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# The Deadly-Isms

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Segment Length: 3:13 minutes

## **Lesson Description:**

Are communism and fascism opposites? Aren't they on opposite ends of the political spectrum? Just what is left and what is right? And what does it mean to be "middle of the road"? Is there another way to look at political philosophies? This video segment looks at the commonly accepted political spectrum and suggests a different approach.

## **Concepts & Key Terms:**

*Bipartisanship* – agreement or cooperation between two political parties that usually oppose each other's policies.

*Crony Capitalism* – an economy that includes favorable government intervention on behalf of one or more companies at the expense of taxpayers and other companies.

*Corporatism* – an infrastructure that supports the existing corporations in a country and uses government influence and power to eliminate or reduce competition.

## **Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- explain the generally accepted left-right political spectrum.
- discuss similarities among various political philosophies.
- evaluate the left-right political spectrum.
- compare the left-right spectrum with one that sets freedom as the opposite of totalitarianism.

## **Preview Activity and Questions:**

Start the video, then pause at the eight-second mark. Have students write down all the systems of government shown on the screen. Ask them what they know about any of these terms. Can they name any others? After a brief discussion, restart the video.

## **Viewing Guide:**

It is recommended that teachers show the video segment twice: once to allow students to view the video and focus on the issues presented, and once to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs sharing and verifying answers.

## **Answers to Viewing Guide**

1. totalitarianism
2. bipartisanship
3. business
4. experts

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## Viewing Guide

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** As you watch the video, fill in the blanks with the correct words.

1. You'll see the worst types of \_\_\_\_\_: National Socialism, Marxism, Communism.
2. Many Americans say "I'm not left or right. I'm in the middle. I like \_\_\_\_\_."
3. Corporatism: this is big \_\_\_\_\_ in cahoots with big government.
4. We got to big government corporatism with the help of \_\_\_\_\_, technocrats.

**Now, take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer the questions below:**

What is one of Matt Kibbe's criticisms of the left-right political spectrum? \_\_\_\_\_

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In what ways do you think communism and fascism are similar? \_\_\_\_\_

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In what ways do you think communism and fascism are different? \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Discussion and Analysis:**

1. What is an “ism,” or ideology? Are all political opinions “isms”? Explain.
2. What does it mean for government to control the means of production?
3. What freedoms do people lack under both far-left and far-right governments?
4. According to John Stossel, what is the difference between capitalism and corporatism?
5. How do the commonly accepted views of left and right compare and contrast with the left and right that Matt Kibbe talks about?
6. What does Matt Kibbe object to about the far-left and far-right? What are his and John Stossel’s objections to people who say they are politically “middle-of-the-road”?
7. Matt Kibbe wants us to reject left and right and come together to find common values. Is this idea consistent with his objection to middle-of-the-road? Why/why not?
8. What common values do you think Matt Kibbe wants? Why does he say Republicans and Democrats “collude” rather than “compromise”?
9. What are some benefits to having political groups pushing against each other? What are some benefits to having them come to agreements? What are some drawbacks?
10. Do you agree that the left-right political spectrum keeps people fighting with each other? Would people still have disagreements if they didn’t have the idea of a political spectrum to label different opinions? Explain.

### **Discuss These Lines from the Video:**

1. We might agree on the rules that hold civil society together.
2. In truth, this whole left-right thing, it’s the wrong way to think about political philosophy.
3. Most of the good stuff happens outside of politics.
4. I’ll be on your side, as long as you don’t hurt people and you don’t take their stuff.

### **Quotes for Discussion:**

Isms in my opinion are not good. A person should not believe in an -ism; he should only believe in himself. – Ferris Bueller

Everyone has an ideology – which is another way of saying that everyone has (a) values and (b) a view about how the world works. – Paul Krugman

Thanks to ideology, the twentieth century was fated to experience evil on a scale calculated in the millions. – Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Ideology is a conceptual framework for the way people deal with reality. Everyone has one... To exist, you need an ideology. – Alan Greenspan

How difficult it has been for mankind, in all ages and countries, to preserve their dearest rights and best privileges, impelled as it were by an irresistible fate of despotism. – James Monroe

The people never give up their liberties but under some delusion. – Edmund Burke

In most of history, societies have not been free. It's a very rare society that is free. The default condition of human societies is tyranny. – Michael Novak

The first thing a man will do for his ideals is lie. – Joseph Schumpeter

### **Activities:**

1. The Advocates for Self-Government publishes the World's Smallest Political Quiz. Have the students complete this online (link below) or complete the pdf version (included at the end of this guide). Printable versions are also available on the website.  
<https://www.theadvocates.org/quiz/>
2. Watch the full version of The Deadly Isms Episode 1: Up From Totalitarianism, and discuss it in class. As an alternative, have the students view the full version at home and write a persuasive essay about it.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkHStde5rrk>
3. Matt Kibbe refers to Republicans and Democrats coming together to bail out Wall Street. Research this issue and answer the following questions for homework. (As a starting point, it might help to look up the newspaper articles that appear on-screen as Matt Kibbe says this.) Who was bailed out? Who did the bailing out? Why? Who favored it? Why? Who opposed it? Why? What were the difficulties getting Democrats to go along? What were the difficulties getting Republicans to go along?
4. Read the article "Cuomo approves \$1M plan to renovate swanky Cadillac office" by Carl Campanile. Is this crony capitalism, corporatism, or both? Explain. Find other examples of this type of behavior.  
<https://nypost.com/2018/02/19/cuomo-approves-1m-plan-to-renovate-swanky-cadillac-office/>
5. Read and summarize the article "Corporatists vs. Capitalists" by Cenk Uygur.  
[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/cenk-uygur/corporatists-vs-capitalis\\_b\\_288718.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/cenk-uygur/corporatists-vs-capitalis_b_288718.html)
6. Matt and Terry Kibbe founded the organization, Free the People. Why? What do they advocate? What do they oppose?  
<https://freethepeople.org>

7. Read and summarize the article “Quasi-Corporatism: America's Homegrown Fascism” by Robert Higgs

<https://fee.org/articles/quasi-corporatism-americas-homegrown-fascism/>

8. Matt Kibbe talks about technocrats. Some people believe we shouldn't make policy decisions based on whether a policy fits any ideology; instead, we should do “what works.” Experts, they say, have the technical knowledge to get good results, such as a strong economy, a healthy, happy population, or lower crime. Because these people believe in the importance of technical knowledge rather than debates over values, they are often called technocrats. Another label for this idea is “pragmatism.”

Critics say that, by advocating whatever works to achieve their goals, technocrats are in fact embracing their own form of ideology. For instance, suppose a technocrat will do anything to reduce crime, as long as it works. The technocrat must believe crime reduction is more important than any other competing consideration (the rights of the accused, perhaps). Or suppose the technocrat believes we should do anything that works in reducing obesity, and advocates putting every American on a diet. In that case, he must value keeping people healthy more highly than personal freedom.

Write an essay on the idea of technocracy, or pragmatism. Are there any issues where we can all agree on the goals, and leave it to experts to determine the best way to achieve these goals? Are there any issues where ideological differences are inescapable? Explain your reasoning.

9. Divide the class into groups and have each group research a different ideology and examples of governments that have been based on that ideology. What actions did people take when motivated by these ideologies? Why did these ideologies have such power to motivate? As a class, compare and contrast these different systems—and their results.
10. Research the origins of the left-right political spectrum in the French Revolution. Compare the meanings of left and right on their spectrum with today's commonly accepted left-right American political spectrum.
11. Create your own political spectrum that reflects the major disagreements on different issues as best you can. It can be one, two, or any number of dimensions. It can use conventional political categories or others you think work better. Find out where you and your classmates fit on each other's spectrums. Talk to others you know about their political views, and place them on your spectrum.
12. What is meant by “civil society”? Research this term. What does civil society consist of? What are some examples of the groups and organizations that make up civil society? What is the relationship between civil society and government?

# WHERE DO YOU STAND POLITICALLY?

To find out, take the world-famous...

# World's Smallest Political Quiz

For years, politics has been represented as a choice between left (or liberal) and right (or conservative). Growing numbers of thinkers agree this is far too narrow a view — and excludes millions of people. The political map on the Quiz gives a much

more accurate representation of the true, diverse political world. **The Quiz measures tendencies, not absolutes.** Your score shows who most agrees with you in politics, and where you agree and disagree with other political philosophies.

—Scoring: For each statement, circle A if you Agree, M for Maybe (or don't know), or D if you Disagree.—

## How do you stand on PERSONAL ISSUES?

20 10 0

- ▶ Government should not censor speech, press, media or Internet. A M D
- ▶ Military service should be voluntary. There should be no draft. A M D
- ▶ There should be no laws regarding sex between consenting adults. A M D
- ▶ Repeal laws prohibiting adult possession and use of drugs. A M D
- ▶ There should be no National ID card. A M D

**SCORING** 20 for every A, 10 for every M, and 0 for every D: \_\_\_\_\_

## How do you stand on ECONOMIC ISSUES?

20 10 0

- ▶ End "corporate welfare." No government handouts to business. A M D
- ▶ End government barriers to international free trade. A M D
- ▶ Let people control their own retirement: privatize Social Security. A M D
- ▶ Replace government welfare with private charity. A M D
- ▶ Cut taxes and government spending by 50% or more. A M D

**SCORING** 20 for every A, 10 for every M, and 0 for every D: \_\_\_\_\_

## ▶ NOW FIND YOUR PLACE ON THE CHART!

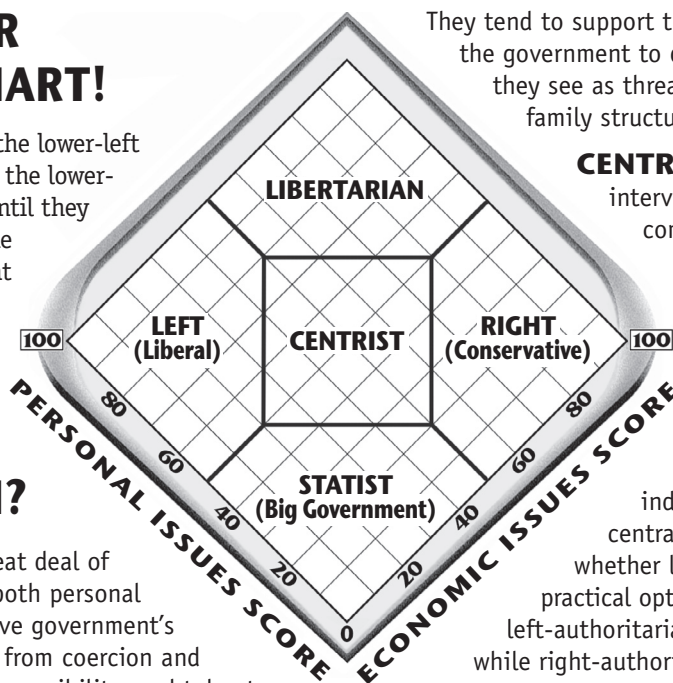
Mark your **PERSONAL** score on the lower-left scale; your **ECONOMIC** score on the lower-right. Then follow the grid lines until they meet at your political position. The Chart shows the political group that agrees with you most.

## ▶ WHAT DOES YOUR SCORE ON THE CHART MEAN?

**LIBERTARIANS** support a great deal of liberty and freedom of choice in both personal and economic matters. They believe government's only purpose is to protect people from coercion and violence. They value individual responsibility, and tolerate economic and social diversity.

**LEFT-LIBERALS** generally embrace freedom of choice in personal matters, but support central decision-making in economics. They want the government to help the disadvantaged in the name of fairness. Leftists tolerate social diversity, but work for what they might describe as "economic equality."

**RIGHT-CONSERVATIVES** favor freedom of choice on economic issues, but want official standards in personal matters.



They tend to support the free market, but frequently want the government to defend the community from what they see as threats to morality or to the traditional family structure.

**CENTRISTS** favor selective government intervention and emphasize what they commonly describe as "practical solutions" to current problems. They tend to keep an open mind on political issues. Many centrists feel that government serves as a check on excessive liberty.

**STATISTS** want government to have a great deal of control over individuals and society. They support centralized planning, and often doubt whether liberty and freedom of choice are practical options. At the very bottom of the chart, left-authoritarians are usually called socialists, while right-authoritarians are generally called fascists.

The "World's Smallest Political Quiz" chart and questions are copyright by the Advocates for Self-Government, Inc. Okay to reprint Quiz without modifications with credit to the Advocates. The "World's Smallest Political Quiz" is adapted from an original idea by David Nolan.

## Advocates for Self-Government



269 Market Place Blvd., #106 ♦ Cartersville, GA 30121-2235  
800-932-1776 ♦ Email: Quiz@TheAdvocates.org  
Fax: 770-386-8373 ♦ Web: www.TheAdvocates.org