

**FEDERALISM**  
Class Notes

**I. Structure of Government**

- A. **Unitary System** - Central government has authority over all of its political subdivisions.  
 ➤ Sabato: *Local and state governments derive all authority from a strong national government*  
 ➤ Examples: Great Britain, France, Japan, China, Iran; 193 UN member states 165 have unitary systems  
 ➤ Pro's and Con's?
- B. **Confederation** -Two or more independent states join together to achieve a common goal, such as mutual defense or trade. Each state retains its own sovereignty, giving only limited powers to the central government.  
 ➤ Sabato: *League of independent states deriving power from the states*  
 ➤ Examples: Articles of Confederation; Southern States during Civil War, European Union  
 ➤ Pro's and Con's
- C. **Federation** - Political authority is divided between a national, or federal, government, and its political subdivisions. In this system, national and state governments each have defined powers, with some being share by both and some being denied both with national government supreme.  
 ➤ Sabato: *Both national and state governments derive power from the people (American federalism only)*  
 ➤ Examples: United States, Australia, Germany, Switzerland, India, Canada

**II. Advantages and Disadvantages of a Federal System**

Activity: Federalism Pro's and Con's of American Federalism

- 1) Divide class in half: one side has pro's of American federalism, the other side con's.
- 2) Then tell students to work with a partner to brainstorm 3-5 pro's or con's of federalism. (3-5 minutes)
- 3) Then, write results on board.
- 4) Conclusions (students vote):  
*Option 1: American federalism works well more times than not/overall.*  
*Option 2: Serious problems with American federalism outweigh the benefits.*

Advantages of Federalism	Disadvantages of Federalism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federalism ideally suited to needs of a heterogeneous people spread over a large continent</li> <li>• Checks tyranny and a demagogue or overly powerful region</li> <li>• Allows unity w/out uniformity &gt;&gt;&gt; many issues like gun control, divorce, capitol punishment left to states</li> <li>• Encourages Experimentation &gt;&gt;&gt; states are "laboratories" - Wisconsin during Progressive Era, NY on water</li> <li>• Keeps government closer to the people w/ strong state and local politics</li> <li>• Provides citizens more access to government at three different levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overlapping tasks between state and national government</li> <li>• Inefficient - too much paperwork, multiple bureaucracies which can lead to red tape and waste</li> <li>• Expensive</li> <li>• Too many elections on all levels of government</li> <li>• Conflicts over authority between federal and state government</li> <li>• Difficult to act quickly in an emergency i.e. Hurricane Katrina</li> </ul>