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Burns and Peltason: Government by the People, Texas Version: Study Guide

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BURNS AND PELTASON: GOVERNMENT BY THE PEOPLE, TEXAS VERSION: STUDY GUIDE. 1996

Steven Alan Samson

Chapter Twenty-Three: The Texas Constitution

1. **The Constitutional Legacy** How does the Texas Constitution contrast the U.S. Constitution? In what ways is the Texas Constitution an example of what a constitution should not be? What did the state constitution of Coahuila y Tejas (1827) provide for and what elements of the constitution have endured? What were the two interests of the colonists who adopted the Constitution of the republic of Texas and what does it provide for? What provisions regarding the legislature were included in the Constitution of 1845? How was the Texas Constitution amended in 1850? How was Texas's new membership in the Confederacy reflected in the Civil War Constitution? How has the Constitution of 1866 had an enduring impact on Texas constitutional law and politics? What factors led to the defeat of Governor E. J. Davis in 1872? In what ways was the Constitution of 1876 an anti-government charter?

2. **General Principles of the Texas Constitution** What are the specific weakness and criticisms of the Texas Constitution? What are the procedures for amending the Texas Constitution?

3. **Constitutional Reform** What were the major political issues addressed by the Constitutional Convention of 1974? What major changes were included in the 1975 reform proposals? What factors led to its defeat? What notable constitutional changes were approved between 1975 and 1994? What role do interest groups and elites play in Texas politics?

4. **Prospects for Change** Why have wholesale attempts to revise the Texas Constitution been unsuccessful?

Chapter Twenty-Eight: Local Government in Texas

1. **Local Governments in the Texas Political System** How does the Dillon rule apply to local governments of Texas? How much discretionary authority is given to Texas's cities? What major responsibilities are assigned to different levels of Texas government?

2. **Municipal Governments** How do general law and home rule cities differ? What are three forms of city government in Texas? Does the city's election system make a significant difference? In what ways are the financial options of Texas cities limited?

3. **Urban Problems** How does the aging population in Texas contribute to urban problems? How does "white flight" contribute to urban problems in Texas? What are reasons for declining infrastructures of local governments? How have the crime problems in Texas cities been worsened by local budget limitations? Why are mandates politically attractive to federal and state policy makers?

4. **County Governments** What is the organizational structure of county government in Texas? What are the main criticisms of Texas's county government?

5. **Special Districts** What are the functions of special districts? What are the consequences of single-purpose districts? Why do inequities exist in independent school districts? How are school districts governed? Why were councils of government created?

6. **Solutions to the Problems of Local Governments** Why do many governments believe privatization can reduce costs? What allows Texas cities to expand their boundaries beyond suburban development? What recommendations have been made to modernize county government in Texas? What techniques have been used by cities to assist in economic development? What did the 1971 Interlocal Cooperation Act allow for? What solution has been proposed to address the problem of fragmentation of metropolitan government? How do public improvement districts operate?

Chapter Ten: Political Parties

1. **What Parties Do for Democracy** What are the major functions of parties? Evaluate their performance in each category. What three methods have been used by parties to select candidates? Which method is the most common today? Are political parties an appropriate vehicle for social reform? What is the role of third parties? What contributions to American government have third parties made? Why do third parties usually fail?

2. **Parties: Their Rise and Role** What was the attitude of the Founding Fathers toward parties? Why? What were the original names of the Democratic party? What party emerged to replace the Federalists? How was the spoils system used by political parties? What were the origins of the GOP? How did reforms of the Progressive Era affect political parties. What groups were brought together in FDR's New Deal? In what sense were attempts of Reagan to make Republicans the dominant party thwarted?

3. **American Parties Today** What characteristics do both major parties share today? How do Americans view political parties today? How are parties organized at the national level? Describe the role of the presidential convention; the national committee; the national party chairperson. What is the role of congressional and senatorial campaign committees? How are parties organized at the state, county and local level? How do political parties operate in: 1) the Congress, 2) the executive branch, 3) the judicial branch, 4) state and local governments.

4. **Parties in the Electorate** What distinctions have existed historically between Democrats and Republicans? How do they differ today? What are the different ways citizens view partisanship? How important is party identification? What is meant by party realignment? What prospects confront each party in the 1990s?

5. **Saving the Parties** Are parties dying? What procedural reforms have been adopted by Democrats? Republicans? What prospects for renewal have been adopted by each party?

Chapter Eleven: Public Opinion, Political Participation, and Voting

1. **Public Opinion** What is public opinion? What is meant by intensity, latency and salience as applied to public opinion? Name an issue about which there is general consensus. One issue which the public is polarized.

2. **Political Socialization** How influential is your family in shaping your political attitudes? What institution ranks next to the family? What part does ideology play? Why is the mass media (especially TV) important? What are religion and ethnic background important? Why do adults sometimes shift their childhood attitudes? Name an issue about which there is general consensus. One about which the public is polarized.

3. **Voters: Who and Why** How can a citizen participate in government other than voting? Trace the expansion of suffrage in the United States. In which election is voter turnout the greatest? The lowest? How can voting laws affect voting rates?

4. **Nonvoting: Who and Why?** What are the causes of low turnout? Is nonvoting a serious problem? What are the characteristics of nonvoters? How can the barriers to nonvoting be reduced? What are the characteristics of those who vote? How does social status impact on voting behavior.

5. **Voting Behavior in the United States** How does partisanship identification differ from party registration? Who are the independents? How do they differ from partisans? What is a realignment election? What are the positive aspects of candidate appeal? Give examples of candidates with positive appeal, negative appeal. How important are issues in determining how a person votes?

Chapter Twelve: Campaigns and Elections: Democracy in Action

1. **The Rules of the Game** Who determines the rules for US elections? When are elections held in the United States? Explain fixed term; staggered term and term limitation. What effect does the winner-take-all rule have on our elections? What is the electoral college? How important is it?

2. **Running for Office** Why do campaigns for Congress vary so widely? What are some similarities between campaigns for the House and the Senate? How is the election process distorted today? How does an emphasis on personality and negative campaigning detract from the true issues? What is the recent success rate of representatives who run for reelection? Why do critics say we are electing "representatives for life"? Why must most representatives build a personal rather than a party organization? What advantages do incumbents have in running for reelection? Does a big budget assure election to the House? How much does an average Senate race cost? Why are Senate races more difficult to win? Why are Senate races of the future less apt to favor incumbents? Does negative campaigning seem to be effective?

3. **Running for the President** How are most delegates to the national

convention selected? Why do Iowa and New Hampshire loom so large in the delegate selection process? How have recent conventions been decided in advance? Of what value is the party platform? How is the candidate for vice-president selected? Why do parties continue to have conventions? How do you run for president of the United States without political party backing? What factors are considered by candidates in planning their fall campaigns? How do campaigns resemble marathons? What is the impact of presidential debates?

4. **Improving Elections** What advantages are claimed for the party primary system? What are the alleged disadvantages? Why might a national primary be better? Might national caucuses be better? Should direct election of the president be substituted for the electoral college? Is reform of the electoral college likely?

5. **Campaign Money** Cite the major scandals involving campaign money. Why do the costs of campaigns continue to rise? Why is PAC money so controversial? How do we now finance presidential campaign costs? What provisions have been made to publicize spending in congressional races? What are some criticisms of the FECA? How did Ross Perot bypass campaign finance reform? Why is bipartisan campaign finance reform so difficult to achieve?

6. **Interpreting the 1992 Election and the 1994 Election** What were the outstanding characteristics of the 1992 and the 1994 elections?

Chapter Thirteen: The Media and American Politics

1. **The Influence of the Mass Media** How did the media handle the reporting in the Persian Gulf? What is the media's major role in American politics? How is our culture affected by the mass media? What new technological changes in the media are emerging? How are new competitors affecting the established media? Why is the media the primary linking mechanism in American politics?

2. **The Rise of an Autonomous Press** How is the role of today's press different from the press of Thomas Jefferson's day? What is the objective of journalism? How did FDR use radio as a political tool? Where do Americans get most of their news? Is the mass media a business or a public service industry? What do journalists believe is their function in elections?

3. **The Media and Public Opinions** How have the media changed American politics? Why did early studies tend to minimize media power? What factors determine how a person interprets media messages? Why do both liberals and conservatives feel the media is biased? Why is the media's role in setting the national agenda so important? Who favors greater regulations of the media? Why is the regulation difficult?

4. **The Media and Elections** How has modern media changed political campaigns? How do media consultants differ from political party advisers? Why does the media often picture campaigns as a game rather than a serious contest over issues? Do voters make their decisions on the basis of media reporting? How does the reporting of election results influence elections?

5. **Media and Governance** What is the media's role in political process?

What has been the relationship of recent presidents with the press? Why has Congress suffered at the hands of the press? Why is the Supreme Court the least dependent upon the press? Is the claim the media is the fourth branch of the government exaggerated?

BURNS AND PELTASON: STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter Thirty: The Democratic Faith

1. Why did Athenian democracy break down? They wanted comfort and security more than freedom.
2. What makes citizenship complete? Active participation. ["No right without its duty, no duty without its right" -- Francis Lieber].
3. In the 1943 Barnette case involving religious liberty and public education, Justice Robert Jackson wrote that "authority here is to be controlled by" -- what? Public opinion [cf. Francis Lieber's "publicist"].
4. Identify two ways of organizing representation? Geographically into local districts based on majority representation (two-party system favors coalition-building) or broker rule (full representation of minorities).
5. What does the textbook mean by calling leadership "situational and contextual"? James Madison illustration.
6. Distinguish between power and authority. What is legitimacy?

Chapter One: Constitutional Democracy

1. Define democracy. Identify two forms of democracy. How has the use of the word changed? What is another word for representative democracy?
2. What freedoms constituted Franklin Roosevelt's so-called Second Bill of Rights?
3. The essence of liberty is what? The term introduced to American political science by Francis Lieber around 1853 is "self-government."
4. Identify some assumptions or prerequisites of modern democracy. Free and fair elections, opposition political parties, majority or plurality rule, freedom of expression (inc. access to information, right to assemble and protest).
5. Identify some conditions conducive to democracy. High degree of literacy, relative economic prosperity, social pluralism with overlapping associations and groupings, a democratic consensus.
6. What is a theocracy?
7. Who was John Peter Zenger?

Chapter Two: The Living Constitution

1. What is natural law? How does the Constitution bring unity to a diverse nation? Identify some ways in which the Constitution grants and limits power.
2. What were the circumstances behind the case of *Marbury v. Madison* (1803)? What legal remedy did William Marbury seek? How did the Court rule in this case and why? What were the consequences of the Court's decision?
3. How have the checks and balances been modified in practice? How do the British and American political systems differ?
4. How have Congress, the President, and the judiciary expanded (elaborated) their power without having to amend the Constitution? How have custom and usage modified the system?
5. How may the Constitution be formally changed? Why did the proposed Equal Rights Amendment and the District of Columbia Amendment fail?

Chapter Three: American Federalism

1. What is federalism? What are its alternatives? What are some of the advantages of federalism?
2. Identify and distinguish between the various powers of the central government. What powers have been used to expand the central government? What are concurrent powers? What restraints are placed on the national government? On the states? How does the Constitution regulate relations between the states?
3. What historical circumstances contributed to the growth of Big Government? What are entitlements? How do centralists and decentralists differ in their interpretation of the Constitution? Who have been among the prominent decentralists? Centralists?
4. What were the circumstances behind the case of *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819)? What arguments were made? How did the Supreme Court rule and why? What have some of the consequences? How has the role of federal courts expanded?
5. Identify the various types of federal grants. What is meant by an iron triangle (or issue network)? Identify some of the techniques of control by the central government?
6. What are some current trends in the relationship between the central government and the states?

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Chapter 7: Political Culture and Ideology

1. **American Beliefs and Behavior Patterns** What attitudes do Americans share? What basic beliefs do they hold in common? What kinds of conflict exist within our ideology and culture? As compared with other Western democracies, in which political virtues do we seem to excel?
2. **The Quest For Additional Rights** How did original agrarian roots give support to the idea of equality? How was that concept challenged by the rise of corporations? What contradiction apparently exists between unregulated capitalism and democracy? What new rights did FDR sponsor for Americans? What is the American Dream?
3. **Liberalism, Conservatism and Public Policy** In trying to define liberal and conservative attitudes what tests apply? Why are clear-cut labels hard to define? How are today's liberals different from earlier ones? Contrast their attitudes toward the role of government. What attitudes do liberals have toward the possibility of progress? Contrast their views with those of conservatives. What is a neoconservative? Radical Rightist? Neoliberal?
4. **A Central Tension: Political Equality Versus Capitalism** How do the central values of political equality and a free market system conflict? Why should the American system be described as "mixed"? What do Americans believe about rewarding people of ability? Private property? Inheritance? What trend seems to be developing in the way American wealth is distributed between the wealthy and the poor? What tensions does this create in a society that believes in political equality?
5. **Ideology and Tolerance** What clear-cut differences separate conservatives and liberals on the issue of tolerance? How do they differ on civil rights and liberties? Identify three issues on which liberals display intolerance. What are the issues that bring a demand for conservative government restrictions?

Chapter 8: The American Political Landscape

1. **Where Are We From?** How does geography explain our diversity? Why is the South the most distinct district in the United States? How have the South's voting patterns changed in recent years? What makes California distinctive? What has "white flight" done to the modern day city? How has the growth of metropolitan areas rearranged black-white relationships?
2. **A Land of Diversity** How has immigration made us so diverse? How does diversity promote tension?
3. **Race and Ethnicity** What are the major racial groups in the United States? What percentage of the population does each group compose? Trace black migration patterns within the United States. What are the major areas of disagreement between blacks and whites? How have African Americans increased their political power? Which party do most African Americans favor? Why? Why have Asian-Americans been the most successful racial group economically and educationally? Under what legal handicaps do Native Americans operate? Why are the Hispanics considered an ethnic group?
4. **Gender** How has the political power of women changed in the last two decades? Why is income a major issue on the women's changed in the last two decades? What policy issues divide men and women?
5. **Other Institutional Differences** What role does religion play in the United States? What shifts in wealth and income have occurred since 1980? What distinctions exist between an industrial society and a post-industrial society? Why has social class been relatively unimportant in the United States? Could this change? Why have the elderly been such a political success? How important is education to a diverse society?

6. **Unity in a Land of Diversity** What factors unify our diverse population?

Chapter 14: Congress: The People's Branch

1. **Congressional Elections** What is meant by a "safe seat"? "Competitive seat"? How does gerrymandering play a role in Congressional elections? What triggers the periodic redistricting? Under what restrictions are Congressional district lines drawn? Why is incumbency an advantage? What overriding factor determines voter decisions? What are general characteristics of legislators with respect to sex, education, economic background, political background, race and religion? What profession tends to dominate legislative backgrounds?

2. **Powers of Congress** What general powers were given to Congress? What special powers was it given? In the national contest for power why has the President gained more than Congress?

3. **The Houses of Congress** Why was the legislative branch originally divided into two parts? How has the House of Representatives made its procedures more efficient? What special powers does the Speaker have? What other officers supplement the Speaker's leadership? What key role is played by the Rules Committee? What official dominates Senate procedure? How have Senate minorities used the filibuster? How can cloture be used to end filibusters? Why have confirmations by the Senate become more political?

4. **The Job of the Legislator** What is the delegate theory of representation? The trustee theory? Who is apt to hold each view? What role do each of the following play in a Congressman's voting record: Ideology? Voter opinion? Colleagues? Staff? Party? President? Other influences? How do PACs influence the legislative process?

5. **The Legislative Obstacle Course** How is power dispersed in Congress? What is a rider? Why are they used? What is meant by authorization and appropriation? Why is compromise so important in Congress?

6. **Committees: The Little Legislatures?** Why is Congress sometimes called a collection of committees? How are committee members selected? How important are the chairs of committees and subcommittees? What role does seniority play in committees? How valuable are committee investigations? How important are conference committees?

7. **Is Congress Effective? Congressional Reform?** What are the most frequent criticisms of Congress? Evaluate each criticism. How is Congress fragmented? In what sense is Congress acting as Founders anticipated?