

Types of Political Systems in ancient Greece

Government is the institution that makes, enforces, and interprets laws

Political system refers to a set of beliefs that determines how government works, how laws are made, and who is in charge.

Monarchy (“one rules”)

- King or queen
- Absolute power
- Hereditary (birth)
- Divine Right

Aristocracy (the “best” rules)

- Nobility, lords
- Upper class, wealthy
- Born into it

Oligarchy (a “few” rule)

- Wealthy, land-holding
- NOT born into it
- Group of people or families

Tyrant (Tyranny) (“illegitimate” rule – not voted for or born into or wealthy)

- Supported by the poor: they helped the tyrant to overthrow the oligarchy in return for help (jobs or laws that canceled debt)
- Takes power but not by the usual means (not born into it, not elected, not from a rich family that has been ruling for a while)
- Usually wealthy
- The beginning of the poor working together to make changes

Democracy (the “people” rule)

- Power of the people
- Direct democracy: every citizen votes on every thing
 - Problem: very few people were citizens
- Indirect democracy: the people elect representatives to do their voting (USA)
- Limited democracy: Restrictions on who is considered a voting citizen

No country has a direct democracy today. (Too many people to have everyone vote on everything.)
The United States is a good example of an indirect democracy (aka, “republic”).

Theocracy: “God” rules (through representatives)

- Priest rules “for” god(s)
- Leader “speaks” for god
- Leader is sometimes considered a god

Anarchy: “Without” rule

- Chaotic (no rules, no enforcement, no predictability)
- Does not last (too uncomfortable)