

Glossary of Common History Terms

Agrarian	Involved in producing crops and livestock through farming
Anarchism	A political system that seeks to abolish the state and create a communal society
Aristocracy	People who possess noble titles and privileges, often with wealth and power
Authoritarian	Characterized by a strong central government and limited political and social freedoms, as that of a dictatorship
Blockade	An effort to cut off supplies, war material or communications from a particular area by force
Bourgeoisie	People who own capital, such as land, factories and raw materials
Capitalism	An economic system where most companies, land and other resources are privately owned
Clergy	People ordained by the church to carry out its functions, such as priests, monks and nuns
Commercial	Involved in trade, such as importing and exporting, buying and selling
Communism	A political and economic system with the goal of creating a classless society in which the means of production (like factories) are owned and controlled by the public
Conservative	A political philosophy promoting traditional social institutions and cautious about change or innovation
Coup d'état	The forcible removal of an existing government from power through violent means
Civil war	A war between citizens of the same country

Democracy	A political system where the government or parts of it are selected by the people
Dictator	A ruler with total power over a country, typically one who has obtained control by force
Diplomacy	The practice of conducting negotiations between nations
Economic	Relating to the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services
Faction	A group of dissenting individuals within a larger entity, such as a political party
Fascism	A far-right political ideology characterized by dictatorial power, extreme nationalism, government control of industry, and forcible suppression of opposition
Fiscal	Relating to government revenue, like taxes
Franchise	The right to vote
Guerilla warfare	A form of fighting in which small groups of combatants use tactics like ambushes, sabotage, and raids to fight a larger traditional army
Historiography	The study of historical writing; how historians write about the past
Idealist	Guided by a pursuit of noble principles, purposes, and goals
Ideology	A system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy
Imperialism	A system where a powerful state conquers territories (colonies) for its own gain
Inflation	An increase in prices for goods and services, reducing the purchasing power of money
Left wing	Politics which support social equality and egalitarianism (a belief in human equality), as opposed to social hierarchy

Liberalism	A political philosophy based on individual liberty, consent of the governed, and equality before the law
Limited war	A war in which the nations fighting do not expend all of their available resources and whose objective is less than total defeat of the enemy
Nationalism	An ideology urging loyalty to one's own country; to put your country first
Opportunist	A person who takes advantage of circumstances with little regard for principles
Political	Relating to the government or public affairs of a country
Populist	Political approach that appeals to the ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by the established elites
Progressive	A political stance that argues for change or reform, as opposed to maintaining things as they are
Proletariat	People who work for wages in a society, particularly in the industrial sector
Propaganda	Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view
Radical	One who desires extreme change of part or all of the social order
Reactionary	A political stance that advocates a return to the previous state of social affairs
Republic	A state in which power is held by the people and their elected representatives
Revolution	A major, sudden, and profound change in government or economic relationships
Right wing	Politics which support social hierarchies as natural or desirable, associated with conservative thought

Sanctions	A threatened penalty for disobeying a law or rule
Social	Relating to society or its organization
Socialism	A system where the government rules in the interests of the workers or common people
Suffrage	The right to vote in political elections
Totalitarianism	A government in which the state's power is unlimited and controls virtually all aspects of public and private life
Total war	War that is unrestricted in terms of weapons used, territory involved, or objectives; every resource, including that of civilians, is considered part of the war effort
Tyrant	A cruel and oppressive ruler