

The Viability of Liberalism

PART

3

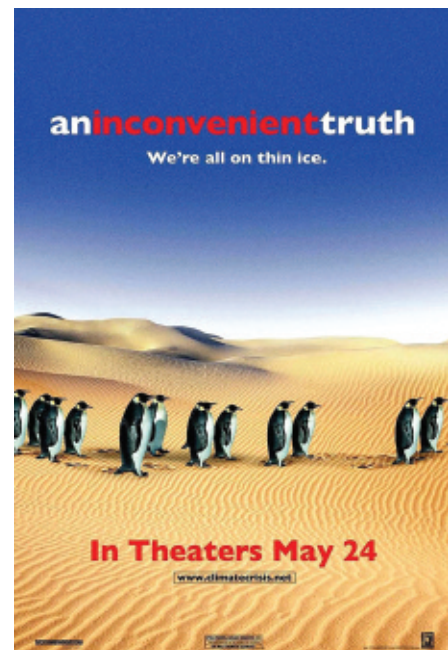
By this point, you may have developed a tentative response to the Key Issue for this course: *To what extent should we embrace an ideology?* You have explored the evolving nature of liberalism and its impact on society and on identity. Your response to liberalism may have grown and evolved as well.

Any photo-essay on world history since the end of the Second World War likely would include some of the images shown here. All of these images present varying perspectives on liberalism. The big ideas to be derived from these images are similar to the ideas that challenge voters during democratic elections, as they decide to what extent they should embrace or reject liberalism. The importance and viability of liberalism continues to be debated in democratic societies. Can an ideology driven by a commitment to open dialogue and progress be embraced as a compelling and viable blueprint for the future?

Noted British philosopher and social advocate Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) observed:

The essence of the Liberal outlook lies not in what opinions are held, but in how they are held: instead of being held dogmatically, they are held tentatively, and with a consciousness that new evidence may at any moment lead to their abandonment.

Signs of the big economic downturn of 2008; Czech citizens press for democratic reform in 1968; poster for *An Inconvenient Truth*, a documentary about global warming



The Spanish-born philosopher, Jose Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955), was a member of Spain’s liberal and educated upper class. He once said:

Liberalism is the supreme form of generosity; it is the right which the majority concedes to minorities and hence it is the noblest cry that has ever resounded on this planet.

British statesman and prime minister Winston Churchill (1874–1965) explained:

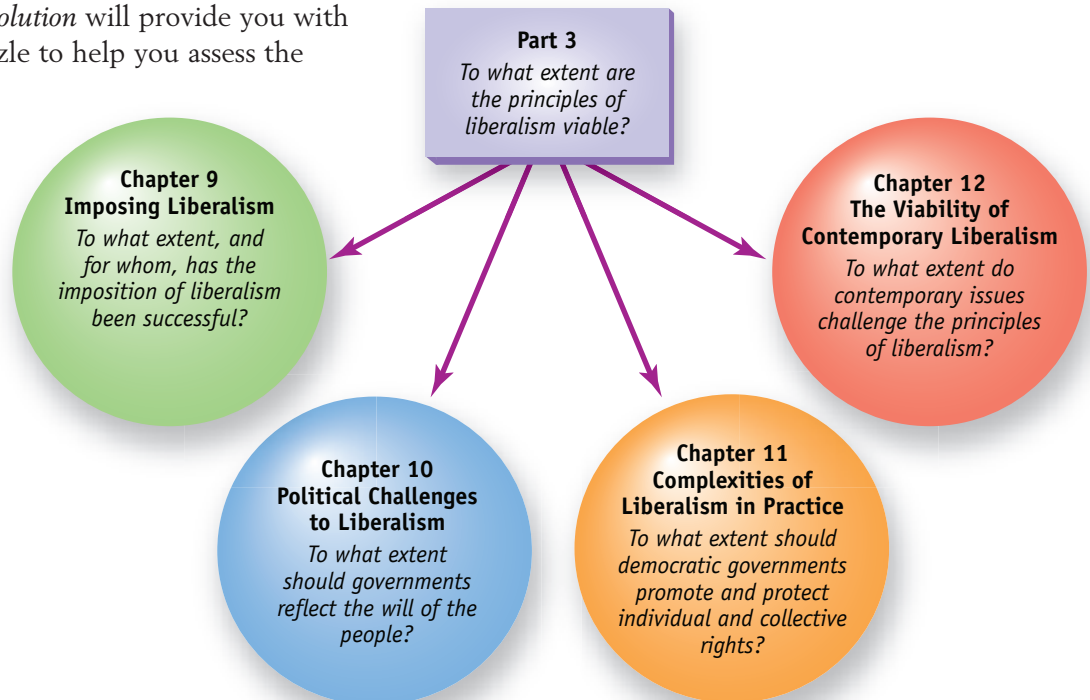
Any man who is under 30, and is not a liberal, has no heart; and any man who is over 30, and is not a conservative, has no brains.

Part 3 of this course investigates the issue, ***To what extent are the principles of liberalism viable?*** These are the very concerns and issues suggested by the images and quotations on these pages.

To help you formulate a response to this issue, you will explore how liberal foreign policies have been challenged by both past and current global events. There is no consensus on the viability of liberalism, so attempts to impose this ideology have resulted sometimes in resistance to the principles of liberalism and sometimes in the reformation of liberalism. Exploring domestic and global examples will help you recognize the complexities of liberalism and uncover sources of resistance, to understand how people with alternative or competing worldviews respond to this ideology.

Finally, if liberalism is to remain a viable ideology, it must have a utilitarian purpose—it must provide a solution to a range of contemporary issues confronting people. Exploring the notion of *liberalism as a solution* will provide you with the final piece of the puzzle to help you assess the viability of this ideology

As you explore the topics in Part 3, consider the competing opinions that arise. To help you better resolve this issue, you may want to record the contrasting opinions you read about, as well as the opinions that challenge your current thoughts on liberalism.



Visit the Learn Alberta site www.LearnAlberta.ca and click on the *Perspectives on Ideology* learning object for fully interactive learning scenarios entitled ExCite (Exploring Citizenship). These scenarios related to issues and concepts in the Student Resource enhance learning.

