Hello. My name is Patrick Scott. Welcome to PLS 101, American Democracy and Citizenship. Iím hoping that youíre gonna have a successful semester. I want to share with you a little bit about the overview of this course and also perhaps some strategies as to how to make sure this will be a successful time for you.

First of all I want to talk to you about this course in terms of why I think itís important. And the best way I can describe this was in light of what I saw the other day in terms of a bumper sticker, driving down the street. This bumper sticker said, ìYour Ignorance is Their Power.î And I thought, ìHow true that applies to this course.î And what I mean by that is this. If we donít know how our political system works, howíre we gonna change it for the better? If we donít know how our system works, then basically what this means is that other people will be making very important key decisions for us. So your ignorance is their power.

The reason why I enjoy teaching this class so much is to help us get to a better level of understanding of how our system works. Because if we understand better how our system works, we can become that much closer to knowing how to use it to change it for the better.

Now, in terms of how this course is structured, a few things I want to talk about. First of all, all the material that we have will be posted at our Blackboard website. There is a website there that will have the syllabus on there and all the relevant materials, PowerPoint presentations and things like that. But, as you know, this course will be available in both a taped form that will be on cable as well as on computer disk. These, of course, are available at the bookstore.

In this class weíll have four tests and a common final. The four tests will cover four basic units of material and then the common final is a comprehensive final that every single student taking PLS 101 has to take at the end of the semester. And I want to talk to you a few minutes in terms of how weíre going to do this and also the books that are required for this.

The first book that weíre gonna be using is a book by Janda, Berry and Goldman, The Challenge of Democracy, the brief version. Itís a paperback book, not terribly expensive, very readable, and a very helpful, handy text to use. Weíre also gonna be using a set of supplemental readings called American Democracy and Citizenship, a reader. Weíll be using both books throughout this course.

In terms of how this course is structured, what weíre gonna be doing, like I said, is weíre gonna have four basic units of material. The first unit is gonna be covering sort of the foundations of our system of democracy. For example, weíll be talking about the purposes of government, political ideology. What is your ideology? How does, for example, a conservative differ from a liberal in terms of what they believe? Weíll be looking at things like representative versus direct democracy. Weíll be looking at our Constitution. What were the factors that shaped the formation of our Constitution? Why do we even need a Constitution, to begin with, and what are the various principles and bodies in our Constitution? Such as system of separation of powers and checks and balances.

Then weíll move on and talk about Federalism and the relationship between the states and the federal government, and the advantages and disadvantages of our system of government by giving a lot of power to the states and a lot of
power to the federal government, and how that contrasts with other systems of
government around the world. So that pretty much covers the foundation unit
of material.

Then we’re gonna move from foundations to the next unit which covers
essentially political behavior and that’s gonna be covering topics such as
public opinion, how public opinion is formed. What is the role of the media
in shaping our thinking and thoughts about our political system? What are the
various factors that have shaped your own views about politics? We’ll also be
looking at participation, things like voting behavior. Why do some people
vote and others not vote? Is not voting bad for our democracy? We’ll also
talk about political parties and why do we have predominantly a two-party
system. And the role of campaigns and how they have changed over the past
several years. And elections. We’ll be talking about elections like
primaries and the electoral college. Should the electoral college be
abolished? Why do we have it? Then we’ll also as part of this unit of
material talk about the role of interest groups. Are interest groups good or
bad for democracy? What kinds of interest groups are out there and are the
special interests, again, good or bad for democracy?

Our third unit, we’ll be talking about various institutions that play a
role in our system of government. We’ll start first by talking about Congress
and the Missouri legislature. We’ll be talking about things like the powers
of Congress, how laws are passed, the very important role of congressional
committees. We’ll then move on to move from the Congress to the Presidency,
and also the Missouri governor as well. We’ll talk about topics, for example,
like the leadership role of the President, how the President’s power has
expanded over the years, and the role of the Cabinet in advising the
President. From there we talk about the bureaucracy. Is bureaucracy really a
fourth branch of government? What are the factors that have helped
bureaucracy become so big and powerful over the past 50 years?

And then we’ll look at briefly how these institutions shape the making or
formation of public policies, the process of policy making, and we’re gonna
have particularly our focus on economic policy.

Our last unit really covers a couple of different things. We’ll first
talk about the role of the courts and specifically about the Federal
Judiciary. We’ll be talking about the Supreme Court and its role and
influence in shaping our society. We’ll be talking about things like civil
rights and civil liberties, and the struggle for equality throughout the
history of our government, of our democracy.

We’ll also talk about our final topic will be U.S. foreign policy and
foreign policy making, and particularly the role of the U.S. in terms of its
leadership role. We’ll be talking about, for example, should the U.S. be the
world’s police power and what are the limits of the U.S. in the international
arena.

As we cover these topics, I think to be successful you need to do two
things. You need to make sure that you watch these lectures at the same time
that you’re reading the material. I like to look at this as a tapestry in
which what we talk about in class or on tape melds well with the material
that’s in the book. And if you’re learning both together, that’s gonna
reinforce the concepts that we’re talking about here. And by doing that,
you’re gonna come away with a much richer understanding and a detailed picture
of how our American system of democracy works.

I want at the end you to come to the conclusion that, yes, you’ve learned
a lot, you’ve done well, and you now are in a position where you can look at
that bumper sticker and say, "I don't have the ignorance so they don't have the power over me. I know enough about my system as to how I can change to make it work for the better." That's my goal for you for this semester.

You can contact me, of course, on the Blackboard website, by email or by phone. I want to work with you to make sure this is gonna be a very successful semester for all of you. Thank you very much.

Let's, then, go ahead and start talking about this course, American Democracy and Citizenship. And what I like to do is, first of all, start out by talking about the role of government in our lives. A lot of times we don't really think about how often and in so many ways that government surrounds us. There are so many different ways and it is pervasive in our lives. And I have something I wanted to read to you just to show you. If you think about government regulations, they are very pervasive. You don't even think about it. But just look at this through your day or even in here, in this vignette. Think about the simple act of going to McDonald's. Well, listen to this.

This is just a little vignette I want to read:
Consider the simple act of going to McDonald's to buy a hamburger. You leave your house or apartment which has been built according to local building codes. Those building codes are an example of government regulation. You get into your car. If you have a fairly new car it is got certain safety features like airbags. Why are those airbags there? Because of government regulations.

You drive to an intersection, you stop at a red light, another form of government regulations. Once you get to McDonald's you notice that there's a sticker on the door from the local public health agency. This sticker indicates that this local public health food service place has been inspected and fortunately found free of both insects and rodent infestation. [Thank goodness, right?] Again, that's regulation. On the wall you see a certificate from the local municipality indicating that this property is licensed to operate as a business. Again, regulation.

You then give your order to a person whose minimum wages and maximum working hours are set by regulation, whose supervisor is required by guidelines issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to maintain a workplace free of harassment and whose wages are reduced by mandatory reductions for income tax and social security. If after your meal you feel you need to visit one of the rest-rooms, you will find one oversized stall designed for those who are physically challenged. Again, regulation.

Other examples in which we see government pervasive and again, driving to class. The traffic regulations. The speed of your windshield wipers are actually to some degree regulated by government. Our classroom building here, constructed with federal and state dollars. Do any of you have student loans, by any chance? Of course. Okay. Probably several of these or many of these are subsidized by either the federal government or by the Missouri state government.

Our lives are constantly governed by regulation. We are not officially born until we have a birth certificate. We must attend school up to a certain age. We cannot engage in many occupations without a license from the state. We cannot be declared legally dead without a death certificate. And it doesn't end there. We could be buried only in government approved cemeteries and our estate taxes must also be paid. All of that in terms of regulation. So again I say consider the government regulations that affect you or all of us on a daily basis and you can get a sense of how much government does affect us in so many ways.
So I’d like to, first of all, just kind of as a way of introduction, just point out the fact that in a lot of ways ó this is what I said on Monday ó of all the classes that you take, I would make the argument that you’ll see more connections between this class and what we talk about in this class in the outside world than in many other classes that you take here at Missouri State University.

Another question I’d like to look at is ó you know, we kind of take again our system of government for granted. We know that we’re a democracy and yet at the same time we should recognize that we are very unique compared to other democracies. And one of the things I’d like to do is really compare our system of government with many others. For example, western European democracies from which we have our historical heritages in terms of our system of government.

And let’s just look at some of those differences here, just again by way of contrast. If we, for example, look at political parties, if we look at parties here in the U.S. versus parties in many western European democracies there’s a big difference in the nature of political parties. What we have here ó and I’ll be talking about this several times, over and over and over again, so you’ll know it very, very well. What we have here is what is called a broad based or large based two-party system. Even though we do have other parties here. We have a Libertarian party, we have a Right to Life party, we have a Green party. Do we have a Socialist or Communist party here in the United States? Absolutely, we do. We have those. But again, by and large, our political system is dominated by the Republican and Democratic parties.

Over in many European democracies they have what is called a multi-party system. And in addition to that, they have essentially ó they’re very ideological in nature. So you’ll have a very strong presence of a Communist party there or a Socialist party there where they’re not strong here. So that’s one of the important differences between our political system and theirs.

Another thing that I’ve put up here is control over basic government services in terms of police and education. And what we see here is that in our system of government, where do police and education functions tend to be primarily controlled by state, local or national? Who controls basic education and police functions, would you say? State and local, right? More so than national. In many European democracies those are controlled at the national level. And here’s a good example of this. When we talk about Federalism we’ll talk about this a little bit, too. But if we were in France right now, we could actually ask the Minister for Education. She could look at her watch just right now and tell you exactly what every third grader is studying throughout the whole nation of France. Because that particular function of education is controlled at the national level, not the state or regional or provincial kind of level. Where again, our system is very much controlled at more the local and the state level as opposed to the national level. So there again you see a lot of differences between our system of government and many western European democracies.

Another thing I’d like to tell you is that the nature of voters, the rise ó what I call the rise of the independent voter, and the idea behind this is that ó again, over here most people today would probably ó we could even do a little test here. Let’s try this for the test before I give you the answer here. How many of you ó and don’t be shy. If you don’t know, that’s fine too. I’ll give you a don’t know as a category. But how many of you today would tend to identify pretty strongly with the Republican party? If you
identify strongly with what the Republican party is all about and believes in, raise your hand. How many? A few of you? Okay. How many of you clearly identify with the Democratic party? You believe in the basic values and premises of the Democratic party. Now, here’s one more. How many of you are pretty much moderate, you can vote either way? Raise your hand. Okay. Thank you. I’ll pay you all at the end of class since you proved my point here.

Bottom line is, what you see here is a very good example of what the nature of the U.S. voter is like. We have people who call themselves independent voters. They’re essentially moderate voters. They’re not strongly ideological. I used that term before in terms of parties. They’re not diehard believers in one party system or another, or one party set of principles or platform than others. Instead, they are very much willing to go and look at the candidate and say, ‘Shall I vote for this candidate or this candidate?’ And they’re happy, one way or the other. They can vote for one party or the other. That’s called the rise of independent voters.

Now, let me give you something else that is kind of interesting, too. If we were having this class, say, 75 years ago and your grandparents, your great grandparents were in this class, how do you think that vote would’ve been different? If I had said to them, ‘How many of you are strongly Republican or strongly Democrat,’ what would they have said? Most of them would have raised their hands in one or the other. ‘I’m a Democrat through and through’ or ‘I’m a Republican through and through.’ If I had said 75 years ago or 50 years ago, ‘How many of you consider yourselves Independents?’ A very, very small minority.

So we have, again, this broad-based two-party system with a lot of moderate voters, many of whom call themselves Independents who can vote for one party or the other, candidates from one party or the other, as opposed to many European democracies. Let me give you the contrast here. In many European democracies, instead what you find is that the voters there are very much tied to one party or another. They identify much more strongly with one party or the other. You don’t find moderate kinds of parties over there. Again, they’re much more ideologically driven and people identify much more clearly with one or the other.

Let me just give you another example here in addition to that. The role of the courts. The courts play a much greater role here in the U.S. than they do in many European democracies. In fact, I want to read to you about this just to give you an example of our Supreme Court as our top court. Do you think our Supreme Court plays a major role in deciding issues for our country? Absolutely it does. Who can give me an example of a very famous court case? This is a simple question. Give me a very famous court case.

[Inaudible student responses]


I used to just to give you a little bit of background here, I used to live in Washington, D.C., working for the Federal government. I worked for a Senator from Georgia for a bit and then I worked for the Department of Commerce and the Department of Housing and Urban Development for awhile, and so I got a chance to see government in action. Anyway, when I worked for the Commerce Department, I lived in Washington for about four years. And when I
was working for the Commerce Department, we were located right there on Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenue. And I could look out my office and January 23rd, every single year, guess what I would see? A huge mass of people protesting and marching up to the capitol and then to the Supreme Court, which is right across from the capitol, protesting Roe v. Wade of 1973. And then I’d see on the other side of Washington, D.C., another huge mass of people who were basically protesting against the protesters essentially, believing that a woman’s right to choose should be upheld.

And so again, that to me ó I think about those two court cases as simply one of many examples in which you see the courts playing a dominant role here in our system. And I just saw this the other day and I just again ó and I would encourage you, by the way, to do this as well. Stay up on reading political news in the newspaper because you’ll find again so many connections between this class and what’s going on outside.

Here’s something I saw the other day in the Columbia Tribune and this is interesting about what the courts ó the Supreme Court is gonna be dealing with coming up for this year. It says, “2005 is likely to be hectic for the Supreme Court.” Let me just give you a couple of examples of what the Supreme Court is gonna be dealing with, just to show you again an example of the role the courts play in our system of government. Some major cases involved, for example, whether states can execute juvenile killers; whether states can bar interstate wine sales over the Internet. In early March, large crowds are expected when justices take up two cases that question the constitutionality of government displays of the 10 Commandments. The last major religion case was last year’s challenge to the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance. You may have heard about that over in Appeals Court over in California. Justices settled that case without ruling on the merits.

March also brings a case that asks how U.S. authorities should deal with foreign nationals facing charges that could result in execution. In addition, there is an interesting Internet dispute that questions whether file sharing services should be held responsible when their customers illegally swap songs and movies on-line. None of you do that, I know. But again, you can see, again, a very important system of issues here.

In April they’re gonna be looking at Oregon’s attempted suicide law, the constitutionality of that. They’re also gonna be looking at a Florida law that kept a severely brain damaged woman alive over her husband’s objections. There’s another law they’re gonna be looking at, a Florida law too, that bars gays from adopting. And they’re also gonna be looking at an appeal that questions the Bush administration’s strategy to hold military trials for terror suspects in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

This is just a small inkling of the kinds of court cases that are gonna be coming up this year ó which, again, I think suggest to you that the courts definitely ó particularly the Supreme Court and the Federal courts play a very influential role in our political system here in the U.S.

A couple of other quick examples I’ll give you, just in terms of showing some differences between our political system and many western European democracies. The level of taxation. How many of you feel like you’re paying taxes that are too high? We all feel that way, right? Oh, taxes are too high. I went to school at Syracuse University in upstate New York and New York has pretty high tax rates. When I came to Missouri I was thinking this was great. I mean, taxes are so much lower than up there. But even by contrast, what we pay here in Missouri and in the U.S. is very, very small compared to what people pay in taxes in many western European democracies.
I remember meeting a person from Norway one day and he was a very nice older gentleman. And we were talking a little bit about Norway and how did he like Norway and how he compared it to America. And one of the things that he was saying was that he loved living in Norway because everything was paid for. Education was paid for, health services were paid for. He was very happy being over there. But then I asked him, I said, ‘Well, aren’t you paying a very high tax rate?’ He said, ‘Yes, about 75 percent of everything I make went back to the government.’ And I thought, ‘Wow.’ That is just so hard for me to conceive. And yet he was very happy under that system because everything, you know, was provided for by the government. Again, what I want to suggest to you is that, again, that you do find some very strong differences in the level of taxation between many western European democracies and ours.

A couple of other quick things, too, along the same lines. Government ownership of industry. Basically, here the U.S. Government owns a very few industries. In much of Europe the government owns things like airlines. They own the telephone system, steel mills, automobile manufacturers, and oil companies. You see a lot less of that here in the U.S. So again, what I simply wanted to show you here is that even though, again, we’re a democracy, we are very unique in a lot of ways compared to many other western European democracies.

Now, another thing I wanted to say in addition to this is let’s talk a little bit about some of since we’re talking about democracy, let’s talk about the various meanings of democracy. And I want to give you three different types of democracies, since we’re talking about democracy and we are a democracy, one of which is really not a democracy but people have used this before to say they are a democracy. This is a term called democratic centralism. I’ve got a little definition here. Democratic centralism says this: A government is democratic if it serves the true interests of the people, whether or not the people have any say in those decisions.

Now, does that sound very democratic? Many former Communist countries have called themselves democracies. For example, the former East Germany, the German Democratic Republic. There’s a number of these call themselves democracies or a democratic republic. And they practice a form of democracy that they call democratic centralism. It’s saying we are serving your true interests. We know what’s best for you, so therefore we’re democratic. Even though you had no say in that, you’re still a democratic system. Of course, I don’t agree with that but that is one meaning.

Now, one that we’re more closely attuned to is the idea of direct democracy where all citizens participate. Some examples of direct democracy? Historically, ancient Greece was one practiced direct democracy to a certain degree. Again, it wasn’t everybody, but in that case it was the men who participated in these decisions. New England town meetings, even today they will oftentimes get together over a major issue and vote collectively if they’re registered to vote and they will make decisions for the town, certain initiatives and proposals.

Ways in which we see direct democracy also at work today? There’s a thing called referendum and this is an example: when voters are asked to approve or reject a specific issue. Very simply the idea behind that is that the legislature will put something on the ballot. We go to places and you put this before the voters: Do you want to have a new electric facility to make electricity or not? That’s an example of a referendum.

Recall is if you are unhappy with the legislature and you initiate a
petition to remove an elected official before his or her term of office is expired. Again, that is another example that we see.

And then a third one here would be an initiative. There is where citizens may propose something on the ballot such as an amendment to the Constitution. Should we amend the Constitution of Missouri to allow more cockfighting or to ban cockfighting? Should we amend the Constitution to allow for carrying concealed weapons or not? But again, referendum, recall, and initiative are three different ways in which we see direct democracy at work.

So we've got democratic centralism. We've got direct democracy where people participate and these are three different ways in which they participate or some ways we see it at work today.

And then the third is thing called representative democracy or republic. Now, representative democracy is a little different from direct democracy. Because what it is is citizens elect the representatives to make important decisions.

I've got something here I want you to also understand. Whenever I say representative democracy, I want you to automatically think republic at the same time. Those two terms go hand in hand. A republic means representative democracy. When you say the Pledge of Allegiance and ito the republic for which it stands, you probably didn't know what it meant, did you? When they say republic, they're referring to this idea of representative democracy. That is a form of democracy in which the citizens will elect people to make important decisions for them.

Now, I have a very important question for you. Which do you think is better? I mean, in a lot of ways you might think a purer form of democracy, a more pure form, is direct democracy and yet we don't really - even though we do practice direct democracy, our system of government is really founded much more on the idea of a representative democracy. So what do you think is a better form of democracy? Would you tend to think that a representative of republic is better than a pure democracy or not? It is a little bit of a rhetorical question because I think there is some arguments to suggest that a representative democracy is actually better than a direct democracy.

Let me give you a couple of examples of some arguments, then. By the way, if I'm going a little too fast here with the PowerPoints - you know, a lot of time before I'm putting all this up here and that slows down. So if I need to slow down, just raise your hand and I'll be happy to kind of slow down. But essentially the difference between the two is where we elect representatives as opposed to making the major decisions ourselves.

Let me give you some arguments here for representative democracy. And one of the key arguments is this. Some people say - and again, I would agree - direct democracy is not practical in our particular political system. People often don't have the time, the energy, the interest, or the information to decide upon very difficult issues. And I think a lot of you would certainly agree with that.

Let's just think about how a direct democracy might very well work in our society. What if we said at six o'clock today everyone has one of these kind of little remote control buttons and they can actually have an opportunity to vote by pushing this button to their TV screen and to register for a vote on a very important issue. And let's say that the issue coming up at six o'clock this evening, Eastern Standard Time, is that we're gonna find out whether or not we should amend some of the functions of the Department of Energy in terms of some of their regulatory authority. Should they have the right to be more aggressive in cleaning up toxic waste sites or not?
Or maybe itís even much more specific than that. Maybe it might be some toxic waste sites that relate only the sites that contain PCBs or something like that. Maybe weíre gonna have to vote on an issue about arsenic and drinking water. Weíre gonna all vote right now ó or at six oíclock this evening to say whether or not we want to reduce the amount of arsenic in drinking water from 17 parts per million to 14 parts per million. Chances are you get a little bit befuddled by that. Again, oftentimes we donít have the time, the energy, the interest, or the information to decide upon very difficult issues.

So what do we do instead, presumably? We elect representatives who become experts in these areas. In fact, if you look at Congress ó and weíll be looking at Congress later on ó weíre gonna see that Congress is composed of a committee system and if you were elected to Congress in Washington, youíre gonna be serving on several committees. One of the purposes of serving on a committee is to develop a range of expertise on a particular area to consider legislation. So the idea, then, is we have sort of experts looking at these issues whoíve developed these for quite some time, their expertise. Then they will hopefully make better decisions that way.

Again, itís sort of a side note, but when I was first fresh out of college I worked for the senator from Georgia whoís now ó has stepped down, Sam Nunn. You may or may not have heard of him, but Sam Nunn was a very famous senator from Georgia. And one of his areas of expertise was defense policy. And he served on various ó like the Senate Arms Services Committee. Over a period of years he became chair of that committee. He knew defense policy inside out. In a lot of ways, I would make the argument that the quality of our defense, even today, in large measure can be attributed to Senator Nunnís role in making sure we had the right weapon systems to meet our various tactical and strategic kinds of requirements all over the world. And in no small measure to his role in deciding what systems to fund and what systems not to fund, weapons systems to fund. So again, you develop an expertise over a period of time and thatís the reason why perhaps, at least in terms of very complex technical issues, a representative democracy may have some very significant advantages over a direct democracy.

Let me give you another one here ó again, kind of related to this, but the idea is this. That people can make bad decisions based upon fleeting desires. Public opinion oftentimes can be easily swayed. You see something on TV, something terrible happens. Somebody goes into a McDonaldís ó this is a true story. Itís a sad thing. Somebody goes into a McDonaldís in California, takes an automatic machine gun and opens fire, you know ó randomly killing children and adults alike. Some disgruntled employee, probably. Immediately what happens? People begin to call for Congress to do what? Pass legislation that will take away these guns, right? Gun control, for example. People, if we had a direct democracy, would say, ìOkay. Weíre gonna vote tomorrow night. Should we have mandatory, you know, strength in our background checks? Should we ban certain types of assault rifles? Should we get rid of certain, you know, guns altogether?î If they can pass a very stringent kind of gun control measure in the heat of the moment, ultimately it might seem like -- in the sense of the time theyíre voting on it, but ultimately it can be a bad decision. Because you think, well, what about this and what about this and what about that? And now youíre saying that they canít have guns either? Donít we have something called the Second Amendment about the right to keep and bear arms?

You have all these arguments that will come up against some of that, too.
Later on, perhaps. But the idea here is that if you have representative democracy, you know, somebody might just forward through the legislature a bill to consider this. But it will definitely, in a representative democracy, be given an opportunity for representatives to debate on the issue, to argue for the merits of the proposals and so forth, and through that hopefully make a better decision than all of a sudden we have a sweeping gun control legislation that we might regret later on or several people might regret later on.

Along the same lines direct bureaucracy makes it difficult to reach compromises. Because it tends to produce a winner or a loser situation. Either we're gonna vote for this and vote for it or vote against it. Oftentimes in the form of a representative democracy, people have the opportunity, the forum, to deliberate upon an issue, to think about it, to reason things through, and to hopefully enact some kind of compromise that satisfies all parties together. You know the nature of compromise is no one is completely satisfied but people can live with the outcome of the issue. Representative democracy is good because of the fact that it can actually facilitate some compromise. And again, direct democracy makes that difficult to achieve.

Let me give you another one here. Again, kind of going with the first point I made here, some policies are just so important that they really shouldn't be decided by a mere public opinion poll. Again, it's not very practical to decide some policies, particularly when you start getting into some very, very technical areas, you know. How much more pollution should we allow certain manufacturing facilities to allow in the atmosphere? Do you know anything about long-term cancer rates with respect to certain types of environmental toxins? If you don't, perhaps, then, maybe this is something that we should not be deciding in a direct democracy kind of fashion. Because of that.

So there are certainly some arguments about this. Now, one thing I haven't put up here but I will I want to mention this to you is that, you know, our founding fathers were very concerned about rights and freedoms in democracy. When we talk about the Constitution next week we'll get more into this. You know, sometimes I kind of wonder why is it that the founding fathers did not make us a direct democracy? Why did they put in place a republic?

Again, I've got something here that I just printed out that I'd like to share with you some quotes that suggest that the founding fathers knew exactly what they were doing when they decided, let's not do a direct democracy. Let's go for a republic or a representative democracy. Here's a couple of interesting quotes I want to give to you.

James Madison. He's the person on your is he on our monetary currency? Which one? James Madison, Federalist Papers. He wrote a series of articles called the Federalist Papers, number 10. And he said this. He had a disdain for some democracies, in some respects. He said, there is nothing to check the inducement to sacrifice the weaker party or the obnoxious individual if you have a direct democracy. At the 1787 Constitutional Convention, Edmund Randolph said, in tracing these evils to their origin, every man had found it in the turbulence and follies of democracy. Now, these are our founding fathers, our founding fathers of our democratic system here. And he's talking about follies of democracy.

John Adams, our second president, said: Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts and murders itself. This is John Adams.
There was never a democracy yet that did not commit suicide. Chief Justice John Marshall, one of the most famous Chief Justices of the Supreme Court, early on in the founding of our country said, "Between a balanced republic and a democracy, the difference is like that between order and chaos. In republics you have order, in democracy you have chaos." In a word or two the founders knew that a democracy would lead to the same kind of tyranny that the colonies suffered under King George III of England.

One of the things we’ll talk about again in the Constitution, in our Chapter 2, is this idea of tyranny of the majority and they were very much concerned. But I think it’s gonna be interesting is that the founding fathers knew right at the outset that a republic for our country was to be preferred over a direct democracy. And you could even see in some of their quotes a certain disdain for unfettered democracy. They saw how democracy can lead to some excesses. And if you think, for example, the French Revolution and Bastille Day and you remember some of that going on. That might be some of the things that might have prompted their thinking as well or reinforced their viewpoints.

Well, let me ask you a couple of other things since we’re talking about democracy. If we’re gonna have a democracy — let’s say we’re gonna create a brand new country and we’re gonna call ourselves a democracy. And whether it’s a republic or a direct democracy, you know, there are certain types of things that have to be in place in order to have that democracy. Just tell me what do you think. What do you think might be very important if you’re gonna really have a democracy. Thinking about the different kinds of governments that might be available here.

We’re gonna say — we’re gonna have a democracy and we’ve gotta have some certain fundamental things in place. What might be something or one of those fundamental components in order for it to work? What would you say? Anybody? Do you have to have a Constitution? Maybe not, but at least you have some basic agreement about things, right?

And that’s what I’m kind of getting at. What kind of basic agreements do we have here? Should we have certain types of rights or beliefs and certain rights of people? I think so. Freedom of speech. If you’re gonna have basic democracy, you’ve gotta have certain basic freedoms in place such as the freedom of speech. Other kinds of freedoms as well. Freedom of the press so you can criticize the government, either by written form or by speaking out. What might be another freedom? Freedom to do what? To come together, to organize, to assemble. So not to be put in jail because we choose to meet together to create a new political party or to try to change the government.

Certainly a belief in the legitimacy of our political system. In other words, we have a certain basic understanding and respect for the rules of the system. We have a respect for the rights of others so that if one political party wins or a group of people become in power, they’re not gonna go and kill off all the other people who were in power before. That’s not a democracy. Those are the kinds of things you need to have. And there’s certainly some other kinds of basic things, too. Again, like the respect for the rights of others and again, certain views about the legitimacy of our system here.

Since we’re talking about representative democracy, let me give you a couple of other quick things here, too. There are two basic types of a representative democracy and it is important to have both of these. One is called a parliamentary system. This is a system that you see again in many European — western European democracies. They have a parliamentary system of democracy. It is a representative democracy. But now how is it different.
This is, again, a very, very important point. In a parliamentary system, people elect the legislature and then the legislature ó in this case the parliament ó chooses the chief executive, such as the prime minister. In other words, as you see right here, the people are not separately electing the legislature and the chief executive. Theyíre letting the legislature choose the chief executive.

In other words, under this system what we have here is that the executive branch is wedded to the legislative branch. And thatís a very important point I want to bring up a little bit later on, too, in terms of why did we decide to reject a parliamentary system of representative democracy. But we have here these two branches tied together as opposed to separate. And you know what that also means? This has certain advantages. Let me just say this real quickly. But when you have this type of system where the executive and the legislative branches are wedded together, that basically means that anything proposed by the legislative branch is automatically going to be approved and implemented by the executive branch. In a lot of ways ó or anything the executive branch wants to have done will be approved by the legislative branch. Because the prime minister is the ñ essentially the acting chair of the party in the legislature.

Think how that would look here in the U.S. We would have our president as part of the same party and the branch wedded together essentially. Now, we have today the same party as the majority in both houses of congress. But again, theyíre separately elected and oftentimes what we have had historically in our system of government is something called divided government -- you may have heard that term before, divided government ó historically where we elect congress as controlled by one party and the president is controlled by another party. And again, thatís both good and bad.

A good case in point, letís talk about George Bush Senior. When George Bush Senior was elected president, he developed a nickname called the Gridlock President. Because what would happen is that he was a Republican but he had to deal with a Democratically controlled congress. And oftentimes they would put forth legislation that they knew that he did not like. The majority of the Democrats would vote for legislation and they would send it to George Bush. George Bush had to sign that legislation or veto it. And what would he do oftentimes? Stick to his guns and veto that legislation. And oftentimes things did not get approved.

And so what Iím suggesting to you here is that type of gridlock, that type of veto and stuff, you donít see that in a parliamentary system. They act in concert. That can be good. Because if something gets proposed, itís gonna get carried out where in our system of government it doesnít happen.

Question?

[Inaudible student response]

Very good question. The question is what happens if ó can there ever be conflict in a parliamentary system. Yes, there can be some differences of opinion about things. But again, oftentimes they will reach compromise and act upon it, but still within the interest of what the party wants to do. You very rarely will see the prime minister at severe odds with the other party leadership. Oftentimes they work together. Thatís a very good question.

But again, some people suggest is what we shouldíve had was a parliamentary system and weíd get more things done. Other people say, ñNo, thatís not a good idea.î Why? Because the things that get done may not be good things to get done. Now, that contrasts here with what we have in a presidential system. Again, theyíre both forms of representative democracy.
But under our system here each branch of government is elected separately by the people and that is why we have that potential for a divided government. That is why we can elect a Democratic president and a Republican congress, or vice-versa. And in a lot of ways because of that, the president or the congress is beholden to the people who elected them more than to each other or to the party. Because of this, compromise often has to take place and often because of this things don’t get done. Again, George Bush Senior is a good example because of a lot of the gridlock that occurred when he was our president.