

RESOURCES ON AYN RAND'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Ayn Rand is an original, highly unconventional, and frequently misunderstood thinker. For example, her political philosophy is often characterized as “conservative,” even though she *explicitly* rejected that label, or as “libertarian,” a label she equally disavowed. Conventional ways of categorizing her thought, therefore, often serve to distort rather than to help illuminate her unique perspective. As a resource for both students and education professionals preparing to either study or teach Rand in the A-level politics curriculum, the [Ayn Rand Institute](#) (ARI) has collected here a set of resources on Rand’s political philosophy, its moral foundations, and its applications. Experts at ARI have been offering educational material and advanced instruction on Rand’s philosophy, Objectivism, since the Institute’s founding in 1985, and are uniquely positioned to provide accurate and easy-to-access materials for anyone, beginner or specialist, who wants to learn more about her original philosophy. Below you will find a variety of free essays, interviews, courses and other offerings, mostly from Rand herself, that will help you to understand this unique thinker’s contribution to political thought.

***Note:** The politics section of the A-level curriculum classifies Rand as a “conservative” and the writers of the testing materials for the A-level exams may expect students to classify her as a “conservative” on the exams. The resources below will help you to see whether, or to what extent, that characterization fits Rand’s political thought, as well as why Rand herself rejected the label “conservative.” However, students are advised to use their own judgment as to how to classify Rand when taking the exam.

ESSAYS BY AYN RAND

“Man’s Rights”

In this essay, Rand explains the fundamental moral principle on which her political philosophy is based — the principle of individual rights. Rand’s theory of the nature, source, and justification of rights is original, and its implications for her political philosophy are wide-ranging.

“The Nature of Government”

In this essay, Rand explains what government is and why man needs it. She explains her view of the source of a government’s authority and of the three broad categories of proper government action.

“What Is Capitalism?”

In this essay, Rand explains what capitalism is, why it is often misunderstood, and why it is the only social system consonant with man’s nature. She discusses the moral roots of capitalism in contrast to the moral doctrines that lead to rule by force, which underlie all tyrannies throughout history.

continued

“Conservatism: An Obituary”

In this essay, Rand argues why the conservatives’ embrace of the morality of altruism has made it impossible for them to defend capitalism. Rand examines the nature of altruism and its incompatibility with capitalism, the three futile arguments that conservatives use to defend capitalism, and the nature of the moral crisis confronting the world.

“Patents and Copyrights”

In this essay, Rand applies her theory of rights to the issue of intellectual property, arguing in favor of intellectual property rights, as an individual’s right to the products of his mind.

“The Pull Peddlers”

In this essay, Rand explains why accepting the “public interest” as a criterion for legislation necessarily causes the proliferation of “pull peddling” — (or lobbying) — i.e., “the activity of attempting to influence legislation by privately influencing legislators.” The politics of “pressure-group warfare” is widespread today, and Rand’s analysis helps to explain its underlying cause.

“The Roots of War”

In this essay, Rand contrasts statism and capitalism, arguing that statism necessarily leads to war. Statist regimes plunder first their own people, then their neighbors, whereas capitalism (which depends on, and flourishes under, peaceful conditions) has nothing to gain from war.

PUBLIC TALKS, VIDEO ADDRESSES, AND INTERVIEWS WITH AYN RAND

Capitalism vs. Communism

In this 1961 video address, Ayn Rand examines why capitalism is under constant attack despite its record of success compared with socialism’s record of failure. She examines the nature of altruism and criticizes the typical arguments that conservatives use to defend capitalism. Rand urges businessmen not to abandon the realm of ideas to their enemies, to be proud of working for their own self-interest and to stop supporting their destroyers.

Conservatism vs. Objectivism

In this 30-minute radio interview from 1964, Ayn Rand summarizes Objectivism’s central tenets and then explains why she is not a conservative but rather a “radical for capitalism.” Rand addresses such topics as conservatives’ views of the welfare state, the status of Libertarians, and advice for young Objectivists about working with conservative political groups.

continued

Politics of a Free Society

In this 28-minute radio program from 1965, Ayn Rand responds to questions about the ideal political structure of a free society. Topics addressed include the government's role as protector of individual rights, the relationship between a country's political and economic systems, the role of a written constitution, voting, taxes, the difference between a democracy and a republic, and non-coercive methods of financing a government's operations.

The Age of Mediocrity

In this 1981 lecture, Ayn Rand laments the growing political influence of the religious right, focusing especially on the incoming Reagan administration's support for and sponsorship of such movements as the campaign against abortion rights, the advocacy of "creationism" in schools, the veneration of "family," and the so-called Moral Majority.

The Structure of Government

In this 30-minute radio interview, Ayn Rand discusses the purpose and proper structure of government, addressing such issues as the importance of a written constitution, the difference between a republic and a democracy, federalism, checks and balances, the judiciary, "one-man-one-vote," and filibusters.

VIDEO AND AUDIO COURSES

What Is Capitalism?

This 1967 lecture is Ayn Rand's flagship talk on capitalism. In it she explains in depth what capitalism is, why it is often misunderstood, and why it is the only social system consonant with man's nature. This talk is excerpted from Rand's substantially longer and more comprehensive [essay](#) of the same name.

The Philosophy of Objectivism

This course, by Leonard Peikoff, was endorsed by Ayn Rand as "the only authorized presentation of the entire theoretical structure of Objectivism, i.e., the only one that I know of my own knowledge to be fully accurate." Lessons 9 and 10 of that course (below) focus on Rand's political philosophy and its moral foundations — and you can listen to Rand participating in the question-and-answer sessions.

continued

The Philosophy of Objectivism, Lesson 9:
“Objectivism and the Moral Foundations of Government” (Lectures 3–6)

Leonard Peikoff explains why the moral principles underlying the Objectivist political philosophy — viz., the evil of initiating force and the principle of individual rights — entail a government whose sole function is the protection of its citizens’ rights.

The Philosophy of Objectivism, Lesson 10:
“The Nature of Capitalism and Its Relation to Morality”

Leonard Peikoff explains why capitalism is the only social system consistent with a rational morality. Peikoff stresses the connection between morality and a free market, egoism and the profit motive, justice and market prices, productiveness and individual effort.

The Morality of Freedom

Focusing on the Age of Enlightenment, ARI senior fellow Onkar Ghate surveys the philosophical foundations of freedom as a moral and political ideal, and explains why Ayn Rand’s philosophy of Objectivism provides a new case for the Enlightenment ideals of political liberty.

THE AYN RAND LEXICON

The Ayn Rand Lexicon, a mini-encyclopedia of Rand’s philosophy, covering some 400 topics in philosophy, economics, psychology and history, is compiled from Ayn Rand’s works. Below are the entries dealing with political philosophy, its foundations, and applications.

[Anarchism](#)
[Capitalism](#)
[“Common Good”](#)
[Communism](#)
[Contracts](#)
[“Collective Rights”](#)
[“Conservatives” vs. “Liberals”](#)
[“Conservatives”](#)
[Constitution](#)
[Collectivism](#)
[Democracy](#)
[Dictatorship](#)

continued

THE AYN RAND LEXICON (continued)

Economic Power vs. Political Power

Egalitarianism

Freedom

Foreign Policy

Fascism and Communism/Socialism

Fascism/Nazism

Founding Fathers

Free Market

Government

Human Rights and Property Rights

Individual Rights

Individualism

Interventionism (Economic)

Law, Objective and Non-Objective

“Libertarians”

“Liberals”

Lobbying

“Meritocracy”

Mixed Economy

Monopoly

National Rights

New Left

Pacifism

Patents and Copyrights

Permission (vs. Rights)

Politics

Property Rights

“Public Interest, the”

Pursuit of Happiness, Right to

“Redistribution” of Wealth

Representative Government

Republic

continued

THE AYN RAND LEXICON (continued)

[Self-Determination of Nations](#)

[Social System](#)

[Socialism](#)

[Soviet Russia](#)

[Statism](#)

[Taxation](#)

[Tyranny](#)

[Unions](#)

[United Nations](#)

[Voting](#)

[War](#)

[Welfare State](#)

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