

Module 8: Politics

Topic 2 Content: Political Spectrum

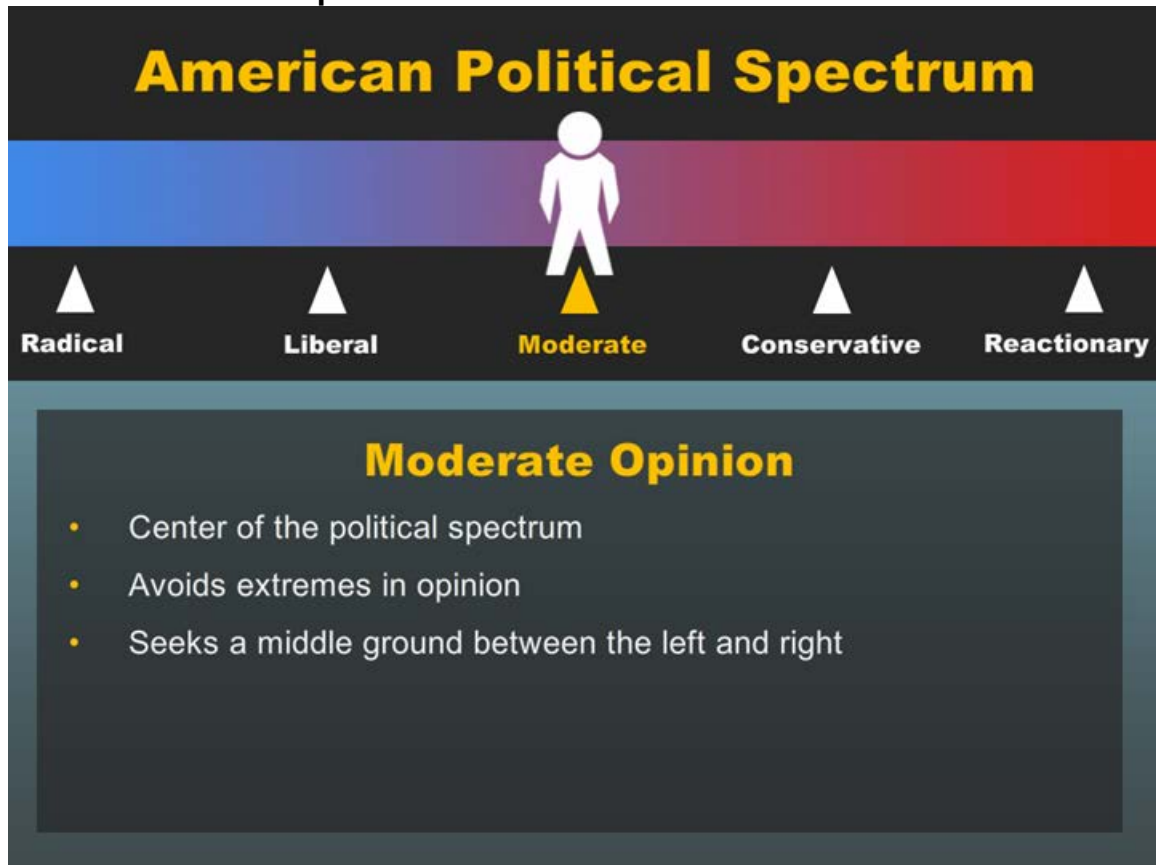
Introduction



Glover Mint: Welcome to WUSG News. On today's episode, my cohost, Demi Tracy, will discuss the American political spectrum. Let's jump right in.

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American Political Spectrum

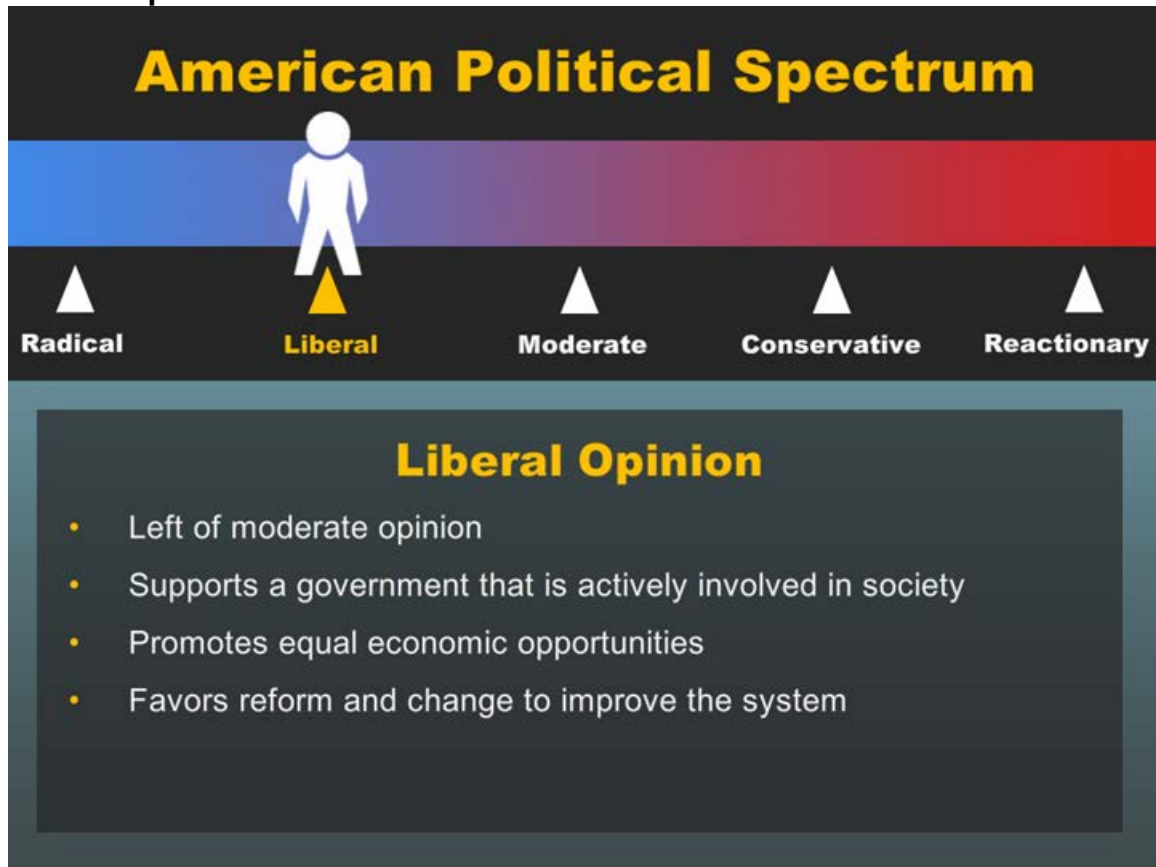


Demi Tracy: During any conversation about American politics, you are inevitably going to hear terms like liberal, conservative, and moderate. These broad terms are used to describe the different ideologies held by communities, groups, and individuals. By placing these terms on a spectrum, we are able to easily compare these different positions.

For example, moderate opinion falls in the center of the American political spectrum, avoiding extremes in opinion and seeking a middle ground between the left and the right.

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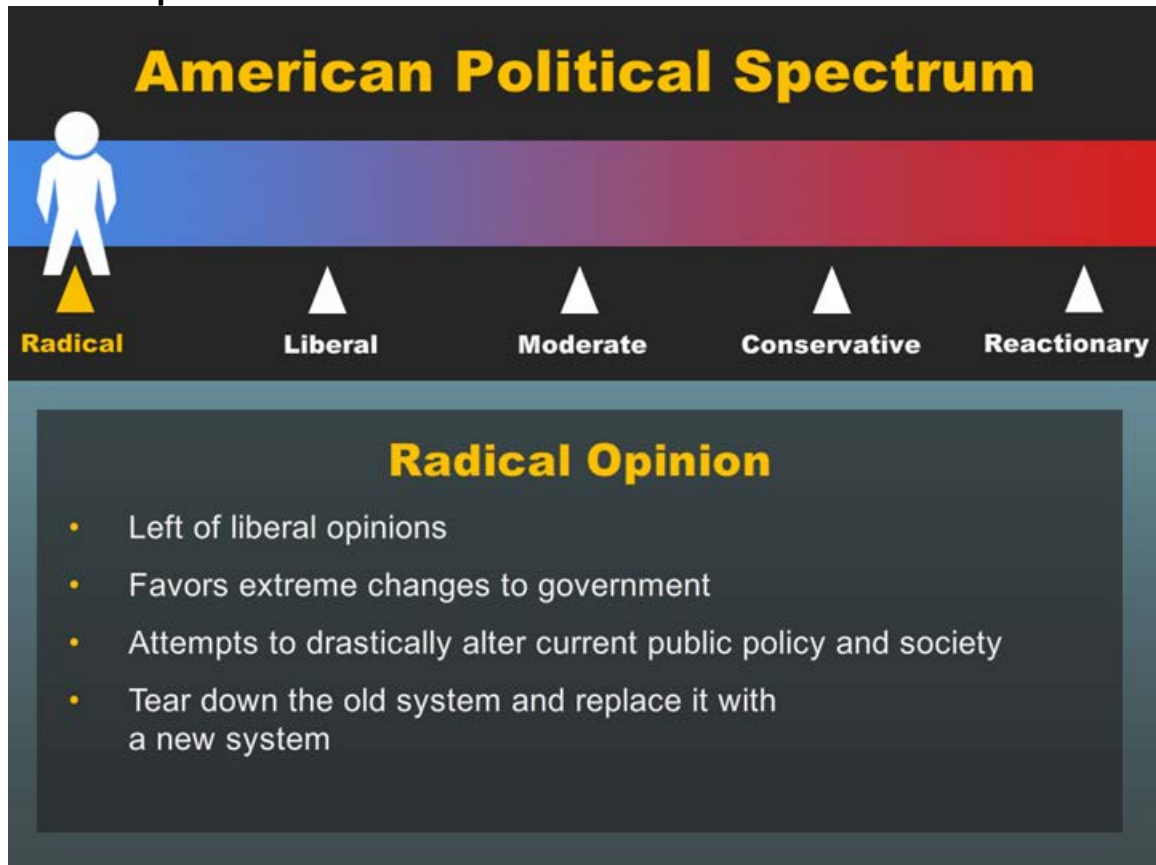
Liberal Opinion



Demi Tracy: Liberal opinion is left of moderate opinion. Liberal opinion generally supports a government that is actively involved in society. It promotes the idea of equal economic opportunities. Liberals favor reform and change, not because the system is broken, but because there are areas where it could be improved.

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Radical Opinion



Demi Tracy: Radical political opinions sit to the left of liberal opinions. Radicals also favor change, but these changes are generally extreme and would drastically alter current public policy and society. Rather than fine-tune the system, radicals seek to tear down the old system and replace it with a new one.

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Conservative Opinion

The diagram shows a horizontal spectrum with a color gradient from blue on the left to red on the right. A white person icon stands on a yellow triangle at the 'Conservative' position. Below the spectrum are five labels: Radical, Liberal, Moderate, Conservative, and Reactionary, each with a white triangle above it. The 'Conservative' label and its triangle are highlighted in yellow.

American Political Spectrum

Radical Liberal Moderate **Conservative** Reactionary

Conservative Opinion

- Right of moderate opinion
- Supports a limited government role in society
- Promotes free enterprise and personal initiative
- Believes in tradition and maintaining the status quo

Demi Tracy: Conservative opinion sits to the right of moderate opinion, and traditionally supports a limited government role in society. Ideas such as free enterprise and personal initiative are promoted. Conservatives believe in tradition and the maintaining the status quo, or the way things currently are. The system is not broken, so there is no reason to fix it.

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Reactionary Opinion

The diagram shows a horizontal bar with a color gradient from blue on the left to red on the right. Below the bar are five white triangles pointing up, labeled 'Radical', 'Liberal', 'Moderate', 'Conservative', and 'Reactionary'. A white silhouette of a person stands on a yellow triangle at the far right end of the spectrum, representing a reactionary.

American Political Spectrum

Radical Liberal Moderate Conservative **Reactionary**

Reactionary Opinion

- Right of conservative opinion
- Favors extreme reversals of society and the status quo
- Believes in returning things to the way they were
- Sometimes called the radical right or reverse revolutionaries

Demi Tracy: Reactionary opinions are to the right of conservative opinions. Reactionaries favor extreme reversals of society and the status quo. A conservative generally believes in keeping things the way they are, but a reactionary would like to return things to the way they were. Reactionaries are sometimes called the radical right, or even reverse revolutionaries, since they hold views and favor methods that are just as extreme as radicals on the left.

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Conclusion



Demi Tracy: The American political spectrum is a great tool for comparing different ideologies, but it can also oversimplify things. These terms should be used in a broad sense and not applied too specifically. This is especially true when you begin to discuss multiple issues. For example, a person may have a conservative opinion about the economy and hold liberal views regarding society.

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Ending of Episode



Glover Mint: Thank you, Demi. Interestingly, the use of the words “left” and “right” to describe a political ideology began during the French Revolution. Members of the National Assembly who supported the King sat on the right, while those who supported the revolution sat on the left. Thanks for joining us.