



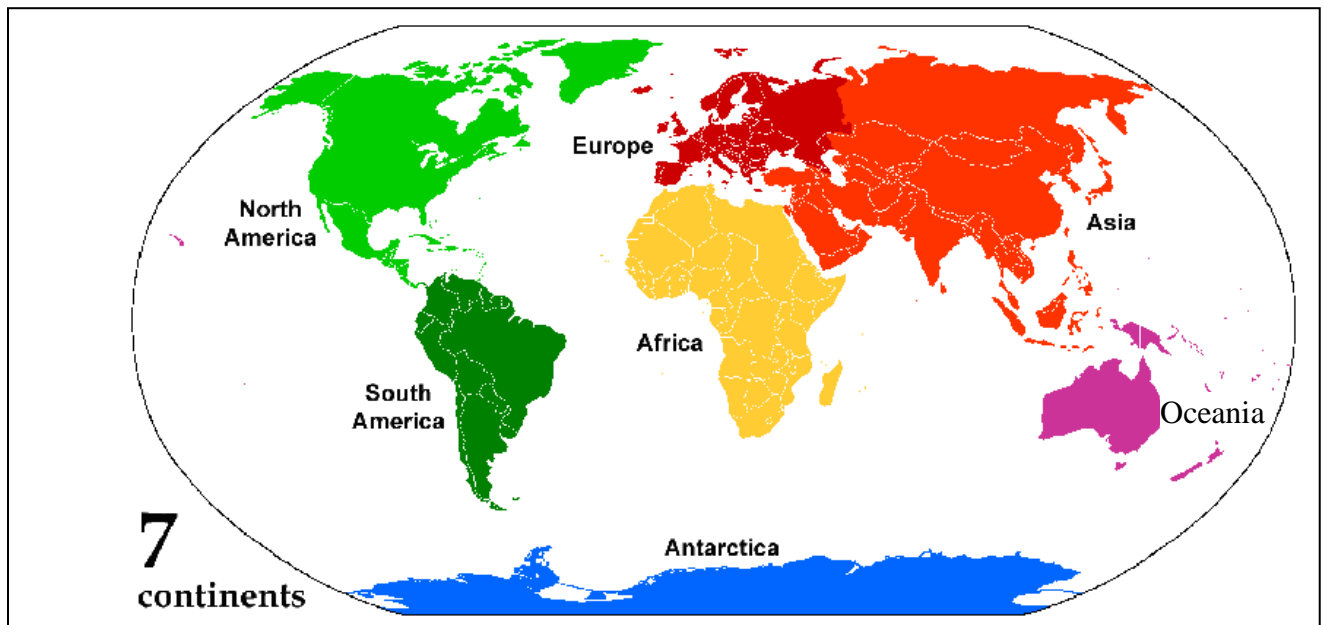
# Unit 0: Introduction to the Contemporary World

World Continents • Land Areas and Populations  
Largest Countries by Size • The Political Spectrum  
Governments  
Questions

## 0.1 The World's Continents<sup>1</sup>

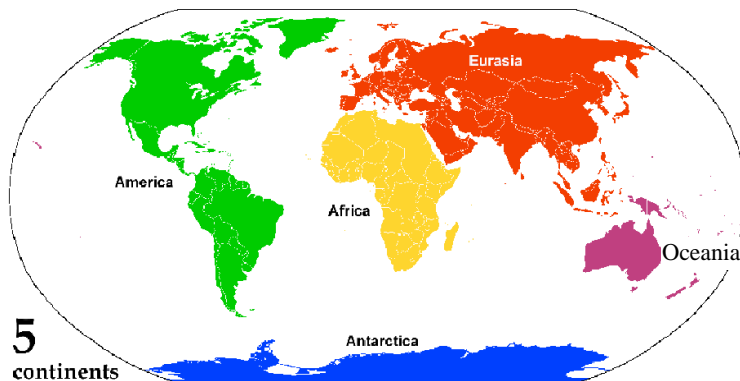
Our planet's land is divided into physical areas of land mass known as continents. The seven continental masses are listed below.

Africa	Europe
Antarctica	North America
Asia	South America
Oceania	



Some textbooks claim there are only five officially recognized continents.

Africa	Eurasia
America	Oceania
Antarctica	



<sup>1</sup> Continent picture sources by Wikimedia Foundation Inc., created by Alex Covarrubias and released into the public domain by its author.

## 0.2 Land Areas and Population

Continent	Land Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	% of World (Land Area)	Population	% of World Population
Africa	30 251 000	20.2	828 487 666	13.5
Antarctica	14 000 000	9.3	0	0.0
Asia	44 009 000	29.4	3 729 663 850	60.6
Europe	10 445 000	7.0	728 822 900	11.8
North America	24 211 000	16.2	485 969 330	7.9
Oceania *	8 985 000	6.0	31 216 051	0.5
South America	17 832 000	11.9	350 819 346	5.7

\* Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Islands

### QUESTIONS: Continents and Population

On a separate ruled loose-leaf paper, answer the following questions in well-written sentences.

1. Why do you think Asia is the most populous region in the world?
2. Why do you think that the different regions don't have similar population growth?

## 0.3 Largest Countries by Size

The world's eight largest countries according to geographic size are listed below.

Country	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Population (2014)
1. Russia	17 075 200	143 700 000
2. Canada	9 984 670	36 685 648
3. United States of America	9 826 630	326 474 013
4. China	9 596 960	* 1 388 232 693
5. Brazil	8 511 965	211 243 220
6. Australia	7 686 850	24 641 662
7. India	3 287 590	1 342 512 706
8. Argentina	2 766 890	44 272 125

\* Reported population; since couples were legally allowed to only have one child, many did not report all their children.

## 0.4 The Political Spectrum<sup>2</sup>

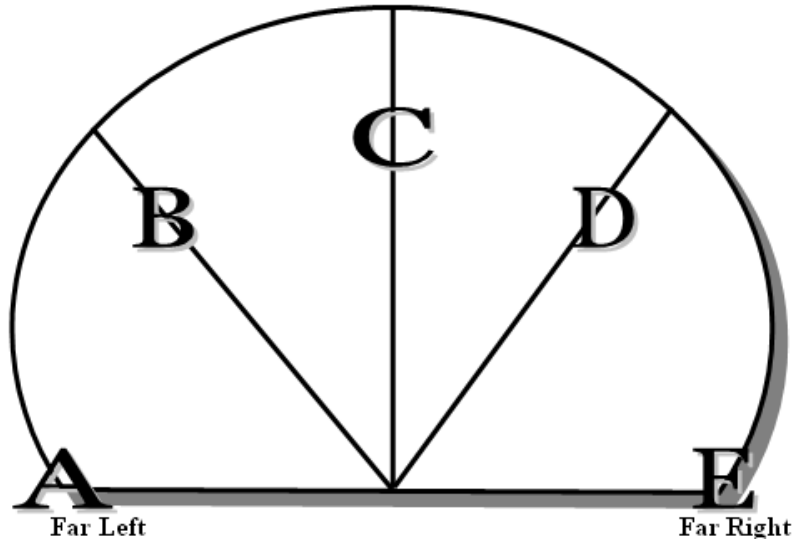
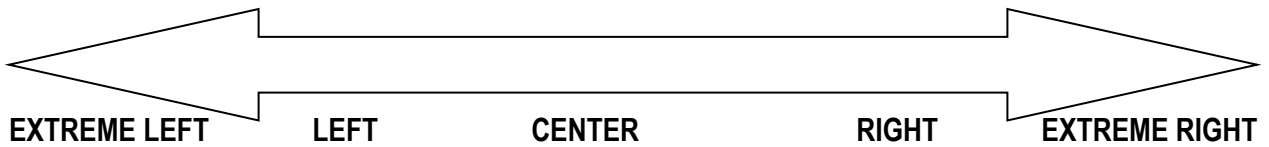
The *political spectrum* is a way of modeling different political positions by placing them upon one or more geometric axes symbolizing independent political dimension. Most spectra include a right wing and left wing, which originally referred to seating arrangements in the 18th century French parliament. Researchers have frequently noted that a single left-right axis is insufficient in describing the existing variation in political beliefs, and often include other axes.

The purpose of the political spectrum is to show the differences in beliefs and ideologies (communism, racism, feminism, capitalism, liberalism, sexism etc.). The main issues that position a person's attitudes on the spectrum are listed below.

1. Speed of change in a society
2. Freedom of individual versus security of the group
3. Sharing of wealth through social benefits

<sup>2</sup> Special thanks to Mr. McKoy for his contribution to the Political Spectrum section of these notes.

Sometimes the different political ideologies are placed on a line or on a “circular” spectrum.



The *left wing* holds communism and socialism.

The *right wing* holds conservatism and fascism.

# Global Politics

**FEATURES**

- Communism!
- Democracy!
- Oligarchy!
- Totalitarianism!
- Nationalism!
- Holy Roman Empire!
- The American Constitution!
- The Teutons!



Key concept: Understanding the political spectrum

## Political Ideologies

Extreme left: **Communism** is a political ideology where a single authoritarian party controls all property, production, natural and capital resources. This eliminates social capitalistic inequalities and promotes a classless society.

Left: **Socialism** is a political ideology which advocates collective or governmental ownership and administration of production and distribution of goods. This eliminates social capitalistic inequalities and promotes a classless society.

Center: **Liberalism** is a political ideology which promotes individual freedom and a limited role of the government.

Right: **Conservatism** is a political ideology which advocates the preservation of what is best in society and opposes radical changes. It tries to favor tradition and traditional values and stays away from innovation and change.

Extreme right: **Fascism** is a political ideology which advocates an absolute government headed by a dictator, severe economic and social control, and forcible suppression of opposition.

## QUESTIONS: The Political Spectrum

**PART A:** Refer to the spectrum on the previous page and indicate the letter (A to E) corresponding to each statement.

1. Our way of life must be protected at all costs. No other society performs as well as ours
2. Society can best achieve success through a moderate and a conservative approach with all its citizens.
3. Change for change sake is worthless. We must rely on past values as it is tradition that best reflects a society's values.
4. We are the true representatives of the people. We hold the common good above all else, as the main consideration of a society's actions.

1) \_\_\_\_\_ 2) \_\_\_\_\_ 3) \_\_\_\_\_ 4) \_\_\_\_\_

**PART B:** If democracy is the moderate (middle) position on the political spectrum, where would each of the following political systems be placed on the spectrum? Your options are: extreme left (EL), left (L), center (C), right (R) and extreme right (ER).

1. Fascism \_\_\_\_\_
2. Nazism \_\_\_\_\_
3. Theocracy \_\_\_\_\_
4. Communism \_\_\_\_\_
5. Monarchy \_\_\_\_\_
6. Oligarchy \_\_\_\_\_

**PART C: *Where Are You on the Political Spectrum? Answer each question as honestly as you can. For each question, place an “X” indicating if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each statement.***

1. The death penalty is wrong and should not be allowed under any circumstances.
2. The government should use taxpayers’ money to provided free day care for all parents.
3. Directors of big companies that pollute our air and water should be personally fined and sent to prison.
4. Canada should allow any immigrant who wants to move to Canada to do so.
5. Canada’s Native peoples should be given the land they were promised in treaties signed with the government.
6. If a factory is polluting our air and water, the government should close it down, even if it means that its workers would lose their jobs.
7. Our government should spend less money on our armed forces.
8. Laws should be passed and enforced that will make sure that women receive the same pay as men do when they do work of equal value.
9. The United States should not be allowed to test its cruise missiles in Canada, even if this means that its workers would lose their jobs.
10. High school students should be allowed to take any course they want; there should be no compulsory subjects.
11. If a person is poor, it is not his or her fault; the government should help such people by providing generous financial aid.
12. The government should control the amount of rent that landlord can charge his or her tenants.
13. The tax laws should be changed to make rich people and big companies pay more than they do today.
14. The government should provide a mother with enough money to allow her to stay at home for longer time after she has a baby.
15. A woman who has decided that she wants to have an abortion should be allowed to do so without having to get anyone else’s’ permission.
16. No person or government should be allowed to censor any book, movie or piece of music.
17. Artists, writers, and musicians are more important in our society than are business executives.
18. Workers who go on strike do it for good reasons and deserve to have the public’s support.
19. The government should give more money to our universities and community colleges in order to keep students’ fees as low as possible, even if this means raising taxes.
20. Canada should give more financial aid to poorer countries

Answers for the questions (The Political Spectrum) Part C. For each question, place an “X” indicating if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each statement.

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

**Your Score**

You can now convert your answers into a score using the following calculation method.

Number of “Strongly Agrees” \_\_\_\_\_ x 5 = \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of “Agrees” \_\_\_\_\_ x 3 = \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of “Disagrees” \_\_\_\_\_ x 2 = \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of “Strongly Disagrees” \_\_\_\_\_ x 0 = \_\_\_\_\_

**Total =** \_\_\_\_\_

**Indicate where you fall on the political spectrum.**

<b>100</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>0</b>
Left Wing	Moderate Left Wing	Center	Moderate Right Wing	Right Wing

**Party positions**

50-60: Liberal  
 65-75: New Democratic Party  
 35-45: Conservatives

## 0.5 Governments

### 0.5.1 The British North American Act of 1867 (Constitution Act of 1982)

The *British North America Act, 1867* (now called the *Constitution Act, 1867*) was a charter which outlined the roles and responsibilities of different levels of government during the time of confederation during the London Conference.

### 0.5.2 The Canadian Federal Government

*Section 91* says that *Canada's* prime responsibility is for national defence, interprovincial and international trade and commerce, immigration, the banking and monetary system, criminal law, fisheries, and for "all matters not specifically assigned to the provinces".

### 0.5.2 Provincial Governments

*Section 92* gives the *provinces* responsibility for such matters as property and civil rights, the administration of justice, the hospital system, natural resources within their borders, social security, health, and municipal institutions, as well as "all matters of a local or private nature".

### 0.5.3 Municipal Governments

*Municipal governments* are created by the provinces to provide services that can be more effectively handled under local control. Municipalities are responsible for fresh water services, sewage, garbage collection, recreational facilities, libraries, security & fire services, street construction & maintenance, public lighting, snow removal, and other such services.

## 0.6 Important Countries

After World War 2, there were slightly over 70 countries. According to the United Nations and the United States of America Department of State, *there are 195 countries as of Tuesday, September 05, 2017.*

Depending if we count Taiwan and other such states for example, we could say that there are as many as 220. If we base our numbers on how many countries have their own Internet domain suffix (Canada=".ca", Japan=".jp", Germany=".de", etc.), then there are 253.

The following is a list of "countries" we should all be familiar with, especially when it comes to their location.

#### Middle East

- Lebanon
- Iraq
- Israel
- West Bank
- Jordan
- Syria
- Iran
- Saudi Arabia
- Egypt
- Libya

## **Europe**

- United Kingdom
- France
- Spain
- Portugal
- Germany
- Austria
- Czech Republic
- Slovenia
- Hungary
- Croatia
- Romania
- Bulgaria
- Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia
- Greece
- Sweden
- Finland
- Norway

## **South America**

- Brazil
- Argentina
- Chili
- Peru
- Columbia
- Ecuador
- Venezuela
- Uruguay

## **Africa**

- South Africa
- Ethiopia
- Sudan
- Somalia
- Rwanda
- Angola
- Botswana
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Nigeria
- Ghana
- Mali

## **Asia**

- China
- India
- Japan
- North Korea
- Vietnam
- Burma
- Indonesia
- Taiwan