

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING POLITICAL STUDY

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ANNOTATION

The aim of the article is to analyze some specific terms in political communication, the importance of being aware of political language, to enhance good attitude towards political activities.

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INTRODUCTION

Every clique has its own language-an insider's jargon that people outside the group don't always understand. Filmmakers talk about "panning" and "fading". Retailers talk about "floor sales" and "back orders". Politicians have a language of their own too. Studying politics will enhance students' understanding of various political concepts and terms such as sovereignty, state, political obligation, and the relationship between the individual and the political system.. Hence, students will be better placed to identify the types of political systems which would be geared towards the promotion of the welfare of the population. Such knowledge will help students to remedy and criticize the flaws of political activities such as rigging in an electoral process and as a result ensure good political performance. Political studies have a potential of bringing about social transformation. This is possible because a good understanding of politics among students will empower them, thereby enhancing their political consciousness and participation. For Beck (1979:190), politics is the science or art of governing the affairs of society with reference to the perceived interests of the citizens.They can hence participate responsibly in public affairs by advocating just socio-economic policies. By bringing a more fair distribution of resources and greater employment, they can become agents of change of the existing redundant structures, which are oppressive. This may lead to improved living standards among individuals and the entire society. The study of politics involves the study of a system that is interconnected with social, economic, and cultural structures. Studying politics will enable students to notice relationships between political, economic, cultural and social phenomena. This will enhance the students understanding of the dynamics of change and hence draw generalizations about the political process. Studying politics will help students to better understand political structures and how structures work so as to contribute to improving a political system. The study enhances an awareness of values in politics by communicating to students ideologies of various political systems such as democratic system. The information gained will be useful in making value judgements about a particular political system so as to either accept or reject it. Thus political studies enable students to comprehend various forms of government and hence make informed choices with knowledge of the purpose and functioning of each.

What exactly do politicians mean when they talk about a "lame duck" or a "dark horse"? What is "red tape" and who is the "Incumbent"? This glossary is designed to demystify some of these terms and explain their origins.

Big Government: A negative term, used mainly by conservatives to describe government programs in areas where they believe government shouldn't be involved, especially those that spend money on social problems

Bipartisan: A cooperative effort by two political parties

Bleeding Heart: A term describing people whose hearts "bleed" with sympathy for the downtrodden; used to criticize liberals who favor government spending for social program

Bully Pulpit: The Presidency, when used by the President to inspire or moralize. Whenever the President seeks to rouse the American people, he is said to be speaking from the bully pulpit. When the term first came into use, "bully" was slang for "first rate" or "admirable."

Campaign: (noun) An organized effort to win an election (verb) To strive for elected office

Caucus: An informal meeting of local party members to discuss candidates and choose delegates to the party's convention

Coattails: The power of a popular candidate to gather support for other candidates in his or her party. Winning candidates are said to have coattails when they drag candidates for lower office along with them to victory.

Convention: A national meeting of a political party, where delegates formally elect a party's nominee

Dark Horse: A long-shot candidate

Delegate: A representative to a party's national convention chosen by local voters to vote for a particular candidate. Each state is assigned a certain number of delegates based on its population.

Demagogue: A leader whose impassioned rhetoric appeals to greed, fear, and hatred, and who often spreads lies. Former U.S. Sen. Joseph McCarthy (see McCarthyism) is often cited as a classic demagogue.

Fence Mending: What politicians do when they visit their electoral districts to explain an unpopular action? The term originated in 1879, when Ohio Senator John Sherman made a trip home that most people considered a political visit. Sherman insisted, however, that he was home "only to repair my fences."

Filibuster: An attempt by a Senator or group of Senators to obstruct the passage of a bill, favored by the majority, by talking continuously. Because there is no rule in the Senate over how long a member can speak, a Senator can prevent a bill from coming up for a vote by talking endlessly. Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina set the record in 1957 by speaking for more than 24 hours without stopping.

Fishing Expedition: An investigation with no defined purpose, often by one party seeking damaging information about another. Such inquiries are likened to fishing because they pull up whatever they happen to catch.

Front Burner: Where an issue is placed when it must be dealt with immediately

Gerrymander: The reorganization of voting districts by the party in power to insure more votes for their candidates. The term originated in 1811, when Governor Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts signed a bill that changed districts to favor the Democrats. The shape of one new district supposedly resembled a salamander, provoking a Boston newspaper editor to say, "Salamander? Call it a Gerrymander!"

GOP: Grand Old Party, nickname of the Republican Party

Grass Roots: Political activity that originates locally, or arises from ground level

Ideology: An integrated system of ideas about politics, values, and culture. Those who espouse an ideology are sometimes criticized as rigid and narrow-minded.

Incumbent: A current officeholder

Inside the Beltway: The area inside the Capital Beltway, a highway that encircles Washington, D.C. An issue described as "inside the Beltway" is believed to be of concern only to the people who work in and with the federal government and of little interest to the nation at large.

Lame Duck: An officeholder whose term has expired or cannot be continued, who thus has lessened power

Left-wing: Liberal. The labeling system originated from the seating pattern of the French National Assembly, which put liberals on the left, moderates in the middle, and conservatives on the right.

Reactionary: A militant conservative; opposite of "radical," which means ultraliberal

Red Tape: Government paperwork and procedures that are slow and difficult. Stems from an eighteenth-century British practice of binding official papers with a reddish twine.

Good political understanding can enhance truthfulness and faithfulness in one's promises by emphasizing the importance of morality in politics. This can help curb corruption, which has become a "cancerous" growth in many countries, especially in the area of politics, and thereby bring sanity to political activities. It can also help mould people's character by inculcating in them a culture of diplomacy and democracy. People can thus refrain from acts of violence in attempting to address some political issues such as constitutional reforms and election crises. Political science will provide students with information on various political ideologies such as nationalism, liberalism, and socialism. They will thus be able to make well informed decision regarding aspects of different ideologies to make their own. They will also be exposed to various political theories such as the theory of justice by being provided with reliable and objective facts about certain political phenomena at a particular time. Most people are ignorant of their basic and fundamental rights and duties. Therefore, people ought to be aware of their rights and duties in order to participate actively and responsibly in government. This can be enhanced by providing students with political and civic knowledge. According to Article 21 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "everyone has the right to take part in the government of his or her country, directly or through freely elected representatives" (United Nations 1998:5)

To sum up a study of politics is important in preparing students for future leadership. It can help develop students' capabilities in political affairs. The students will thus be in a better position to address some of the political problems such as inadequate constitutions. Some students can dispute the importance of studying politics if they do not aspire to become politicians or work in public institutions. Nevertheless, a good political knowledge is significant not only in teaching politics, in pursuing a career as a professional politician, in working in a government ministry, but also in working in many specialized institutions and voluntary organizations, in voting, and in conversations about politics. For this reason, at least one course in political studies should be obligatory for all students and some electives should be available so that political studies can be pursued to varying extents by all students.

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