for the distribution of power, resources and opportunities around the globe. From this viewpoint, power is not restricted to the halls of government and bureaucracy, and lack of intention does not make an action non-political.

Figure 1. The Fair Trade label helps conscientious consumers identify which products they wish to support with their purchasing power. (Thinglass / Shutterstock.com)

Taking a Closer Look: Politics and You

To explore the ways in which politics plays out in your life, complete the following activity.

- Step 1
    - Draw a line down the middle of a blank page. Label one side "Political," and label the other side "Everyday Activities."
- Step 2
    - In the "Political" column, make a list of any three issues, topics or events that you would consider to be "political." Your examples can be past or present. At this point, don't think too much about why you would describe each issue, topic or event as "political." Simply make a list of the first few things that come to mind. Note: there are no right or wrong answers here.
- Step 3
    - Under the heading "Everyday Activities," make a list of anything you've done in the past 48 hours. Maybe you went to work or spent some time studying for a test. Maybe you bought something to eat or wear. Maybe you drove a car or took public transit. Maybe you went out with friends or played a sport. More than likely, you spent some time online. Hopefully, at some point, you ate, showered and slept.
- Step 4
    - Return to your first list of "political" topics, events or issues. Ask yourself, why do I think these things are "political"? What features or characteristics do they share in common? What people, institutions or systems are involved? Here, your attention might be drawn to the role of government or law. Likely, your examples all involve or affect large groups of people. Perhaps your examples speak to matters of social justice, military conflict and/or human rights. If you consider carefully, your responses will all have something to do with how resources, such as land or money, and opportunities, such as education, jobs and health care, are contested and

distributed. Ultimately, they will all be reflections of power, in its various forms. The issues, events or topics you have identified are "political," at least in part, because they focus our attention on the core political question, "who gets what, when and how."[9]

- Step 5
    - Consider your second list of "Everyday Activities." Ask yourself, are any of these activities political? As a worker, for example, what is the relationship of power between yourself and your boss? What is the role of government in setting a minimum wage and ensuring just working conditions? As a consumer, how do you affect the lives of other workers and communities, even some living halfway around the world? How do your everyday activities impact the natural world? As a student, are you a participant in a certain set of power relationships? How do your daily activities reflect and shape the distribution of power and resources around the globe? As you engage in this reflective analysis, it should become clear that "the everyday" is political.

Whatever our precise definition of politics, even the briefest of reflections compels us to recognize the all-pervasive influence of this dynamic and complex force in our daily lives. Arguably, the more we understand about politics, the better equipped we are to harness its potential. Towards what end is largely a matter of our political ideology.

Ideology: One Reality, Many Lenses

As human beings, we are uniquely positioned to reflect on, question and intentionally construct our political reality. How we engage with society and with what objectives is reflective of our **political ideology**: our basic set of beliefs about how the world actually works, on the one hand, and how we think the world ought to work, on the other. As a relatively coherent set of ideas that we hold to be true, our political ideology helps us to explain and evaluate social conditions, understand our place in society and establish a framework for action.[10] Though we may be unaware of, or lack the specialized language to describe, our political position, every one of us has a political ideology.

Let's unpack this dense definition by considering the example of poverty in Canada. Poverty can be described as a social condition, in that it is a consistent characteristic of Canadian society. While there is no universally agreed-upon definition of *poverty*, the term is generally used to describe a material standard of living that does not provide for basic human needs, including safe and secure housing, food security, health care, education and transportation.

Statistics Canada measures poverty according to the Low-Income Measure (LIM), which sets the poverty line at 50% of the median income for like households. According to the 2016 Census, approximately 4.8 million or 13.9% of Canadians currently live in poverty. Of these Canadians, 1.3 million are children, which means about one in five children in Canada live below the poverty line. In the case of indigenous children, 40% are living below the poverty line. Racialized individuals, women, those living with disabilities and indigenous peoples experience the highest levels and most extreme forms of poverty in Canada. This can be a perplexing reality, considering that Canada is ranked by the International Monetary Fund as the 24th wealthiest country in the world, with a GDP per capita income of $50,626.[11]

Check out the following links for a clearer picture of wealth and poverty in Canada.

- [Canada Without Poverty: Just the Facts](#)

- [Government of Canada: Towards a Poverty Reduction Strategy](#)

In the context of such incredible wealth, what explains the persistence and growth of poverty in Canada? What factors influence or determine a person's material standard of living? Are there any systems, structures, beliefs or behaviours that may have an impact on the distribution of wealth and opportunity in Canadian society?

How we approach and respond to these complex questions will reflect our political ideology, which offers us a set of values and assumptions or "truths" that guide our interpretation and explanation of social conditions, such as poverty in Canada. Before you read on, take a moment to answer the following question:

- What do you think is the main cause of the persistence of poverty in Canada?

If we tend to explain the persistence of poverty in Canada primarily in terms of the individual — if poverty is understood to reflect an individual's lack of motivation, talent or will-power, for example — we likely occupy a more right-wing ideological position. From this perspective, it is largely the responsibility of the private individual, not government, to pull themselves out of the condition of poverty.

If, on the other hand, we tend to explain the persistence of poverty in Canada primarily in terms of the social framework — if poverty is understood to reflect a lack of effective social supports, inequality of opportunity and systemic marginalization of certain groups within society, for example — we likely occupy a more left-wing ideological position. This interpretation of the social condition of poverty would support more active and effective government involvement in the fight to end poverty in Canada.

Taking a Closer Look: Minimum Wage

To further explore the impact and importance of political ideology, consider the issue of minimum wage. The issue of minimum wage has been the subject of intense debate in Canada since its origins during the 1920s. The result of a long history of struggle by the working and middle classes, contemporary minimum wage laws set the lowest possible hourly wage that employers can legally pay their employees.[12] The intention of minimum wage laws is both to ensure that all workers are able to earn a "living wage" and that working classes earn enough disposable income to support continued economic growth as consumers. Current debates generally have to do with the actual rate of minimum wage, when it needs to be adjusted to account for inflation and how such changes ought to be implemented.

While some view an increase in minimum wage as an investment in future economic growth and social well-being, by way of encouraging sustainable jobs, ensuring a more equitable distribution of wealth and increasing the disposable income of the working classes, others view higher minimum wages as a threat to the survival of small businesses, a contributor to job loss and lower rates of job creation, and a likely cause of inflation, as businesses raise their prices to recoup their losses.[13]

For a fuller look at this debate as it relates to minimum wage in Ontario, watch the following brief CBC clip:

- [(Video) The National: The impact of Ontario's new minimum wage](#)

You likely have some experience with minimum wage work. Presumably, at least one of your motivations in pursuing a post-secondary education is to improve your earning potential beyond this minimum rate. Perhaps you have experience or anticipate running your own business at some point, in which case you will be responsible for paying your workers' salaries.

- How do your own experiences and goals shape your view of this important issue?

- Where do you sit in this debate and how does your position reflect your political ideology?

As we can see, different ideologies offer very different lenses through which to view the world and result in very different suggestions about how we ought to behave in that world. Our ideology informs how we understand our rights and responsibilities in relation to society at large and, by extension, our understanding of the role of government. Given its extensive influence on social life, a deeper appreciation of political ideology can be incredibly empowering.

Understanding the Ideological Spectrum

You may have heard terms such as "left-wing" and "right-wing," liberal and conservative, socialist and fascist before and wondered about their exact meaning. While it is not possible within the scope of this article to do justice to the rich history and diversity of political thought, the modest aim here is to provide a point of entry into modern western political ideology by distinguishing, in admittedly broad strokes, three historically dominant ideologies, namely, liberalism, conservatism and socialism. We will also briefly explore the differences between authoritarian and libertarian belief systems. Hopefully, after working through this section of the reading, you will have a better sense of what these terms mean and how they relate to your own world view.

As alluded to earlier, contemporary political ideologies have traditionally been understood in terms of their relative positions along a left-wing – right-wing spectrum. Ideologies are organized along this spectrum according to the *principle of egalitarianism*. In general, the further to the right we move, the greater the tolerance for socioeconomic hierarchy; the further left we move, the greater the commitment to socioeconomic equality.
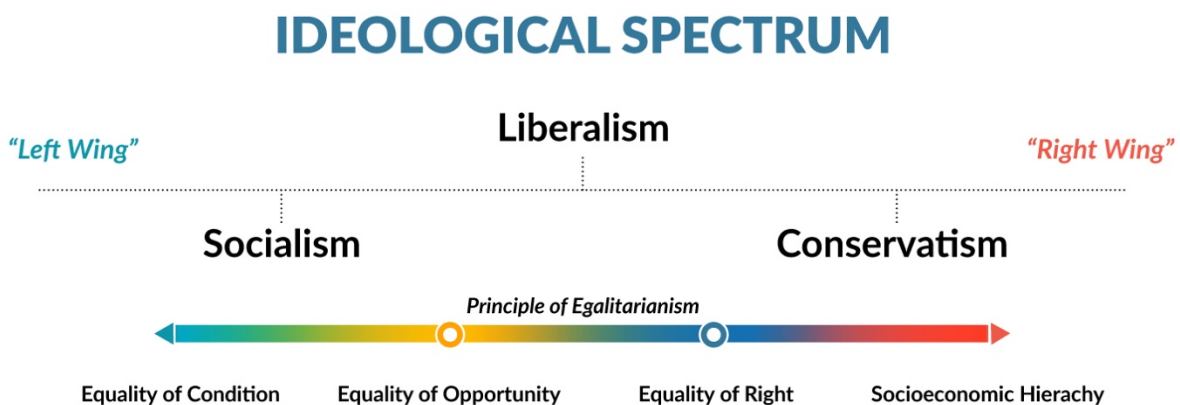
(Image courtesy of Humber College)

Infographic Description / Alternate Format

The ideological spectrum is a line that moves from "left wing" on the left side to "right wing" on the right side. Closest to the left we find socialism, while liberalism is in the middle and conservatism is nearest to the right side. Below this line is a second spectrum, representing the principle of egalitarianism. On the left side is equality of condition. Moving from left towards centre, we find equality of opportunity. Moving past centre into the right, we find equality of right, and furthest to the right we find socioeconomic hierarchy.

(End of infographic description.)

At the centre of this spectrum sits the dominant political ideology of liberalism. As its name suggests, liberalism is most concerned with enabling and protecting *individual freedom* or *liberty*. From the liberal perspective, all individuals should be free to live as they choose, provided that in exercising this freedom, the liberty of others is not unjustly threatened or limited. The [capitalist free market](), rooted in the institution of private property, is understood to be an essential arena for the protection and expression of individual liberty, as is one's private religious and moral life.[15]

Liberalism aims to protect individual liberty by designing and enforcing a legal framework rooted in the principle of *equality of right*. That is, all individuals are understood to possess certain fundamental rights, regardless of individual characteristics such as race, class and gender, which it is the job of government to protect. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is an example of this principle, in that it enshrines a constitutionally protected set of rights which apply equally to all Canadian citizens.[16]

Taking a Closer Look: The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

> ### The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
>
> ### Section 15 – Equality Rights
>
> Equality before and under law and equal protection and benefit of law
>
> **15.** (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.[17]

More left-wing versions of liberalism express the view that government also bears some degree of responsibility for ensuring *equality of opportunity*. From this perspective, individual liberty can only be realized when citizens have access to those resources necessary for their own development and well-being, such as health care and education.[18] Canada's publicly funded health care system is a reflection of this principle.

To ensure that these types of governmental policies and decisions reflect the popular will, liberalism promotes the system of *representative democracy*, whereby citizens engage in regular, free and fair elections to decide who will represent their interests in government and to hold those entrusted with positions of authority accountable to the general public. Within this system, all citizens have the legal right to run for office and all votes are counted equally.[19]

Conservatism and Socialism

Conservatism, the political ideology sitting to the right of liberalism on the ideological spectrum given above, shares the liberal commitment to free-market capitalism and representative democracy, but prioritizes the political values of *order and security* over those of individual liberty and legal equality. [20] The case of racial profiling at airports and border crossings is an instructive example of this important ideological difference. For liberals, the practice of racial profiling, whereby a person's perceived race, ethnicity and/or religion are interpreted as grounds for more invasive and extensive security screening, is an unjustifiable violation of individual rights on the part of the state. From the conservative perspective, racial profiling is a reasonable restriction on individual liberty, insofar as this practice is understood to be necessary for the preservation of national security.

At its heart, conservatism is concerned with protecting (or "conserving") those traditions and institutions believed to be essential for social stability, such as private property, religion, and the family.[21] Resistance to change can be understood as an outgrowth of the conservative view of society as an interdependent organic whole. Through this conservative lens, all changes are understood ecologically; change in one part of the social system can produce unpredictable and dangerous effects in other parts of the system. For this reason, conservatism advocates the political value of prudence; change should be pursued with extreme caution, and only when the social benefits of such change outweigh the social costs of maintaining the status quo. [22] Opposition to the legalization of same-sex marriage is an important example of this type of social conservatism, which views the family unit as the cornerstone of a stable and prosperous society.[23] Changes to traditional arrangements of marriage and family, generally rooted in religious teachings and long-held cultural values, are seen to be unnecessarily risky challenges to this sacred foundation of social stability and well-being.

Conservatism accepts restrictions on the moral liberty of citizens when it is necessary to ensure order and stability. However, government intervention in and regulation of the capitalist free market is strongly resisted, as it is understood to produce market inefficiencies and to interfere with economic growth. According to conservatism, capitalism is the best possible economic system because it provides individuals with economic incentive to work hard and innovate. In the face of economic inequality and poverty, conservatism generally advocates private charitable efforts to help those in need, rather than public initiatives that rely on taxpayer money and government coordination.[24]
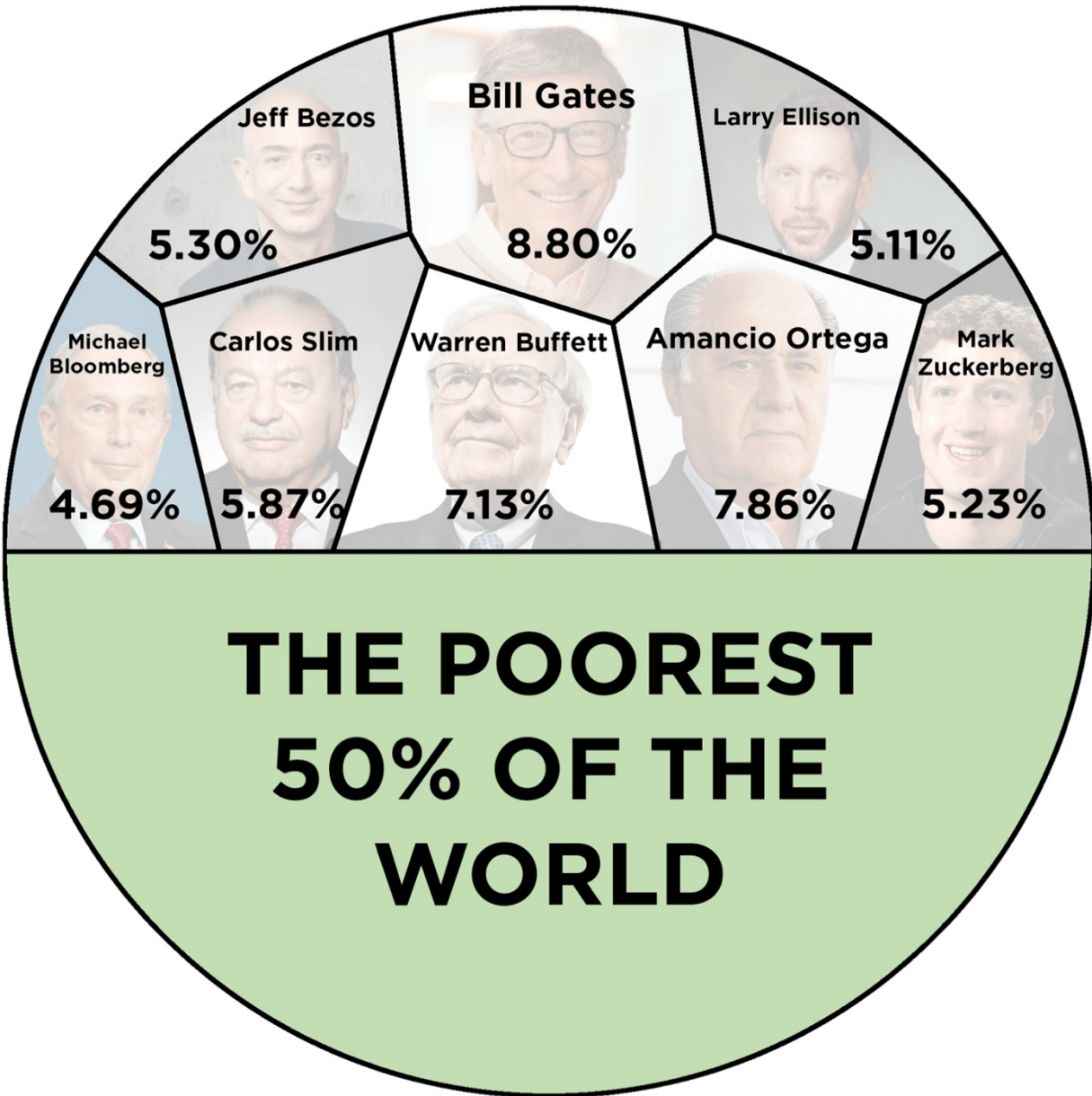
From the conservative perspective, *socioeconomic hierarchy* is a natural and inevitable feature of human society; there will always be those that rise to the top and those that sink to the bottom. Conservatism tends to put its faith in those that do rise to the top, understanding the acquisition of authority and resources to be a function of individual ability, merit and accomplishment, rather than privilege and opportunity.[25]

Socialism, which sits to the left of liberalism on the ideological spectrum, fundamentally rejects the conservative account of inequality in society. Rooted in the ultimate goal of eliminating socioeconomic inequality, socialism views the coexistence of extreme wealth and widespread poverty as neither natural nor inevitable. Instead, the socialist perspective understands inequality as both the result and the necessary condition of our global capitalist economy.[26] Put simply, we cannot all be Bill Gates, because then who would work for Microsoft?

Capitalism generates historically specific economic classes based on their relationship to the means of production. That is, while a handful of people privately own the land, technology and financial capital necessary to produce goods and services, the majority of us are dependent upon selling our labour in exchange for a wage. From the socialist perspective, this wage-relationship, coupled with the driving profit-motive of the capitalist economic system, ensures the ongoing economic subordination of the working and middle classes around the world. Within this framework, one's economic status is not a simple reflection of individual effort or talent, rather, it is mostly a reflection of ownership, heredity, opportunity and privilege.

Rather than offering all individuals an equal chance to improve their material living standard, socialism argues that the capitalist free market concentrates wealth in the hands of a few, at the expense of the world's poor majority.[27] The fact that eight men currently own the same amount of wealth as the poorest 50% of the world's population is a case in point.[28] See the *The World's Wealth Inequality* infographic below.

THE WORLD'S WEALTH INEQUALITY

Jeff Bezos 5.30%

Bill Gates 8.80%

Larry Ellison 5.11%

Michael Bloomberg 4.69%

Carlos Slim 5.87%

Warren Buffett 7.13%

Amancio Ortega 7.86%

Mark Zuckerberg 5.23%

THE POOREST 50% OF THE WORLD

Sources:
https://www.oxfam.org/
https://howmuch.net/articles/the-worlds-wealth-inequality

howmuch.net

(*The World's Wealth Inequality* [Infographic]. Retrieved from
https://howmuch.net/articles/the-worlds-wealth-inequality)

Infographic Description / Alternate Format

A circle is divided in half to create a 50/50 pie chart. The bottom half (50%) is labelled the poorest 50% of the world. The top half is divided into eight sections, as follows: Bill Gates 8.80%, Amancio Ortega 7.86%, Warren Buffet 7.13%, Carlos Slim 5.87%, Jeff Bezos 5.3%, Mark Zuckerberg 5.23%, Larry Ellison 5.11%, Michael Bloomberg 4.69%. The overall meaning is that these eight billionaires own the same percentage of the world's wealth as the poorest 50% of the world's population combined.

(End of infographic description).

According to socialism, one's economic status is intimately connected to one's political status. The more money I have at my disposal, the more opportunities I can explore, the more doors I can open and the more people I can influence. Economic inequality, therefore, generates other forms of inequality.[29] The liberal goal of legal equality is, from the socialist perspective, unachievable within the context of capitalism. While all Canadians have equal legal right to run for office, for example, only those with the means and connections required to run for office are generally able to do so in practice.

Given its view of capitalism as the foundation of inequality and injustice in society, socialism ultimately advocates replacing our global capitalist economy with the equitable *redistribution* of wealth among all members of society according to the principle of *collective ownership*. The aim is to establish an *equality of condition* such that all members of society enjoy the same material standard of living and have equitable access to opportunities such as quality health care, education and employment.[30] While this end goal is most often described as *communism*, exactly how this type of society might be best achieved and how it would operate in practice is an ongoing source of intense debate among those who identify with socialist ideals.[31]

## Taking a Closer Look: Bill and Melinda Gates

When billionaires Bill and Melinda Gates appeared on *The Late Show* in 2019, they spoke about their heavy involvement in philanthropy via the charitable [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](), which funds social programs aimed at improving access to education and health care, among other goals. An interesting ideological tension occurs when the couple speaks in favour of increasing taxes for the wealthy. Watch the following video clip and try to answer these questions:

- How might socialism be used to criticize this approach to ending inequality?
- How do Bill and Melinda Gates reflect socialism?

[(Video) Bill & Melinda Gates Talk Taxing The Wealthy]()

Authoritarianism and Libertarianism

So far, we have been examining the core ideologies of liberalism, conservatism and socialism in terms of the traditional left-right spectrum. As you might have imagined, however, political ideologies are more complex than this. We can gain a clearer understanding of the differences within and between political ideologies by adding another unit of measurement to our political spectrum.[32]
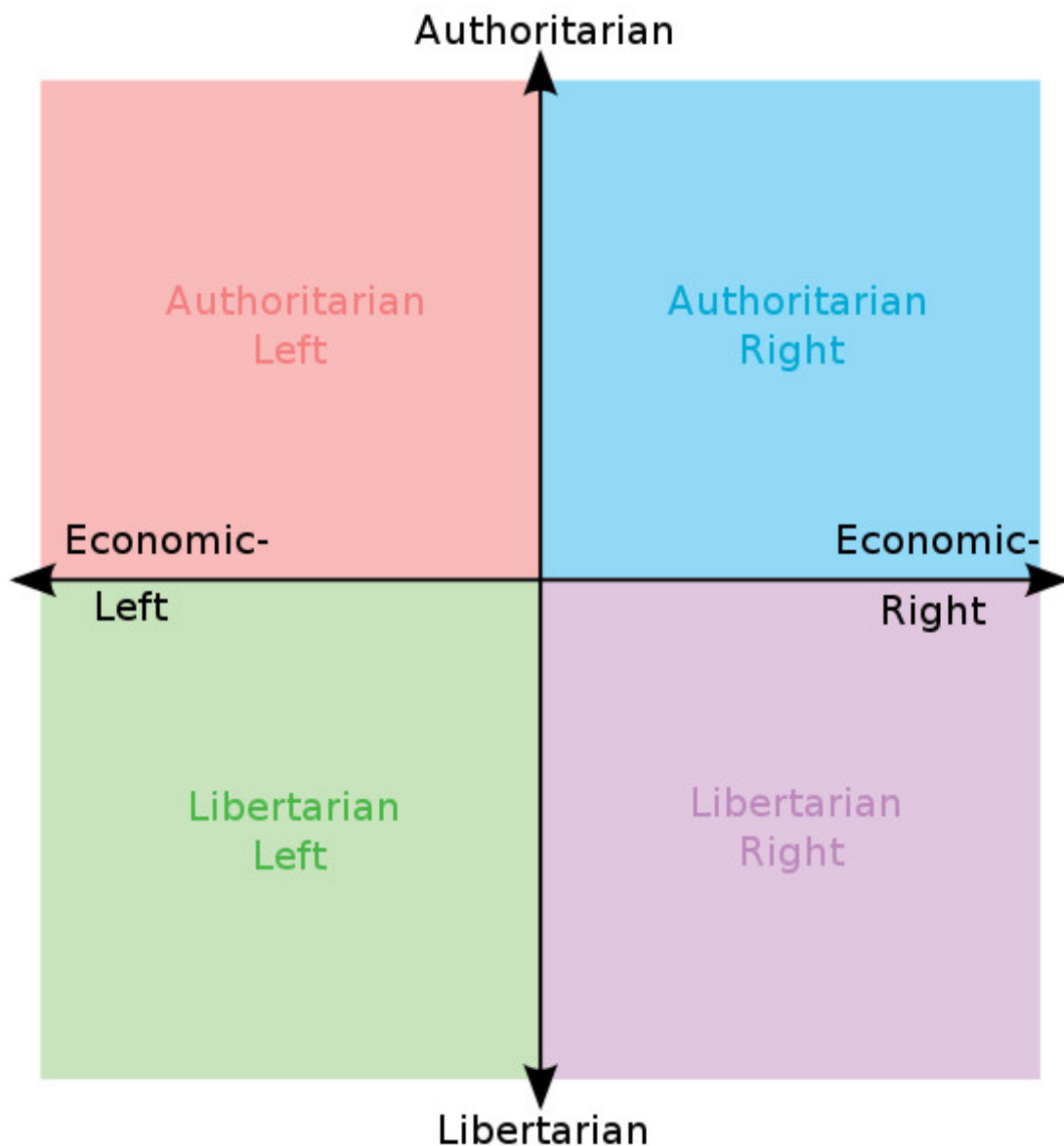
(Traced by User:Stannered [Public domain])

Image Description / Alternate Format

The political compass is a box divided into four quadrants. The top half is Authoritarian, divided between Authoritarian Left and Authoritarian Right (referring to the left-wing, right-wing spectrum discussed earlier). The bottom half is Libertarian, divided between Libertarian left and Libertarian Right.

(End of image description).

While the horizontal axis reflects the traditional left-right spectrum we have been discussing, the additional vertical axis measures the extent to which an ideology is either authoritarian or libertarian. Ideologies are positioned along this axis based on their understanding of the ideal relationship between government, on the one hand, and citizens, on the other.

Authoritarianism refers to those ideologies that support the concentration of power in the hands of government. In its most extreme forms, authoritarianism involves a highly militarized state, the elimination of free elections, and severe restrictions on individual rights and freedoms.[33] These types of regimes exist on both the left and right of the traditional spectrum.

Fascism, an ideology rooted in extreme nationalism and, typically, doctrines of racial supremacy, is the most extreme right-wing version of authoritarianism.[34] Historical examples of this type of fascist regime include Nazi Germany, Mussolini's Italy and Pinochet's Chile, to name but a few.[35] Fascism sits to the right on the spectrum due to its commitment to the institution of private property and the capitalist economic system.[36]

Communism, which involves the destruction of the free market and the establishment of a government-run economy, is the most extreme form of left-wing authoritarianism.[37] Historical examples here include the former Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and Castro's Cuba.[38] While these fascist and communist regimes occupy

different positions along the traditional left-right spectrum, they share a commitment to powerful, repressive systems of government.

At the opposite end of this vertical axis sits **libertarianism** which, in its most extreme forms, advocates the complete dismantling of government. This position is also frequently called *anarchism*, which literally means "without rule."[39]. In general, libertarian ideologies view the state as an illegitimate and self-serving institution.[40] Of course, the reasons for this view of government differ considerably depending on whether one sits to the left or the right of the ideological spectrum.

Right-wing libertarianism, as expressed by the Tea Party in the U.S. and Canada's Libertarian Party, is rooted in a deep distrust of government and an intense commitment to individual liberty. From this perspective, all forms of government regulation and administration are a violation of individual rights and freedoms.[41] The imposition of taxes and restrictions on the right to bear arms are frequently cited as examples of this kind of violation.

Left-wing libertarianism, on the other hand, is rooted in a deep commitment to collective well-being. This version of *communism* advocates the dismantling of the capitalist economy and the state, followed by the equitable redistribution of wealth to small, locally run communities that operate on the basis of collective ownership. Whether or not violence is a legitimate means to achieve these goals is a matter of debate on both the left and the right.[42]

Though we have tried to lay them out clearly here, it is important to point out that, in practice, politics is a messy affair. Our ideological positions are never as coherent as we might think they should be, nor are the views expressed by our political leaders ever exactly aligned with any one ideology. Nonetheless, a general understanding of the similarities and differences of key ideological positions is useful as we try to make sense of "real-world" politics.

Taking a Closer Look: Your Ideological Position

To get a better idea of your own ideological position, complete the following steps.

- Step 1
    - To see where you sit on the political spectrum, complete the brief [test on the Political Compass website](#). Although this is not a scientific assessment in the truest sense of the word, your responses to the questions posed will provide you with insight as to your own political leanings and where your values and viewpoints position you in relation to others.
- Step 2
    - To get a sense of how your ideological dispositions correlate to the main political parties in Canada, complete the brief survey available on the [Vote Compass website](#). Be sure to explore the variety of information available on this site concerning the various parties' ideals and platforms for a clearer understanding of their relative ideological positions. It is important to note, as indicated by the political compass site mentioned above, that the official name of a political party (e.g., The Liberal Party, The Conservative Party, The New Democratic Party, The Green Party) does not always directly correlate with the positions of similarly named ideologies on the ideological spectrum discussed above.

Summary

If you come away from this article with a better understanding of why politics is deserving of your attention, as well as a clearer picture of your own political values and beliefs, then your time has been well spent. In truth, whether or not we pay attention to this important dimension of social life, we are all political actors whose lives are both shaped by and, in turn, shape power relationships around the globe. Whether you'll be able to find a well-paying job when you graduate; whether you'll be able to afford your own home one day; whether you'll be able to travel the world as you hope to do; whether you'll be able support and raise a healthy family, if you want to; or even if you're just buying a cup of coffee, your future is an intensely political affair. Hopefully, with a clearer view of the political landscape and your place in it, you are better equipped to help create the future you want.

Additional Resources

- Canada Without Poverty. (2018). *Just the Facts*. Retrieved from http://www.cwp-csp.ca/poverty/just-the-facts/
- Government of Canada (2017). *Towards a Poverty Reduction Strategy – A backgrounder on poverty in Canada*. Retrieved from https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/backgrounder.html
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