1. Ask students to imagine that at some time in the future only two countries exist in the world: Freeland and Leaderland. Since they have nowhere else to go, they must choose one of the countries in which to live.

2. Put signs up at opposite ends of the room that indicate "Freeland" and "Leaderland." Explain to students that after hearing the descriptions of the two countries, they must choose one or the other. Read the country descriptions to the class.

3. After reading the descriptions, have students get up and move to the country of their choices. Then have students, one at a time, try and get students from the other country to change their minds and move over to their country. Points could be awarded for the team that convinces the most students to change their minds.

The goal is for students to recognize that there are pros and cons with both lands, without realizing it, they are creating a constitution of the government they want. Use this as an intro activity to the concept of government.

Leaderland or Freeland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leaderland</th>
<th>Freeland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>In this country there are many laws which all have been made by one man: The Leader. The people of this country are told by The Leader and his assistants where to live, how to dress, what jobs to hold, what newspapers to read and for whom to vote at election time. The people lead safe and orderly lives . . . as long as they follow The Leader.</em></td>
<td><em>In this country the people are free to do whatever they want. Children and adults may decide for themselves if they want to go to school, work, sleep all day, play at the beach, watch videos, etc. There are no laws of any kind in Freeland.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Governments are necessary at a minimum to provide public goods and services that all citizens need but cannot reasonably be expected to provide themselves.
Government

• The institutions and processes through which public policies are made for society

— Public Policy: a course of action government takes in response to a political issue

Purposes of Government as told by the Constitution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forming a more perfect union</td>
<td>Creation of a strong union of the states, while also maintaining state sovereignty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing justice</td>
<td>Reasonable, fair and impartial law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insuring domestic tranquility</td>
<td>Preservation of public order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing for the common defense</td>
<td>Protection and maintenance of national defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting the general welfare</td>
<td>Providing public services and economic health of the nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securing the blessings of liberty</td>
<td>Promoting individual freedoms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(An institution is an ongoing organization that performs certain functions for society.)

Every nation must decide for itself what goals will be translated into public policy and the methods by which those goals will be translated. The Preamble of the US Constitution addresses the goals of public policy for the US.

This definition leads to two basic questions:

How should we govern?
What should government do?
Forms of Government

**Anarchy**—lack of government

**Autocracy**—rule by one
   - *Absolute Monarchy*: ruler gains power through inheritance; no restriction on ruler’s power
   - *Constitutional Monarchy*: ruler gains power through inheritance; formal restrictions on power
   - *Dictatorship*: ruler seizes power; keeps power by force and restricts opposition to regime

**Oligarchy**—rule by a few
   - *Aristocracy*: rule by elite
   - *Theocracy*: rule by religious leaders

**Democracy**—rule by the people

Greek philosopher Aristotle attempted to classify governments based on the number of individuals who participated in making political decisions: rule by one, rule by the few, or rule by the many. His early classification system is still useful in describing governments today.

We’ll delve into the specifics of democratic theory a little bit later.
Theories of Democracy

Theories of Government & Politics
What Is A Democracy?

What should we look for to determine if a true representative democracy is in place?

A. Elections of government officials
B. A trial to determine guilt or innocence
C. Guaranteed rights such as speech or press
D. A bicameral (two houses) legislature
## Characteristics of a Democracy

1. Leaders by peaceful, legal means—can be removed
2. Basic rights of liberty
3. Individuals and groups protected from unfair government actions
4. Regular elections, 2 or more parties, secret ballots
5. Represented when taxes levied—elected representatives make laws
6. Media free to report ALL news
7. Courts make rulings for and against government to protect rights.
8. Written or unwritten constitution organizing government and defining what government can or can not do
Robert Dahl suggests that an ideal democratic process should have the following criteria.

Equality in voting: “one person, one vote” is central to democracy
Effective participation: citizens must have equal opportunities to express their preferences
Enlightened understanding: Providing free speech and a free press is crucial to the
democratic experience. If information is monopolized/distorted, citizens do not have accurate understand issues.
Citizens control agenda: This goes back to who shapes public policy...the people! If certain
groups take control and influence policy agenda, it’s not really of the people.
Inclusion: all individuals in the nation must have the right and protections of citizenship as well as all subject to the laws of citizenship.
Theories of U.S. Democracy

- Pluralist Theory
  - emphasizes that politics is mainly a competition among groups, each one pressing for its own preferred policies
- Groups will work together and requires compromise
- Public interest will prevail
- Most positive/optimistic theory

Theories of democratic government are theories about who has power and influence over public policy and decision making at the local, state, and national levels of government. “Who really governs our nation?”

Pluralist theory proposes that even if the average citizen cannot keep up with political issues or cast a deciding vote in any election, the individual’s interests will be protected by groups that represent her or him. Theorists who subscribe to pluralism see politics as a struggle among groups to gain benefits for their members.

The recent explosion of interest group activity is seen as a positive development to pluralists.
A small number of powerful elite (corporate leaders, top military officers, government leaders) from an upper class, rule in their own self-interest. This theory has recently been represented by the demographics of our current congress. The average net worth of Congress is above $1 million. This begs the question, do these representatives accurately represent the American public?

Wealth is the basis of power (can afford to finance election campaigns and control key institutions, such as large corporations)
Believe democracy is a system of many groups having so much strength that government is often “pulled” in numerous directions at the same time, causing gridlock and ineffectiveness.

Because our political system often requires cooperation between national, state, and local levels of government, the reluctance of one can halt policy implementation.
The U.S. Constitution created a form of republican government that we now call a **democratic republic**. The people hold the ultimate power over the government through the election process, but policy decisions are made by elected officials.

James Madison feared that direct democracy would deteriorate into mob rule. After all, what would keep the majority of the people, if given direct decision-making power, from abusing the rights of minority groups. Madison hoped by forming a republic, it would counter the influence of factions.

Many founding fathers carried a certain elitist attitude, believing that the vast majority of Americans lacked a sufficient education to make them qualified to make important political decisions. There was a general lack of trust of “the people.”

**Trustee Model:** Decisions made by the elected official using their own personal views or based on the public good; Not on the basis of constituents’ views  
**Delegate Model:** Decisions made by the elected official mirror/represent the constituents’ views or what the voters tell them to do  
Generally, most legislators hold neither a pure trustee view nor a pure instructed-delegate view. Typically, they combine both perspectives in a pragmatic mix that is often called the “politico” style.
Traditional democratic theory requires citizens to have a strong political knowledge and judgement. However, the average citizen does not possess the technical knowledge needed to understand the complex issues that confront government. Those who possess more knowledge of the political system tend to have more power.

Statistics prove that Americans do not take full advantage of their opportunities to shape government and select leaders. This limited participation challenges the foundation of democracy.

There has always been a close connection between money and politics, but this continually becoming more of a concern as candidates become more dependent on PACs (political action committees) to fund campaigns to due escalating costs.

The diversity of interests in American politics makes decision making more difficult and can sometime result in policy gridlock.
Reflection

“No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." —Winston Churchill
Intro to Politics
Politics

• The process by which we select our governmental leaders and what policies these leaders produce
• Produces authoritative decisions about public issues
• Lasswell—Politics: “Who gets what, when, and how”

Politics is seen in many places outside of government. For example, in your family or your work-place. Politics is the struggle over power or influence within organizations or informal groups that can grant or withhold benefits or privileges. However, we will focus how politics relate to governmental decision making.

Who refers to voters, candidates, groups and political parties
What refers to the substance of politics and government (benefits, such as medical care for the elderly, and burdens, such as new taxes)
When refers to the time involved to recognize, decide on and implement new policies
How refers to political participation by the people
So how do we create change? How do we achieve the goals we have set out to accomplish? We the people are the beginning and end of the policymaking system. People shape policy.

Linkage institutions transmit the preference of Americans to the policymakers in government. Anything that brings attention to people’s interest, problems or concerns.

All of these linkage institutions help to shape our country’s policy agenda, which consists of issues that attract the serious attention of public officials and other people actually involved in politics. This is the “what” of politics. Policy agenda changes with the political culture of our nation and whatever we consider the most important problems to fix. There is a general consensus that we are always trying to do better as a society. It may take years to get an item on the policy agenda, and then several more years to get it acted on. It is not a swift process, nor did the founding fathers want it to be.

The Constitution establishes three official policymaking institutions. Today, the power of the bureaucracy is so great that most now consider it a fourth policymaking institution. (a body of non-elected government officials. Play an administrative role in policy making.)

Once a new policy goes through this whole process, very few are made by just one single policymaking institution. For example, a law created congress to extend education funding will need bureaucracies to implement the policy by creating extensive rules and regulations.

We also need to ask what is the impact of this policy. Does it solve the problem? Does it create more problems? And the process continues...