

## Evaluating Conservatism

Conservatism is usually associated with the Republican Party or other “right-leaning” groups. In general, conservatives support the status quo and believe in the traditions linked to the Founders and the Constitution or Judeo-Christian traditions. Of course, it is a bit more complex than that. Consider the following types of conservatism and quotes. Then, evaluate the traits of conservatism and how they apply to culture and politics by addressing the prompts in the spaces provided.

### Types of Conservatism in the United States

1. Cultural Conservatism - a philosophy that supports preservation of the national heritage such as language traditions and the importance of assimilation.

“In the first place, we should insist that if the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else, for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed, or birthplace, or origin. But this is predicated upon the person's becoming in every facet an American and nothing but an American... There can be no divided allegiance here. Any man who says he is an American, but something else also, isn't an American at all. We have room for but one flag, the American flag... We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language... and we have room for but one sole loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people... There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism... a hyphenated American is not an American at all.”  
Theodore Roosevelt, 1907, Republican President from 1901-1909

*If conservatives support preservation of the national heritage, what do liberals support?*

*How does your view of “hyphenated Americanism” compare to Theodore Roosevelt's? Is your view liberal or conservative?*

2. Social &/or Religious Conservatism – a philosophy supporting preservation of traditional beliefs such as monogamy, heterosexuality, two-parent households, etc. Also seeking to preserve Christian ideology, either by example or by law, in order to strengthen traditional values, such as natural rights given by “God,” “Under God” in the pledge of allegiance and coin, public displays of symbols such as the Ten Commandments, or supporting organized prayer in school.

“Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”  
John Adams, Federalist President, 1797-1801

“In its main features the Declaration of Independence is a great spiritual document. It is a declaration not of material but of spiritual conceptions. Equality, liberty, popular sovereignty, the rights of man — these are not elements which we can see and touch. They are ideals. They have their source and their roots in the religious convictions. They belong to the unseen world. Unless the faith of the American people in these religious convictions is to endure, the principles of our Declaration will perish. We cannot continue to enjoy the result if we neglect and abandon the cause.”  
Calvin Coolidge, Republican President from 1923-1929

*To what extent is religion a driving force in politics?*

*How has this force changed over time, and can the ideals connected to “moral and religious people” be redefined without connection to religion?*

*How do your views compare to those of John Adams and Calvin Coolidge?*

"Certainly in the next 50 years we shall see a woman president, perhaps sooner than you think. A woman can and should be able to do any political job that a man can do."  
Richard Nixon, Republican President, 1969-1974

"I believe marriage is not just a bond but a sacred bond between a man and a woman...the fundamental bedrock principle that [marriage] exists between a man and a woman, going back into the midst of history as one of the founding, foundational institutions of history and humanity and civilization, and that its primary, principal role during those millennia has been the raising and socializing of children for the society into which they are to become adults."

Hillary Clinton as First Lady from 1993-2001 (has since changed her views) and Democratic Presidential Candidate 2016

"It is important for society to welcome each individual, but I believe marriage is between a man and a woman, and I think we ought to codify that one way or another."  
George W. Bush, 2003, Republican President from 2001-2009

*Traditional values in United States history include the cult of domesticity and traditional gender roles. To what extent do modern conservatives support women staying home vs working? What does this illustrate about conservatism in modern times?*

*Why did Hillary Clinton (and Bill Clinton, as well as former Republican President George H. W. Bush, former Republican Vice President Dick Cheney, and former Republican First Lady Laura Bush) change views on gay marriage? What do these changes indicate about the nature of conservatism in modern times and in the future?*

3. **Fiscal Conservatism** - a philosophy of prudence in government spending and debt, arguing that a government does not have the right to heavily tax the people or run up large debts and then throw the burden on the taxpayer or on future generations of taxpayers.

"But with respect to future debt; would it not be wise and just to declare in the Constitution that neither the legislature, nor the nation itself can validly contract more debt, than they may pay within 10 years? ... No generation [should] contract debts greater than may be paid during the course of its own existence."  
Thomas Jefferson, Democratic-Republican President, 1801-1809

"Our tax system still siphons out of the private economy too large a share of personal and business purchasing power and reduces the incentive for risk, investment and effort--thereby aborting our recoveries and stifling our national growth rate..."  
John Kennedy, Democratic President from 1961-1963

"Whenever we lower the tax rates, our entire nation is better off... the government is overfed."  
Ronald Reagan, Republican President 1981-1989

*What do beliefs about debt and taxes reveal about beliefs regarding the role of the federal government?*

4. **Paleo-Conservatism** - a moderate to extreme form of Conservatism tending to link back to the ideals of the Founders and the original federalism of the Constitution, most popular in the Bible Belt, emphasizes religious heritage, national and Western identity, tradition, civil society, anti-interventionist policies and classical federalism (preserving states' rights). It specifically opposes illegal immigration, communism, authoritarianism, social democracy and entitlement programs.

"The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government are few and defined. Those which are to remain in the State governments are numerous and indefinite. The former will be exercised principally on external objects, as war, peace, negotiation and foreign commerce. ... The powers reserved to the several States will extend to all the objects which in the ordinary course of affairs, concern the lives and liberties, and properties of the people, and the internal order, improvement and prosperity of the State."

James Madison, Democratic-Republican President from 1809-1817

"Let the fourth of July always be a reminder that here in this land, for the first time, it was decided that man is born with certain God-given rights; that government is only a convenience created and managed by the people, with no powers of its own except those voluntarily granted to it by the people"

Ronald Reagan, Republican President 1981-1989

"If we stuck to the Constitution as written, we would have: no federal meddling in our schools; no Federal Reserve; no U.S. membership in the UN; no gun control; and no foreign aid. We would have no welfare for big corporations, or the "poor"; no American troops in 100 foreign countries; no NAFTA, GAT, or "fast-track"; no arrogant federal judges usurping states' rights; no attacks on private property; no income tax. We could get rid of most of the agencies, and most of the budget. The government would be small, frugal, and limited."

Ron Paul, Republican Congressman and Presidential Candidate, 2008 & 2012

***What is the definition of federalism? To what extent does the official definition accurately describe the national government (which is commonly referred to as the federal government)?***

***Paraphrase Reagan's words, and explain why the viewpoint is "conservative."***

***To what extent do you think the views of Ron Paul reflect modern day conservatives?***

"The first consideration in immigration is the welfare of the receiving nation. In a new government based on principles unfamiliar to the rest of the world and resting on the sentiments of the people themselves, the influx of a large number of new immigrants unaccustomed to the government of a free society could be detrimental to that society. Immigration, therefore, must be approached carefully and cautiously."

Thomas Jefferson, Democratic-Republican President from 1801-1809

"Illegal immigrants in considerable numbers have become productive members of our society and are a basic part of our work force. Those who have established equities in the United States should be recognized and accorded legal status. The same time, in so doing, we must not encourage illegal immigration."

Ronald Reagan, Republican President 1981-1989

***Was Ronald Reagan conservative when it came to immigration?***

***What factors do you think should be considered when determining immigration policy? Are your views liberal or conservative?***

"I can find no warrant for such an appropriation in the Constitution, and I do not believe that the power and duty of the general government ought to be extended to the relief of individual suffering which is in no manner properly related to the public service or benefit. Federal aid in such cases encourages the expectation of paternal care on the part of the government and weakens the sturdiness of our national character, while it prevents the indulgence among our people of that kindly sentiment and conduct which strengthens the bonds of a common brotherhood."  
Grover Cleveland, Democratic President from 1885-1889, 1893-1897

"Should any political party attempt to abolish Social Security, unemployment insurance and labor laws, you would never hear of that party again in our political history."  
Dwight Eisenhower, Republican President from 1953-1961

*Identify the turning point which redefined conservative views and policies regarding social welfare, marking the beginning of "modern" republicans.*

*Do you agree or disagree with Cleveland's view on the role of government? Explain why.*

5. **Neo-Conservatism** - the "new" Conservative movement which emerged in the 1960s. It emphasizes free trade and free market economics...

"In this new, multipolar world, we can be the world's best innovator; the world's best producer of new products and services; the world's best assimilator of people from every nation, race, religion, and culture; and the world's best example of shared opportunity and responsibility, demonstrating the power of both individual freedom and close cooperation and proving both the genius of free markets and the necessity of active government."  
Bill Clinton, Democratic President 1993-2001

"As a general matter, I agree -as did Ronald Reagan- that free trade is good for America; when we open up foreign markets, it helps American farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers."  
Ted Cruz, Republican Senator presently and Presidential Candidate 2016

*To what extent was Bill Clinton a conservative?*

*Donald Trump has proposed changing many trade policies in order to restore American manufacturing. To what extent is Trump a conservative? Explain your answer.*

6. **Bio-Conservatism** - a stance of hesitancy about technological development, and a skepticism about medical and other biotechnological transformations of the living world (e.g. cloning, genetic engineering), especially if it is perceived to threaten a given social order.

"Banning human cloning reflects our humanity. It is the right thing to do. Creating a child through this new method calls into question our most fundamental beliefs. It has the potential to threaten the sacred family bonds at the very core of our ideals and our society. At its worst, it could lead to misguided and malevolent attempts to select certain traits, even to create certain kind of children -- to make our children objects rather than cherished individuals."  
Bill Clinton, Democratic President 1993-2001

"Embryonic stem-cell research requires the destruction of life... That's why we've got to be very careful in balancing the ethics and the science."  
George W. Bush, Republican President from 2001-2009

*Can you separate bio-conservatism from religious conservatism? Explain your answer.*