

# L707 Analysis of the 2012 Election

## Session 4

### Political Ideologies

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#### Introduction.

In the introduction to this course, I provided a general summary of what I consider to be the major fault lines between the ideologies of the two parties. I focused on the economic dimension because I believe that lies at the heart of the divide. Actually, my focus could be more accurately described as *political economy*, because we are not looking at classical economic ideologies; rather, we are examining the government role in influencing the market place.

In the most general sense, the divide between the role of government in all aspects of life goes back to the founding of our nation. The notion of a “more perfect union” was hotly debated during the convention that crafted the Constitution and the ensuing ratification of the document. The proponents of a strong national government with vast powers adopted the term “Federalists” and the opponents were termed the “Anti-Federalists”. While it may be an over-generalization, I consider the current Democratic Party to be the modern version of the Federalists and the current Republican Party to be the Anti-Federalists.

The two parties have evolved over the years, as I described in another essay. During the past several decades, the distinction between the two major parties has become sharpened into a bi-polar distribution of conservatives and liberals. Again, these terms are over-generalizations, but they have become generally recognized in the political world and in my view fairly reflect the political divide between the two ideologies. In the most general sense, the conservative ideology emphasizes individual responsibility for one’s own welfare and the liberal ideology emphasizes a communitarian approach that envisions a significant role for the government in ensuring the “general welfare.”

I will directly distribute three readings that provide a broad description of this divide. The article *The Conservative Mind*, by David Brooks in the NYT, 24 September 2012, portrays a Republican Party that has narrowed its ideology to what amounts to a small-government focus that seems (in my interpretation) to reflect the Ayn Rand/Paul Ryan role of government. As you read this, remember the words of Romney in the leaked tape from his Boca Rotan fund raiser. Brooks’ last paragraph reads:

*“Some people blame bad campaign managers for Romney’s underperforming campaign, but the problem is deeper. Conservatism has lost the balance between economic and traditional conservatism. The Republican Party has abandoned half its intellectual ammunition. It appeals to people as potential business owners, but not as parents, neighbors, and citizens.”*

The second article is a book review of a book by E. J. Dionne, *Our Divided Political Heart: The Battle for the American Idea in an Age of Discontent*. This is a summary of the historical trend toward the “communitarian” ideology, to include past Republican presidents. He contrasts this ideology with a radical form of individualism which resembles social Darwinism. As you read this, relate it to the leaked tapes of Obama advocating redistribution to ensure an equal opportunity for all citizens. Excerpts from Dionne’s book:

*“Our country has witnessed the rise of a radical form of individualism that simultaneously denigrates the role of government and the importance most Americans attach to the quest for community.”*

...

*“For most of our history, and especially over most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, America has been guided by ‘the long consensus’—from the first Roosevelt through Ronald Reagan—that while it would be wrong ‘to deny the power of individualism in our history...it is just as misleading to ignore our yearnings for a strong common life and our republican quest for civic virtue.’”*

The third reading, *Conservative vs. Liberal Beliefs*, (StudentNewsDaily.com) is a comparison of competing beliefs on a variety of issues.