

## Module 5: Political Structures (Part I)

Author: Maria Ela L. Atienza, PhD

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What are 'political structures'? What exactly do people refer to when they speak of 'political structures'? In general, the term 'political structures' is often used to refer to political organizations and their interactions and relationships with one another. At times, political structures also refer to the ways in which the government is run. Presently, however, students of politics often use the term political institutions instead of political structures. **Political institutions** do not only refer to political organizations, but, more broadly, to a "stable, recurring pattern of behaviour" (Goodin 1996:22 cited in Lowndes, Marsh and Stoker, 2018 :55). This means that when talking about political institutions, we do not only refer to the formal organizations of government. Attention is also given to "informal conventions of political life" (Ibid). It is believed that knowledge of the latter would enable us to better understand how political structures work. Thus, in this module, the ideas of social contract and constitution are discussed. These ideas cover the concepts of power, authority, legitimacy, and rights. Focusing on these ideas will help us determine the bases of the existence and functions of political structures in our society today and will hopefully deepen our understanding of how political structures work.

Indeed, it is very important for all of us to understand the bases of the exercise of power in our society. What right do people have to make us do something we do not like? Do we have the right to resist? Where did that power come from in the first place? Why do we comply with laws, rules, and regulations? These are only some of the questions that are very important for all citizens to understand.

### | Most Essential Learning Competencies

- Analyze the forms and functions of social organizations; and
- Explain the forms and functions of state and non-state institutions.

### | Content Standards

By the end of this module, learners are expected to demonstrate an understanding of:

- Cultural, social, and political institutions as sets of norms and patterns of behavior that relate to major social interests.

### | Performance Standards

By the end of this module, learners are expected to:

- Analyze aspects of social organization; and
- Identify one's role in social groups and institutions.

**| Self-Evaluation Form (Part I)**

Do you agree that man is naturally good and free? Why or why not?

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**Lesson 1: Right to Rule and the Social Contract**

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**| Lesson Objectives**

At the end of the lesson, the student is expected to be able to:

- Define political structures;
- Explain the concepts of power, authority, legitimacy, rights, social contract, constitution;
- Appraise arguments about the bases of existence of political structures; and
- Examine the functions of political structures, particularly, in Philippine society today.

**| Key Concepts**

- Political Institutions - system of behaviors occurring in governance; also “political structures”
- Power - ability to do something in order to achieve a desired outcome
- Authority - rightful or legitimate power
- Social Contract - agreement made by the members of society with those with authority that determines their relations with one another
- Political Obligation - responsibility of citizens to abide by or follow the government

**| Study Guide**

*Introduction to the Lesson:*

- A. To have an idea about who Thomas Hobbes was and what England was like during his lifetime:

- Read this short article on the Life and Works of Thomas Hobbes by Duncan, Stewart, "Thomas Hobbes", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hobbes/#1>
- Watch this short video on Thomas Hobbes and England in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, <https://youtu.be/9i4jb5XBX5s>.
- Read the excerpts from the Leviathan in Curtis, ed. *Great Political Theories*, Vol. 1, pp. 296-315.

B. To know who John Locke was:

- Read about the life and works of John Locke from this article from the International Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://iep.utm.edu/locke/#H1>
- Watch this video clip on the life and legacy of John Locke, <https://youtu.be/b2NnEfhQ15M>.
- Read the excerpts from the Second Treatise of Civil Government (Curtis, ed. *Great Political Theories*, Vol. 1, pp. 337-354).

C. To learn more about Rousseau and his contributions:

- Read about his life and works from this article, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rousseau/#Life>;
- Watch this video, [Jean Jacques Rousseau Biography https://youtu.be/VqOaG24aPSc](https://youtu.be/VqOaG24aPSc); and
- Read the excerpts from the Social Contract (Ebenstein and Ebenstein, *Great Political Thinkers*, pp. 505-506, 508-520).

## | The Social Contract Theory

As we know, power is found in different types of social and political structures. In its broadest meaning, **power** refers to the ability to do something in order to achieve a desired outcome. Legitimate power – or one that is recognized to be rightful – is called **authority**. Thus, a person is obeyed by others because he or she is recognized as a rightful or legitimate leader. The sociologist, Max Weber (1864-1920) studied the transformation of societies and observed that the bases of the legitimacy of rule vary in different types of societies. Weber identified three pure types of authority: traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational. In certain cases, the type of authority may be a mix of these types.

Political structures in different societies have evolved over time. Historical experiences (such as having been colonized) and cultural practices are some of the factors that have influenced the development and functioning of political structures in various societies. The so-called **Social Contract Theory** from the ideas of three political thinkers who lived from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, namely, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632 to 1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1788), offer some explanations about the nature of the state and its institutions, the power that the rulers of the state exercise, and the rights of the citizens. In a nutshell, these ideas provide explanations about why societies and governments were formed.

Oftentimes, a state is thought of to be synonymous with government. Many Filipinos, in fact, may tend to think of the state in this way. This is understandable because the state exercises its power through the government

and its various institutions. However, the state, as defined above, is much more than the government.

There are many views regarding the origin and nature of the state. From the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, we learn that the state is a natural institution. It is natural because it emerges from the necessity to work together so that certain needs can be met and goals can be achieved. Thus, the state exists because people need to live together.

Human beings are by nature social beings. Aristotle, for instance, believed that a person who does not live in a society is either a beast (animal) or a god (does not need another being to provide for their needs). Based on this perspective, a state exists not for the sake of itself but to achieve a higher good, such as the happiness of the entire community—what we call the common good. For his part, the Italian thinker, Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), argued that the state exists for the sake of itself, i.e., to get, collect, and expand power.

The Social Contract Theory presents another view: the state and the institutions of society are seen as products of a social contract – an agreement made by the members of society that defines and influences their interactions, particularly with those in authority. As mentioned above, there are three major ideas regarding the nature of the social contract. The English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, thought that the agreement came about because of the need to guarantee the security of the people. The main role of the political ruler was to maintain order and security within society. Another English philosopher, John Locke, thought that the social contract was needed to guarantee the fair and impartial enforcement of the law. For Locke, human beings lived in a state of nature governed by rationality and natural law. The primary function of the state, as defined by the social contract, is to guarantee that individuals exercise their natural rights to life, liberty, and property. A third view on the social contract, articulated by the French philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, emphasizes the idea of the natural equality of human beings. Therefore, the only justified authority is one that emerges from an agreement among all in which each particular will has been submitted to the general will. What this means is that no person or entity possesses the right to rule over people unless everyone has agreed to such rule. The power exercised by the state is only made possible because the citizens have given their consent and have expressed their will to be governed. The ideas of the social contract are elaborated below.

### | Important ideas from Hobbes' *Leviathan*

Thomas Hobbes' masterpiece was the *Leviathan*, published in 1651. In this work, Hobbes wrote about his idea of a social contract and argued that it (the social contract) was necessary for men to live peacefully and securely under the absolute rule of the Leviathan (the ruler). Some scholars have commented that Hobbes' social contract theory rests on his theory of human nature.

In *The Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes wrote on the following ideas:

- *Nature of the human being*: for Hobbes, all human beings enjoy absolute equality; they desire the same thing: power. The “right of nature” is the liberty each man has “to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life”.
- *State of nature*: a state of war where there is no guarantee for one's life; life in the state of nature is “nasty, poor, brutish, and short”.
- *Reason for the establishment of the social contract*: self-preservation; people gave up their rights to protect their lives: they have transferred their natural rights to the ruler for the preservation of their lives; sovereign power has been transferred by the people to the ruler
- *Role of the Leviathan*: to protect people from themselves; without the social contract (therefore, without the Leviathan), there can be no order

- *Obligation of subjects*: preserve the social contract by following the ruler; disobedience or rebellion against the government is tantamount to going back to the state of nature, which is a state of war.

**Political Obligation** refers to the duty of citizens to obey a government that has the right to rule or is legitimate. The agreement that people have made for themselves (social contract) is a basis of political obligation. People obey their rulers because they have given political rulers the right to rule. Basically, this is used to justify absolutism and authoritarianism. Under such systems, citizens are viewed merely as subjects who have given up their rights and therefore have no right to resist or even question their rulers. For example, if one lives under this government described by Hobbes (i.e., an authoritarian or absolutist government), a citizen who is accused of rebellion or any crime would have no right to defend himself or herself. It would not matter whether the citizen is guilty or not.

### | Sub-Lesson 1: Important ideas from Locke's Second Treatise

The second version of the Social Contract Theory comes from another English philosopher, John Locke. Locke's version of the social contract theory differs from that of Hobbes. Both Hobbes and Locke lived during the 17th century, which was a period of chaos in England. If Hobbes argued for absolutism in the *Leviathan*, Locke's social contract theory justified the right of the people to resist tyrannical rule. Below are some of the important ideas from the work of Locke:

- *State of nature*: a state of "perfect freedom"; but inconveniences arise from the practice of equality of all, i.e., in terms of their life, liberty, and possessions
- *Nature of man*: equal with other men; rational: man has reason that enables him to determine what is right from wrong and recognize the rights of other men
- *Civil society*: established by the social contract; to address the inconveniences that arise from the state of nature so that each man does not become the judge of his own case
- *Social contract*: does not mean that people have given up their rights, but the goal of the institution of civil society is the enhancement of one's rights to life, liberty, and property.
- *Role of government*: not to rule absolutely but to rule over people as their trustee; sovereignty has not been given up by the people but has been entrusted to the government; people have the right to resist when the ruler has become abusive.

Comparing the ideas of the two English philosophers, we can clearly see the differences in their perspectives. In the Hobbesian version of the social contract, the citizens' rights have already been lost, since they gave it up for the sake of securing their lives. What this means in practical terms is that the citizens' right to express their views and be heard by the *Leviathan* has been lost. The *Leviathan* governs and all the people need to do is to follow. In contrast, for Locke, while the government exercises power on behalf of the people, they (the citizens) have not lost their rights to express their views and even to resist a bad government. As noted above, the people have not given up their rights but have only entrusted their rights to the government. Therefore, the citizens have every right to take back what they have entrusted to the government. Finally, as the trustee, the role of the government is to make sure that the people's right to life, liberty, and property is enhanced. The role of government therefore is to make people's lives better.

## | Sub-Lesson 2: Important ideas from Rousseau’s Social Contract

A third version of the Social Contract Theory emerged from one of the works of the French philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Of the three social contract theorists, Rousseau was the only one who did not have close contacts with people in the aristocracy or work with people in power. The French writer had an interesting background, and unlike Hobbes and Locke, he did not attend prestigious schools or universities. The third version of the theory from Rousseau will, hopefully, enrich your assessment of views on the relationship between the state (particularly those who are in power) and society. The following are excerpts from Rousseau’s *The Social Contract* (1762).

- “Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains”. This was Rousseau’s way of expressing how the society of his time did not recognize the natural freedom of individuals.
- In the state of nature, man is free but ruled by his instincts or appetite. Therefore, he is not truly free.
- For Rousseau, the purpose of the social contract is “...to form an association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before”. What this means is that, for Rousseau, the purpose of the social contract is the enhancement of one’s liberty. Like Hobbes and Locke, Rousseau believed that a person is naturally free. However, in the state of nature, such freedom possessed by a person cannot be considered real or true freedom. Why is this so? It is because such natural freedom is exercised by a person who is governed simply by his or her natural instincts. To become a better human being exercising true freedom, Rousseau believed that a person must live in a society. This is what it means when Rousseau wrote that, “Man can be forced to be free.” A person learns about true freedom – first, civil liberty, and then moral liberty – only when they live in a society. The product of the social contract, therefore, is a community that defends and protects the rights of each person. The citizen is thus both sovereign and subject. They are sovereign because they are part of the community. They are also a subject because they must follow what the sovereign wills. Concretely, what this means is that the people exercise sovereign power (for example, in choosing or electing the leaders of their country) and at the same time, follow the laws that are made by their government. To do these dual functions (sovereign and subject), Rousseau believed that citizens need to be developed and educated. They must know how to exercise the freedom they possess and not be ruled simply by their instincts. When citizens follow rules that their rulers make, they exercise *civil liberty*. When citizens follow laws that they made themselves, they exercise *moral liberty*. For Rousseau, the highest form of freedom is moral liberty. This is achieved when a citizen can identify their own will as that of the common good or the General Will.
- The purpose of the social contract according to Rousseau is to express the “General Will”, which is aimed at the good of all. It is different from the “will of all” which is the sum of particular wills. Rousseau also considered that people may identify the will of the majority (“will of all”) as the General Will. It is not necessarily so. What Rousseau meant by the General Will is not simply counting of votes, or determining how many are in favor of a certain position. Knowing the General Will requires the active participation of the citizens. What this implies is that the citizens are knowledgeable of the issue being discussed and can make an informed decision (not being ruled simply by their instincts). When citizens are active, they are sovereign, according to Rousseau.
- For Rousseau, the people remain sovereign. This means that they are the highest power. Once they enter a social contract, they do not lose this power. They do not give it up (“sovereignty is inalienable”). They also do not divide sovereign power and delegate the power to another body such as a small group of men and women (“sovereignty is indivisible”).

Overall, the Social Contract Theory presents the idea that society was formed as a result of an agreement among men. There may be different justifications from the different writers regarding the existence of the government and the extent of its power over its citizens. But the idea that sovereign power rests on the people who have made the social contract is common among the three thinkers. Moreover, many scholars acknowledge the influence of the ideas from the social contract theory, particularly from Locke and Rousseau, on the establishment of democratic societies that uphold the ideals of liberty and equality among citizens. To some extent, the idea of a social contract has also been associated with the existence of a constitution.

## | Synchronous Activities

### **Activity 1: Debate on the Social Contract Theory**

*Instructions.*

*Step 1.* Divide the class into two groups.

*Step 2.* Give them ample time to prepare and to discuss the opposing arguments for this question: Is the right or wrong to resist a bad ruler part of the rights of men under a social contract?

*Step 3.* Allow them to reflect on their stances at the end of the debate.

### **Activity 2: Discussion on Hobbes**

*Instructions.* Present the following questions to students:

- What is Hobbes's theory of human nature? What are human beings like?
- How did he describe the state of nature?
- What conditions in the state of nature led men to enter into a social contract?
- What constitutes sovereign power? What are its rights?

### **Activity 3: Discussion on Locke**

*Instructions.* Present the following questions to students:

- What do you think were the important influences on Locke's ideas?
- What do men possess in the state of nature that makes them distinguish what is right from wrong?
- What are three characteristics of the state of nature according to Locke?
- What are the two types of liberty for Locke?
- What is the supreme power of the commonwealth?
- What are the four limits to the power of government?

### **Activity 4: Discussion on Rousseau**

*Instructions.* Present the following questions to students:

- How did Rousseau describe man's life in the state of nature?
- What does sovereignty mean? Who possesses it? What are its qualities?

- What is the General Will? What is its significance in society?

## | Asynchronous Activities

### Activity: Application of the Social Contract Theory

*Part 1.* Imagine yourself to be in a state of nature. Think of yourself as being in a situation wherein there are no rules that you must follow and that you are perfectly free to do whatever you want.

- How would you imagine the situation would be? Would you want to be in such a situation?
- Do you think that such an environment would be conducive for you to achieve your goals? Why or why not?
- Imagine further the situation above to be the same situation of everyone else in your community. Do you think that such an environment where everyone can do as he or she pleases is desirable? Why or why not?

*Part 2.* After a careful reflection of the ideas of the social contract thinkers, write a short essay on the significance of the social contract for a community. Consider the following questions in writing your essay:

- Who do you think should be the source of rules or order in your community?
- Why do you think that person(s) be the source of rules or order in your community?
- What should be the role of the rest of the people in your community?
- What should be the relationship between the source of rules (leader) and the people in your community?

## | Learning Material

Ebenstein, W. and Ebenstein, A. (2000). *Great Political Thinkers: Plato to the present*. New York: Rinehart. pp. 397-406; 425-434; 493-504.

Glorious Revolution in England. Retrieved from [https://youtu.be/dyk3bl\\_Y68Y](https://youtu.be/dyk3bl_Y68Y)

Political Obligation and Legitimacy: Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau (Parts 1, 2, & 3). Retrieved from [www.ilc.upd.edu.ph](http://www.ilc.upd.edu.ph) (click Learning Materials >Vodcast >Social Science).

## | References

Heywood, A. (2019). *Politics*, 5th ed. L.I. London : Macmillan International Higher Education/Red Globe Press.

Lowndes, V., Marsh, D. and Stoker, G. A. (2018). *Theory and Methods in Political Science: Political Analysis* (4th ed.). Red Globe Press.



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## Lesson 2: The Constitution

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### | Lesson Objectives

At the end of the lesson, the student is expected to be able to:

- Define the constitution; and
- Explain related concepts to the lesson.

### | Key Concepts

- Constitution - system of rules which defines the responsibilities and powers of the government and its institutions, and the dynamics between the state and its citizens
- Constitutionalism - political components which establish a system of check and balance

### | Study Guide

#### *Introduction to the Lesson*

A. To learn more about the Constitution:

- Watch this short video on the constitution and its purposes, <https://youtu.be/0UzKD8rZCc0> (video made by International Idea);
- Read pages 501-518 of the book, Politics, 5th edition by Andrew Heywood; and
- Get a copy of the 1987 Philippine Constitution and read the preamble and go through its different parts.

### | Constitution

A **constitution** is broadly defined as “a set of rules, written and unwritten, that seek to establish the duties, powers and functions of the various institutions of government; regulate the relationships between them; and define the relationship between the state and the individual” (Heywood 2019: 502-503). The term constitution is also narrowly used to refer to “the highest law of the land”, implying a “single, authoritative document or a written constitution” (Heywood 2019: 503). There are, however, constitutions that are not codified or are referred to as unwritten. In relation to the discussion on the concept of a social contract, the constitution is

deemed to express the “fundamental law of the land that sets the principles, powers, organization and functions of the state and its government, the relations between state-government and the people, (the) rights and obligations of the people, (and the) relations among the people” (Rebullida in Philippine Politics and Governance: An Introduction, 2006:147). Thus, in a narrow sense, constitutionalism implies the practice of a limited government ensured by the existence of a constitution. More broadly, “**constitutionalism** is a set of political values and devices that fragment power, thereby creating a network of checks and balances” (Heywood 2019: 512). The value of a constitution is widely recognized. Its existence serves a number of purposes other than ensuring the existence of a limited government. Heywood (2019:514) identifies the following purposes of constitutions:

- Empower states
- Establish unifying values and goals
- Provide government stability
- Protect freedom
- Legitimize regimes

In this way, the constitution serves as the legal basis of government. It outlines the extent of the government’s power and the breadth of its responsibilities. Therefore, the constitution limits the power of the government in order to preserve and protect the rights of a nation’s citizens.

## | Synchronous Activities

### **Activity: Discussion on the Constitution**

*Instructions.* Present the following questions to students:

- What is a constitution?
- How are constitutions classified?
- What are examples of different types of constitutions? Where can these be found?
- What is meant by constitutionalism?
- What type of constitution does the Philippines have?
- How is a limited government enshrined in the Philippine constitution?

## | Asynchronous Activities

### **Activity: Video**

*Instructions.* Watch this short video on the constitution and its purposes, <https://youtu.be/0UzKD8rZCc0> (video made by International Idea) and provide your reflection in an essay of 400-500 words.

**| Self-Evaluation Forms (Part 2)**

1. Review your answer on the first part of the self-evaluation form. After the discussion on this module, do you still have the same answer? Will you change it? Why will you change it? What will you change?

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2. How will you apply the knowledge you have learned in this lesson in improving Philippine society?

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**| Rubric for Written Outputs**

	Excellent	Above Average	Developing
<b>Content:</b> The central theme/idea of the paper is focused and supported by evidence which indicates mastery of the content.			
<b>Organization:</b> The flow of the discussion of the central theme/idea is coherent.			

<p><b>Presentation:</b></p> <p>The form and presentation of the central theme/idea is clear and easy to understand.</p>			
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**Rubric for Discussions and Debates**

	Excellent	Above Average	Developing
<p><b>Content:</b></p> <p>The central theme/idea/argument of the student's output is focused and supported by evidence which indicates mastery of the content.</p>			
<p><b>Organization:</b></p> <p>The flow of the discussion of the central theme/idea/theme is coherent.</p>			
<p><b>Presentation:</b></p> <p>The form and presentation of the central theme/idea is clear, persuasive, polite, and easy to understand.</p>			

**Learning Material**

COMELEC (2012, May 2). *1987 Philippine Constitution Preamble*. Retrieved from <https://comelec.gov.ph/index.html?r=References/RelatedLaws/Constitution/1987Constitution/Preamble>.

International IDEA (2016). *Constitutional history of Philippines*. Retrieved from [Constitutional history of the Philippines](#)

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- Heywood, A. (2019). *Politics*, 5th ed. L.I. London : Macmillan International Higher Education/Red Globe Press.
- Lowndes, V., Marsh, D. and Stoker, G. A. (2018). *Theory and Methods in Political Science: Political Analysis* (4th ed.). Red Globe Press.
- Tadem, T. S. E., & Morada, N. M. (2006). *Philippine politics and governance: An introduction*. Diliman, Quezon City: Dept. of Political Science, College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of the Philippines.

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