

THIRD EDITION

# Analyzing American Democracy

Politics and Political Science



Jon R. Bond and Kevin B. Smith



# Analyzing American Democracy

## **Praise for *Analyzing American Democracy***

The new edition of Bond and Smith's revered text threads the needle by adding several exciting touches—most notably, the thoroughly updated content and thematically integrated boxes—without sacrificing the features that so many devoted instructors have long loved—most notably, the unapologetically scientific approach and the vivid, deeply engaging writing style.

**John Hibbing**, *University of Nebraska–Lincoln*

From its focus on the principles of democracy to the actual practice of democracy in the United States, Bond and Smith's introductory text provides university students with the necessary tools to critically analyze American politics. The authors effectively apply political science research in a way that is fresh and accessible to students and do so in a way that will make students think well beyond their preconceptions about politics. The chapter on elections is the most thorough and engaging treatment of presidential elections you will find in an introductory American politics textbook.

**Jeffrey S. Peake**, *Clemson University*

Jon Bond and Kevin Smith's *Analyzing American Democracy* provides the most comprehensive and nuanced treatment of American political institutions and behavior to date. By drawing upon the most recent political science literature, the text encourages students to see American politics through a theoretical lens, and promotes a more generalized understanding of political concepts that transcend time and space. With stimulating real-world examples of the trade-offs, paradoxes, and competing ethical perspectives that are negotiated in a modern representative democracy, students become conversant and critically-engaged in the challenges confronting the country, and thus, become better citizens.

**Sarah A. Fulton**, *Texas A&M University*

*Analyzing American Democracy* is one of the best American Government books on the market. Not only is it comprehensive in covering material across the vast spectrum of American politics, but it also has an interesting point of view: the idea that our expectations of government and its performance may not be entirely realistic. Bond and Smith have written a book that is accessible to undergraduate students, yet provides sufficient detail for professors to examine the nuances of American politics today.

**Richard W. Waterman**, *University of Kentucky*

Nobody does a better job than Bond and Smith of integrating modern political science with a thoroughly up-to-date introduction to American government. Most of my students have already been exposed to an AP-style high school American government survey, and a text that is clearly more science than civics is exactly what they need at the college level. On top of that the writing has the wit, snap, and drive that keeps students reading and thinking in spite of themselves.

**John R. Alford**, *Rice University*

Teaching a broad survey course that covers the breadth of American politics can be a daunting task for both instructors and students. Bond and Smith have organized what could be an overwhelming amount of information into a logical structure coupled with a straightforward, journalistic writing style that incorporates cutting-edge political science research with key political concepts. The result is a textbook that is truly an introduction to political science, not just civics or popular politics.

**Amanda Friesen**, *Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis*

# Analyzing American Democracy

## Politics and Political Science

**Third Edition**

**Jon R. Bond**

*Texas A&M University*

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*University of Nebraska–Lincoln*

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# PREFACE

We are political scientists, so almost by definition we are fascinated by politics and believe the best way to understand the political world is through the scientific method. Between us we also have decades of teaching experience, so we are acutely aware that the typical undergraduate shares neither our passion for politics nor a familiarity with the scientific method. The central mission of the third edition of *Analyzing American Democracy*, like its predecessors, is not simply to educate students about the political and policy world, but also to teach them two general lessons. First, as citizens of the republic and citizens of the world, as individuals pursuing an education, a career, and a fulfilling life, they have a lot of extremely good, self-interested reasons to know more about politics. Second, if they want to know more about politics, approaching it scientifically is the most systematic and useful way to do so.

That, we fully realize, can be a tough sell, especially in an era of alt-facts and roll-your-own reality. We live in a polarized and partisan world, and most of what undergraduates know and learn about politics comes from friends, family, and social media, not from political science or political scientists. Indeed, most undergraduates are likely to take only one class and read only one textbook on American politics during their college career. Precisely because our chances to contribute to their education are so limited, we believe that a textbook needs to pursue three fundamental goals. First, at the most basic level, it must be comprehensive. The content between the covers of this single volume should capture a soup-to-nuts overview of the context, rules, processes, and institutions of the American political system. Second, it must not only introduce students to the basic mechanics of American politics but also present in an accessible way the basics of political science and how political scientists explain why politics works the way it does. Third, and most importantly, it must provide students with some basic intellectual tools necessary to promote independent analytic thought about the often confusing and always changing world of American politics. The third edition of *Analyzing American Democracy: Politics and Political Science* seeks to achieve these three goals.

First, the book is comprehensive. It begins by providing students a historical and constitutional framework for understanding American politics. This means introducing students to the concept of democracy, the values democracy represents, and how these values are expressed in the structure and evolution of governance in America. It means a comprehensive examination of the linkage mechanisms that connect citizens to government and how those mechanisms express—or fail to express—the core democratic principles embodied in the American political system. It means systematically covering the key policymaking institutions of national government, not just the decision-making institutions established by the Constitution—

the legislative, executive, and judicial branches—but also bureaucracy, one of the most important and least understood institutions of American politics. Finally, it means giving an overview of how all these elements come together in making and implementing public policy. Of course, we can't cover everything, and we hope students reading this textbook might be intrigued enough by some of the topics that they will continue with additional upper-division courses in American politics. But we aim to include enough of the raw material to help students understand the workings of contemporary American politics such that they can become engaged members of the polity.

Second, this book aims not simply to cover the basics of the American political system but also to demonstrate how politics can be usefully and systematically studied generally. It is valuable for students to have the basic details down and even better for them to begin understanding how the pieces fit together. Our goal is to put into your hands a book that is about not just politics, but political *science*. We take seriously the charge implied in the book's title: A central goal here is to teach students how to think analytically about the complexities of political conflict, processes, institutions, behavior, and policies. We introduce students to the science and craft of political science in Chapter 1 and use the frameworks and scholarship of the discipline to organize and explain all aspects of the American political system. In particular, we introduce students to three theoretical frameworks that illustrate the scientific study of politics—rational choice models, behavioral models, and evolutionary/biological models—and repeatedly return to these frameworks as explanatory aids throughout the book. Because we believe that the text used in political science courses should show students how political scientists report the results of their research, we continue to use the American Political Science Association style of in-text citations, with a comprehensive list of references. More generally, we lean heavily on political science scholarship in all of our explanatory accounts—our aim is to show students political science in action. We particularly want to do this because an Introduction to American Politics class may be the only political science course many students take in their undergraduate career. We want them to leave that class knowing something about what political scientists do and why it is important, just as students taking introductory economics or biology come away knowing something about the core theories and perspectives of those disciplines. In our view, too few introductory American politics textbooks achieve this, and too few members of the population see the value of political science compared to punditry and sound bites.

Third, the book seeks to be accessible but not “dumbed down.” In our experience, students get the most out of this course not just by mastering the facts and theories covered, but when they further develop the tools of analytical thought. All our chapters begin with a story, written magazine-style, that provides a quick and easy introduction to the core themes of the chapter. The next section highlights the core concepts associated with the topic: What principles guide the creation and practice of a federal system? What role does public opinion, which is often ambiguous or divided, play in governance? How does political participation uphold the core principles of American democracy? What purpose does Congress serve as

the national legislative institution? From there, chapters progressively build on these foundations to present the most important concepts, theories, and tools for understanding the great complexity of American politics. Undergraduate students could never hope to know everything about politics in America. Indeed, even if they did, such knowledge would quickly become outdated as new media emerge, rules change, and outcomes of public policies evolve to face new challenges among the citizenry. Students are best served by their textbook and by their undergraduate education if they also learn how to apply core principles and tools to future challenges. For example, the rapidly fragmenting and increasingly partisan media landscape feeds worries about media bias in many citizens. Understanding the core principle of political freedom puts a more partisan press into perspective—a functioning and healthy democracy does not need an unbiased press; what it needs is a *free* press. Or consider that many citizens are frustrated with the increasingly polarized nature of American politics and that elections increasingly seem to represent a choice between partisan extremes. Understanding the core principle of political equality and how the nomination process makes some more equal than others in deciding the general election ballot can help students understand why polarization exists and stimulate thinking on paths to reduce political polarization. American politics and the scholarship of political science tell an interesting and fascinating story; the task of telling that story in an engaging and accessible manner, we treated as both a challenge and an important responsibility.



## NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION

Updated coverage throughout includes:

- 2016 and 2018 election updates and analysis of their political and policy impact
- Social media's growing influence on politics
- The impact of the alt-right and rising populism on elections and policy
- New trends in public opinion
- Weakening of the Voting Rights Act
- Campaign finance upheaval
- The changing congressional landscape
- Updated tables, figures, and photos present the empirical details of American politics, helping students gain quantitative literacy
- Landmark court cases, now highlighted and linked to key concepts
- Refreshed feature boxes reinforce the book's dedication to helping students understand the scientific approach to politics, incorporating intriguing new topics including genetics and public opinion, the biology of political participation, and evolution and the bureaucracy



## **PEDAGOGICAL FEATURES**

We have devised a number of learning tools in this text to help students master the goals of their course. First, before students get immersed in the details of a chapter, they will find at the start a list of key questions to help frame the objectives of that chapter. These questions will help form a conceptual map of what comes next.

Next, every chapter has at least two themed features—“Thinking Analytically” and “Applying the Frameworks”—specifically crafted to show students how the concepts and theories covered in the main body of the chapter are translated into promoting systematic understanding of politics and to prompt them to put that systemic approach to thinking analytically into practice. The framework for doing this is established in the first chapter, where we provide students with a basic framework on the scientific method and what it means to think analytically. The features in each chapter are designed not just to report how that method is put into action, but to get students to do it themselves. The idea is to present them with questions—How do we measure media bias? Does business experience make a better president?—and give them applied practice in systematically thinking their way to their own answers.

In keeping with our focus on political science, we try to graphically illustrate researchers’ findings and general concepts as much as we can. In these pages you will find a rich assortment of tables, figures, charts, and maps to present the empirical details of American politics. These are designed to support and parallel the primary themes of each chapter and help reach students with diverse learning styles.

At the end of each chapter, students might rightly ask themselves what were the most important points covered. We present the “Top 10 Takeaway Points” to answer just such a question. These lists are a handy reference for students reviewing their reading and preparing for quizzes and tests. They also further our goal of helping students see the forest through the trees, discerning the general principles that make sense of the numerous factual details.



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## **SUPPORT MATERIALS FOR STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS**

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*Analyzing American Democracy* is accompanied by a number of useful resources designed to aid in student learning and foster the instructional goals of faculty.

### **Online eResources**

*Analyzing American Democracy* offers an online eResource for both students and instructors at [www.routledge.com/9781138345195](http://www.routledge.com/9781138345195).

### **Test Bank**

A full test bank, written by James Cottrill (St. Cloud State University) and updated by Katelyn Abraham, covers each chapter with multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. It is available to professors in a password-protected Word file for easy editing.

### **Powerpoint Lecture Slides**

Written by Scott Granberg-Rademacker (Minnesota State University, Mankato) and Rebecca Hannagan (Northern Illinois University) and updated by Katelyn Abraham, these PowerPoint slides feature concise lecture outlines as well as all the figures and tables from the text.

*Jon R. Bond  
Kevin B. Smith*

# Analyzing American Democracy



# 1

## THE BASICS OF DEMOCRACY

### KEY QUESTIONS

What is politics? What is government? What is a democracy?

What are the core principles of democracy?

How does a representative democracy uphold these core principles?

How can we make sense of democracy and politics in America?



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**P**RESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH'S first administration was not happy with political reporter Ron Suskind's White House coverage. That's why, in summer 2002, he was on the receiving end of a scolding from a senior advisor to the president. Nothing hugely unusual about that. Irritating government officials is an occupational hazard if you write about politics for a living, and you can hardly blame those smarting from the sting of a reporter's pen for trying to blunt some of its sharp edges. This was not a typical off-the-record clearing of the air, though. Suskind was getting a presidential finger-wagging for being a card-carrying member of the reality-based community, an accusation almost calculated to baffle a reporter for the mainstream media. To start with, what, exactly, is the "reality-based community"? The advisor described them as people who believed that the best way to figure out solutions to political and policy problems was through "the judicious study of discernible reality." And, that's supposed to be a bad thing? Certainly not for Suskind; he responded by talking about the importance of Enlightenment values—empiricism, rational, analytical and scientific thinking—but the advisor cut him off. "That's not the way the world really works," the advisor said; "when we act, we create our own reality" (quoted in Suskind 2004).

Suskind was taken aback. Was a senior official in the United States government really suggesting that politicians and policymakers inhabited some sort of post-modern universe where facts were a matter of perspective and comforting "realities" could just be made up? Fast-forward a decade and a half and there's plenty of grounds for arguing the answer to that question is yes. What were once just plain and simple falsehoods can now be "alternative facts," and truthiness—believing something to be true because it feels true, even if it is demonstrably not—is an actual thing (Bradner 2017). If anyone says something that contradicts our comforting self-created "realities", especially if it comes from some know-it-all reporter or academic, you don't have to worry about taking it seriously. Just call it fake news. Tom Nichols, a political scientist who wrote a book about "the death of expertise," describes a contemporary America where, "policy debates sound increasingly like fights between groups of ill-informed people who all manage to be wrong," where debate does not distinguish between "you're wrong" and "you're stupid," and where "to refuse to

acknowledge all views as worthy of consideration, no matter how fantastic or inane they are, is to be close-minded” (Nichols 2017, 25).

That’s kind of a depressing picture. And if it’s even half-way accurate, you need to know from the beginning that this book is going to be swimming hard against the tide. We not only belong to the reality-based community; we also want you to join us. What follows is premised on the idea that whatever we want the world to be, and regardless of how hard we believe it is exactly that, it just ain’t necessarily so. We believe the world is more than the sum of our own preferences and biases, whatever they are, and that to act otherwise is not only to deny reality but to potentially put democracy at risk. We believe the world, including the political world, is real. It can be prodded and poked, observed and measured, patterns can be identified, outcome probabilities calculated, and cause and effect systematically assessed. We believe that some perspectives—those emerging from serious study and empirical analysis—are simply better than others. And by better, we mean better informed, better thought-out, and better at dealing with the often uncomfortable reality—and it is *reality*—that our political world presents us with.

Fair warning: This sort of analytical thinking, especially about a subject like politics, can be hard work. Most people think politics is, or at least should be, easy. It’s just applied common sense, right? Well, no. Turns out that most people have it dead wrong. Americans know remarkably little about politics and government other than that they hold pretty much all of it in disdain. We think the fundamental reason for this is that Americans really do not understand what a democracy is and what a democracy does. Their judgments of politics and government are not based on hard-nosed assessments of the realities of democracy. Much of the frustration that Americans express about their government is anchored in a misunderstanding of what democracy is supposed to do, an unrealistic expectation of what it can do, and a failure to comprehend the dangers of pursuing undemocratic alternatives to solving problems.

This is not too surprising. Democratic politics is messy and contradictory; making reasoned sense of it is never going to be easy and there are other



Analytical thinking is not always easy, but if you want to understand politics it’s worth the effort.

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options that require a lot less effort. For example, it takes a lot less effort to simply see and understand the political world through our biases and predispositions, our ideology and our preferences. Putting those aside and trying to rationally and analytically understand politics requires some intellectual sweat and labor. But it's not rocket science. We have no doubt the vast majority of citizens—and that definitely includes you—possess the ability to think cogently and logically about politics. Doing so requires knowing something about the machinery of democracy, its institutions and its operating principles. But that's not enough. If citizens are to really understand how the parts of a democracy fit together and whether they are working properly, they need to learn how to think analytically about politics. And that's exactly what this book is going to try and teach you to do.

Welcome to the reality-based community.

## KEY CONCEPTS: POLITICS, GOVERNMENT, AND POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY

This book is about understanding how democracy works in the United States. We examine what a democracy is, examine what it is supposed to do, and seek to explain how the institutions and processes of the American political system operate in theory and in practice. We also aim to help readers learn how to think systematically about politics, to employ reasoned analysis—as opposed to ideology, personal preference, or wishful thinking—to make their own independent judgments about what is happening in the political system, why it is happening, and whether it is compatible with the core principles of democracy. This first means gaining a firm understanding of three crucial concepts—politics, government, and popular sovereignty—and what their combination means in the American context.

### Politics and Government

For many people, the word “politics” is derogatory. To call others “political” is to accuse them of being manipulative and self-serving. Scholars, however, tend to view politics in more neutral terms. Here are probably the two best-known scholarly definitions of **politics**.

1. According to Harold D. Lasswell (1938), politics is “who gets what, when, and how.”
2. According to David Easton (1953), politics is the “authoritative allocation of values.”