

ELEVENTH EDITION

# We the People

An Introduction to American Government



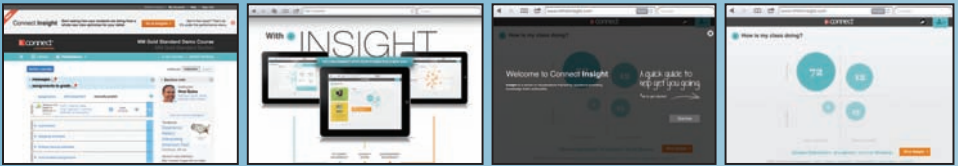
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WE THE PEOPLE

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# WE THE PEOPLE

AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

ELEVENTH EDITION

THOMAS E. PATTERSON

Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press  
John F. Kennedy School of Government  
Harvard University





WE THE PEOPLE: AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT,  
ELEVENTH EDITION

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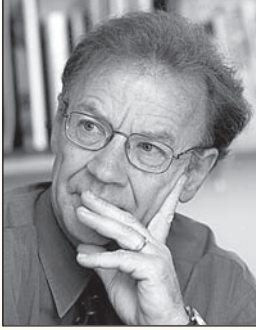
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*To My Children.  
Alex and Leigh*



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Thomas E. Patterson** is Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press in the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He was previously Distinguished Professor of Political Science in the Maxwell School of Citizenship at Syracuse University. Raised in a small Minnesota town near the Iowa and South Dakota borders, he attended South Dakota State University as an undergraduate and served in the U.S. Army Special Forces in Vietnam before enrolling at the University of Minnesota, where he received his Ph.D. in 1971.

Since then, he has regularly taught the introductory American government course. In 2013 he was chosen as teacher of the year and adviser of the year by students at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, the first time a member of its faculty has received both awards simultaneously.

He has authored numerous books and articles, which focus mainly on elections, the media, and citizenship. His most recent book, *Informing the News*, which was described as “superb” and “mesmerizing” in one review, examines the public misinformation resulting from the emergence of partisan outlets and the decline in citizens’ attention to news. An earlier book, *The Vanishing Voter* (2002), describes and explains the long-term decline in Americans’ electoral participation. His book *Out of Order* (1994) received national attention when President Clinton advised every politician and journalist to read it. In 2002 *Out of Order* received the American Political Science Association’s Graber Award for the best book of the past decade in political communication. Another of Patterson’s books, *The Mass Media Election* (1980), received a Choice award as Outstanding Academic Title, 1980–1981. Patterson’s first book, *The Unseeing Eye* (1976), was selected by the American Association for Public Opinion Research as one of the fifty most influential books of the past half century in the field of public opinion.

His research has been funded by major grants from the National Science Foundation, the Markle Foundation, the Smith-Richardson Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Knight Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

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## A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

Anyone who writes an introductory program on American government faces the challenge of explaining a wide range of subjects. One way is to pile fact upon fact and list upon list. It's a common approach to textbook writing but it turns politics into a pretty dry subject. Politics doesn't have to be dry, and it certainly doesn't have to be dull. Politics has all the elements of drama, and the added feature of affecting the everyday lives of real people.

My goal has been to make this program the most readable one available. Rather than piling fact upon fact, the program relies on narrative. A narrative program weaves together theory, information, and examples in order to bring out key facts and ideas. The response to this approach has been gratifying. As the previous edition was being prepared, I received the following note from a longtime instructor:

I read this book in about three days, cover to cover. . . . I have never seen a better basic government/politics textbook. I think reading standard textbooks is “boring” (to use a favorite student word), but this one overcomes that. Dr. Patterson has managed to do something that I heretofore thought could not be done.

When writing, I regularly reminded myself that the readers were citizens as well as students. For this reason, the program highlights “political thinking,” by which I mean critical thinking in the context of both the study of politics and the exercise of citizenship. Each chapter has a set of boxes that ask you to “think politically.” It is a skill that can be developed and help you to become a more responsible citizen, whether in casting a vote, forming an opinion about a public policy, or contributing to a political cause.

Strengthening your capacity for critical thinking is also a central goal of this program. If the only result of reading this program was to increase your understanding of American government, I would judge it a pedagogical failure. Political science programs like those in other social science and humanities disciplines, should help students to hone their skill in critical thinking—the ability to assess and apply information through reflection and reasoning. The program's “Political Thinking” boxes are designed for this purpose. So, too, is the “Critical Thinking Zone” at the end of each

chapter. This feature asks you to make use of each chapter's information through the application of the three skills—conceptualizing, analyzing, and synthesizing—that are at the core of critical thinking.

Finally, I have attempted in this program to present American government through the analytical lens of political science but in a way that captures the vivid world of real-life politics. Only a tiny fraction of students in the introductory course are taking it because they intend to pursue an academic career in political science. Most students take it because they are required to do so or because they have an interest in politics. I have sought to write a book that will deepen political interest in the second type of student and kindle it in the first type.

*We the People* has been in use in college classrooms for more than two decades. During this time, the program has been adopted at more than a thousand colleges and universities. I am extremely grateful to all who have used it. I am particularly indebted to the many instructors and students who have sent me recommendations for making it better. Ashley Wilson, a student at Fullerton College, was among the students who offered a suggestion for this edition. The University of Northern Colorado's Steve Mazurana and his students provided detailed feedback that broadly informed this edition's revisions. If you have ideas you would like to share, please contact me at the John F. Kennedy School, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138, or by e-mail: [thomas\\_patterson@harvard.edu](mailto:thomas_patterson@harvard.edu).

**Thomas E. Patterson**

# PREFACE

## BETTER DATA, SMARTER REVISION, IMPROVED RESULTS

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*We the People* is available to instructors and students in traditional print format as well as online within McGraw-Hill Connect® American Government, an integrated assignment and assessment platform. Connect American Government's online tools make managing assignments easier for instructors—and make learning and studying more compelling and efficient for students.

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Chapter 11: Congress: Balancing National Goals and Local Interests 373

THE MAJOR FUNCTIONS OF CONGRESS	
Function	Basis and activity
Lawmaking	Through its constitutional grant to enact law, Congress makes the laws authorizing federal programs and appropriating the funds necessary to carry them out.
Representation	Through its elected constitutional officers—U.S. senators and representatives—Congress represents the interests of constituents and the nation in its deliberations and its lawmaking.
Oversight	Through its constitutional responsibility to see that the executive branch carries out the laws faithfully and spends appropriations properly, Congress oversees and sometimes investigates executive action.

### 11.1 The Lawmaking Function of Congress

Under the Constitution, Congress is granted the **lawmaking function**: the authority to make the laws necessary to carry out the powers granted to the national government. The constitutional powers of Congress are substantial; they include the power to tax, to spend, to regulate commerce, and to declare war. However, whether Congress takes the lead in the making of laws usually depends on the type of policy at issue.

### 11.2 Federalism: Fragmentation as a Limit on Congress's Role

Congress is structured in a way that can make agreement on large issues difficult to obtain. Congress is not one house, but two, each with its own authority and constituency base. Neither the House nor the Senate can enact legislation without the other's approval, and the two chambers are **not equally identical**. California and North Dakota have exactly the same representation in the Senate, but in the House, which is apportioned by population, California has fifty-three seats compared to North Dakota's one.

Congress also includes a lot of lawmakers: 100 members of the Senate and 435 members of the House. They come from different constituencies and represent different and sometimes opposing interests, which leads to disagreements. Nearly every member of Congress, for example, supports the **principle of global free trade**. Yet when it comes to specific trade provisions, members often disagree. Foreign competition means different things to manufacturers who produce automobiles, computer chips, or



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# LEARN TO THINK POLITICALLY, AND THINK CRITICALLY

Political thinking enables us, as citizens, to gather and weigh evidence, to apply foundational principles to current events, and to consider historical context when evaluating contemporary issues. In short, it allows us to make informed judgments. This program aims to help you learn how to think about politics by introducing you to the perspectives and tools of political science.

This program will not tell you *what* to think politically. Instead, it will help you learn *how* to think politically by providing you with analytical tools that can sharpen and deepen your understanding of American politics:

- Reliable information about how the U.S. political system operates
- Systematic generalizations about major tendencies in American politics
- Terms and concepts that precisely describe key aspects of politics

## CRITICAL THINKING

In addition to the twenty-seven new Political Thinking boxes that have been added throughout the text, each chapter in *We the People* now includes an end-of-chapter **Critical Thinking Zone** that is designed to sharpen your ability to think critically.

## NEW! CRITICAL THINKING ZONE

At the end of each chapter, there's a **Critical Thinking Zone** that asks you, in the context of American politics, to apply each of the basic skills involved in critical thinking: conceptualizing, synthesizing, and analyzing.

This feature is designed not only to test whether you have mastered major points in the chapter but to help you develop the capacity for critical thinking, a skill with lifelong benefits regardless of your chosen career.



### CRITICAL THINKING ZONE

#### KEY TERMS

Anti-Federalists (p. 39)	judicial review (p. 52)
Bill of Rights (p. 51)	liberty (p. 44)
checks and balances (p. 47)	limited government (p. 29)
constitution (p. 32)	New Jersey (small-state) Plan (p. 36)
constitutional democratic	primary election (p. 53)
republic (p. 61)	representative government (p. 29)
delegates (p. 60)	republic (p. 54)
democracy (according to the	separated institutions sharing
framers) (p. 54)	power (p. 47)
denials of power (p. 45)	separation of powers (p. 46)
Electoral College (p. 55)	social contract (p. 32)
electoral votes (p. 55)	Three-Fifths Compromise (p. 37)
Federalists (p. 41)	trustees (p. 60)
grants of power (p. 44)	tyranny of the majority (p. 53)
Great Compromise (p. 36)	Virginia (large-state) Plan (p. 36)
inalienable (natural) rights (p. 32)	

#### APPLYING THE ELEMENTS OF CRITICAL THINKING

**Conceptualizing:** Define the concept of judicial review. How does a court decision involving judicial review differ from an ordinary court decision, such as a ruling in a case involving armed robbery?

**Synthesizing:** Contrast the original system for electing federal officials with the system of today, noting in each case whether voters have acquired a more direct voice in the election process than was originally the case.

**Analyzing:** Why is it more accurate to say that the United States has a system of "separated institutions sharing power" rather than a system of "separated powers"? Provide examples of how shared power can act to check and balance the power of each institution.

## CONTENT CHANGES

This revision of *We the People* includes the many remarkable political developments of the past two years, ranging from the 2014 midterm elections to the gridlock in Washington to the rising foreign policy challenges in Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Nearly every chapter also has significant updates based on the most recent scholarly research on American politics.

Each chapter has a new feature: a chapter-ending **Critical Thinking Zone**. In addition to providing students with an assessment of their understanding of the chapter's major points, each **Critical Thinking Zone** aims to strengthen students' critical thinking ability. Accordingly, the feature's questions are organized around each of the basic skills involved in critical thinking: conceptualizing, synthesizing, and analyzing. In the chapter on political parties, for example, the conceptualizing component asks students to explain the difference between proportional representation and the single-member district system and then explain why proportional representation is more likely to foster a multiparty system.

This edition's revisions were guided, for the first time, by data gathered through McGraw-Hill's **LearnSmart** system. This system, which collects information as students work online through the program's content, identifies the subjects that students have mastered and those they are struggling to master. **LearnSmart's** "Heat Map" measures such things as the length of time the typical student spends on a study question and how frequently students answer it incorrectly. Question topics where students were having difficulty were targeted for revision, which could include, for instance, a fuller explanation of a concept or the use of a clarifying example. No part of an introductory program should defy the understanding of a student who seeks to master it, and the "Heat Map" contributes to that end.

The program's other revisions were guided by recent scholarship and developments in American politics. I have listed below the chapters that have been most substantially revised. The list significantly understates the extent of the changes. Virtually every chapter has important modifications from the previous edition.

**Chapter 4: Civil Liberties: Protecting Individual Rights** Additions include the NSA's secret surveillance program, and the controversy surrounding it, as well as several recent Supreme Court rulings, including its landmark 2014 decision extending search-and-seizure protection to cell phones and other digital devices.

**Chapter 5: Equal Rights: Struggling toward Fairness** Updates include the changing legal and social environment of same-sex marriage, as well as a number of recent Supreme Court rulings, including its key 2014 decision upholding the Michigan electorate’s ban on affirmative action in admissions to the state’s public colleges and universities.

**Chapter 10: The News Media: Communicating Political Images** Additions include expanded discussion of the growing political role of the “new media”—partisan and Internet-based outlets.

**Chapter 11: Congress: Balancing National Goals and Local Interests** Updates include the 2014 midterm elections and how they affect the partisan balance in Congress, as well as a fuller examination of the causes and consequences of party polarization within Congress and its effect on legislative action.

**Chapter 12: The Presidency: Leading the Nation** Additions include the Obama administration’s efforts to expand executive authority in the face of congressional deadlock, as well as an early look at the 2016 presidential election.

**Chapter 14: The Federal Judicial System: Applying the Law** Revisions include a close look at the conservative–liberal divide on the Supreme Court, and the ideological positioning of the Court relative to earlier Courts.

**Chapter 16: Welfare and Education Policy: Providing for Personal Security and Need** Updates include the rocky implementation of the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, as well as the growing strength of the Charter School movement.

**Chapter 17: Foreign Policy: Protecting the American Way** Revisions include the many important foreign policy developments of the past two years, including the Afghan troop withdrawal, the surge in Islamic militancy in the Middle East, the turmoil in Ukraine, and China’s increasingly aggressive foreign policy in East and Southeast Asia.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH *WE THE PEOPLE*

Available in Connect, the instructor's manual includes the following for each chapter: learning objectives, focus points and main points, a chapter summary, a list of major concepts, and suggestions for complementary lecture topics. The test bank consists of approximately fifty multiple-choice questions and five suggested essay topics per chapter, with page references given alongside the answers. PowerPoints are also available to instructors.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Nearly two decades ago, when planning the first edition of *We the People*, my editor and I concluded that it would be enormously helpful if a way could be found to bring into each chapter the judgment of those political scientists who teach the introductory course year in and year out. Thus, in addition to soliciting general reviews from a select number of expert scholars, we sent each chapter to a dozen or so faculty members at U.S. colleges and universities of all types—public and private, large and small, two-year and four-year. These political scientists, 213 in all, had well over a thousand years of combined experience in teaching the introductory course, and they provided countless good ideas.

Since then, several hundred other political scientists have reviewed subsequent editions. These many reviewers will go unnamed here, but my debt to all of them remains undiminished by time. For the eleventh edition, I have benefited yet again from the thoughtful advice of conscientious reviewers. Their sound advice has helped shape nearly every page of the book. These scholars are:

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**Thomas Patterson**

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## CHAPTER

### POLITICAL THINKING AND POLITICAL CULTURE: BECOMING A RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN



“The worth of the state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it.”

JOHN STUART MILL<sup>1</sup>

As U.S. troops moved into position along the Iraq border, pollsters were busy asking Americans what they thought about the prospect of war with Iraq. A narrow majority expressed support for an attack on Iraq without United Nations approval if President George W. Bush deemed it necessary. But Americans' level of support for war varied with their knowledge of the enemy.

Contrary to fact, about half of the American public believed that Iraq was aligned with al Qaeda, the terrorist group that had attacked the United States on September 11, 2001. Some of these Americans mistakenly thought that Iraq helped plan the attacks; others erroneously believed that Iraq was equipping al Qaeda.<sup>2</sup> Some Americans even claimed that Iraqi pilots were flying the passenger jets that slammed into the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon on that tragic September day.<sup>3</sup>



Compared with Americans who knew that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda were avowed enemies, those who falsely believed they were allies were more than twice as likely to support an American attack on Iraq.<sup>4</sup> Some of these individuals undoubtedly had other reasons for backing the invasion. Hussein was a tyrant who had brutalized his own people and thwarted United Nations resolutions calling for inspection of his weapons systems. But their belief that Iraq was in league with al Qaeda terrorists was pure fiction and hardly a reasonable basis for supporting an invasion.

The journalist Walter Lippmann worried that most citizens are unprepared to play the role democracy assigns them. They live in the real world but think in an imagined one. “While men are willing to admit that there are two sides to a question,” Lippmann noted, “they do not believe that there are two sides to what they regard as fact.”<sup>5</sup> In a self-governing society, citizens are expected to act on behalf of themselves and others. But how can they govern themselves if they are out of touch with reality?

Lippmann’s concern has been confirmed by dozens of scholarly studies. Political scientists Bruce Ackerman and James Fishkin put it bluntly: “If six decades of modern public opinion research establish anything, it is that the general public’s political ignorance is appalling by any standard.”<sup>6</sup> *Newsweek* recently gave one thousand Americans who were already citizens the test that immigrants must pass as a condition of citizenship. Four of every ten who took the test failed it.<sup>7</sup> In a survey conducted shortly after Americans went to the polls in the 2010 midterm election, respondents were asked multiple-choice factual questions about eleven issues, ranging from health care to the Afghanistan War, that had been raised during the campaign. The question on Afghanistan, for example, asked whether troop levels had increased, decreased, or stayed the same during the two years that Barack Obama had been president. On every issue, a third or more of the respondents picked a wrong answer and, on most issues, half or more did so.<sup>8</sup>

A lack of information obviously does not keep citizens from voting, nor are uninformed citizens lacking in opinions. Some of them speak out more often and more loudly than people who are informed. But their sense of the world is wildly at odds with the reality of it. They are like the ancient mariners who, thinking the world was flat, stayed close to shore, fearing they might sail off the edge.

## LEARNING TO THINK POLITICALLY

This text aims to help students, as citizens, learn how to think about politics. Political thinking is not the mere act of voicing an opinion. **Political thinking** is critical thinking focused on deciding what can

reasonably be believed and then using this information to make political judgments. It enables citizens to act responsibly, whether in casting a vote, forming an opinion on a political issue, or contributing to a political cause. It is not defined by the conclusions that a person reaches. Individuals differ in their values and interests and can reasonably have opposing opinions. Political thinking is defined instead by the process through which conclusions are reached. It involves the critical evaluation of information in the process of forming a judgment about the issue at hand. Opinions not reached in this way are likely to be incomplete at best, perhaps even wildly off base. “Ignorance of the [facts],” Mark Bauerlein notes, “is a fair gauge of deeper deficiencies.”<sup>9</sup>

Responsible citizenship was what English philosopher John Stuart Mill had in mind when he said that democracy is the best form of government. Any form of government, Mill asserted, should be judged on its ability to promote the individual “as a progressive being.”<sup>10</sup> It was on this basis that Mill rejected authoritarianism and embraced democracy. Authoritarian governments suppress individuality, forcing people to think and act in prescribed ways or risk punishment. Democracy liberates the individual. Although democracy provides the *opportunity* for personal development,



A lack of information about the candidates does not keep some citizens from voting or from having strong opinions on political issues.

the individual bears responsibility for using this opportunity. In this sense, democracy is double edged. By liberating individuals, democracy frees them to make choices. They can develop the habit of political thinking, or they can devise cockeyed visions of reality. There is nothing to stop them from thinking the world is flat rather than round.

## Obstacles to Political Thinking

The major barrier to political thinking is the unwillingness of citizens to make the effort. Political thinking requires close attention to politics, a responsibility that many people refuse to accept. They are, as James David Barber said, “dangerously unready when the time comes for choice.”<sup>11</sup>

Others pay close attention, but they do so in counterproductive ways. A paradox of modern communication is that, although political information is more widely available than ever before, it is also less trustworthy than ever before. Two decades ago, the “knowledge gap” was defined largely by the amount of attention that people paid to the news. Citizens who followed the news closely were much better informed on average than those who did not.<sup>12</sup> That’s less true today because of where people get their information. Many Americans now get most of their news from cable television, talk shows, or Internet blogs.<sup>13</sup> Most of these outlets—whether on the left or right—have dropped all but the pretense of accuracy. They rarely tell flat-out lies, but they routinely slant information to fit their purpose while burying contradictory facts. Once in a while, they expose a truth that mainstream news outlets have missed or were too timid to tackle. For the most part, however, they are in the business of concocting versions of reality that will lure an audience and promote a cause. “The talk show culture,” media analyst Ellen Hume notes, “is a blur of rumor, fact, propaganda, and infotainment.”<sup>14</sup> A recent University of Maryland study concluded that “false or misleading information is widespread in [today’s] information environment.”<sup>15</sup>

Political leaders also “spin” their messages. Although this has always been true, the scale of the effort today is unlike anything that has gone before.<sup>16</sup> The White House press office, for example, was once run by a single individual. It is now a communication machine that reaches deep into the federal agencies and involves scores of operatives, each of whom is intent on putting a presidential slant on the day’s news.<sup>17</sup> In the period before the Iraq war, the Bush administration, through its hold on the intelligence agencies, tightly controlled the messages coming from the U.S. government. Iraq and al Qaeda were lumped together as targets of



Stephen Colbert (in cape) and Jon Stewart are part of the “new media” but, unlike many of the others, do not pretend that all of the information they provide is reliable. Says Stewart, “It’s style over substance.”

the war on terror, leading some Americans—most of them Republicans—to conclude that Iraq and al Qaeda were indistinguishable. During the recent economic downturn, the Obama administration put a favorable slant on the impact of its economic stimulus program, leading some Americans—most of them Democrats—to conclude that the administration had saved or created many more jobs than it actually had.

Research suggests that faulty perceptions are becoming more prevalent, and that changes in communication are largely to blame.<sup>18</sup> During the buildup to the Iraq invasion, for example, the worst-informed Americans were those that obtained their news from cable television shows. Their misinformation level exceeded even that of citizens who paid infrequent attention to news.

The audience appeal of the “new news” is understandable.<sup>19</sup> Many people prefer messages that conform to what they already believe. It is not surprising that liberal bloggers and talk show hosts have an audience made up mostly of liberals, whereas conservative bloggers and talk show hosts have a largely conservative audience. Studies indicate that misinformation spreads easily when those in touch with the like-minded are not also in contact with other information sources.<sup>20</sup> Rather than expanding people’s thinking, such exposure tends to narrow and distort it.<sup>21</sup>

Citizens cannot know whether their ideas are sound until they have heard alternative views and weighed them against their own. The test of an opinion is not whether it sounds good by itself but whether it makes sense when held up against opposing views. “He who knows only his one side of the case knows little of that,” Mill wrote. “His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons of the opposite side, if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion.”<sup>22</sup>

Beyond its contribution to sound opinions, political knowledge fosters an interest in politics. The more citizens know about politics, the more likely they are to want to play an active part in it. For more than fifty years, the Intercollegiate Studies Association (ISA) has surveyed college students to determine their political information and participation levels. The ISA has found that the best predictor of students’ later participation in the nation’s civic and political life is not whether they finished college but whether they have a solid understanding of public affairs. “Greater civic knowledge,” the ISA says, is “positively correlated with all . . . facets of active engagement . . . [everything from] the private functions of writing a letter to the editor and contacting a public official . . . [to] the more public role of a campaign worker or attendee at a political meeting or rally.”<sup>23</sup>

## What Political Science Can Contribute to Political Thinking

This text will not try to tell you *what* to think politically. There is no correct way of thinking when it comes to the “what” of politics. People differ in their political values and interests and, thus, also differ in their political opinions.

Instead, this text will help you learn *how* to think politically by providing you with analytical tools that can sharpen your understanding of American politics. The tools are derived from **political science**—the systematic study of government and politics. Political science has developed largely through the work of scholars, but political practitioners and writers have also contributed. One of America’s foremost political scientists was the chief architect of the U.S. Constitution and later a president. Even today, James Madison’s essays on constitutional design (two of which can be found in this book’s appendixes) are masterpieces of political science.

As a discipline, political science is descriptive and analytical—that is, it attempts to depict and explain politics. This effort takes place through various frameworks, including rational choice theory, institutional analysis, historical reasoning, behavioral studies, legal reasoning, and cultural analysis.

Political science offers a set of analytical tools that can increase one's ability to think politically:

- Reliable information about how the U.S. political system operates
- Systematic generalizations about major tendencies in American politics
- Terms and concepts that precisely describe key aspects of politics

These tools will broaden your understanding of American politics and help you to think critically about it.

Like any skill, political thinking needs to be developed through practice. For this reason, each of the text's chapters includes boxes that ask you to think politically. Some political thinking boxes deal with perennial questions, such as the president's war powers and the proper relation between the nation and the states. Still other boxes ask you to think politically by comparing how politics in the United States and in your state differs from that of other nations and states. Finally, some boxes deal with current controversies, including the rising level of party polarization in America. These boxes particularly reflect John Stuart Mill's test of a sound opinion—whether you can refute opposing views as effectively as you can defend your own.

## POLITICAL CULTURE: AMERICANS' ENDURING BELIEFS

An understanding of U.S. politics properly begins with an assessment of the nation's political culture. Every country has its **political culture**—the widely shared and deep-seated beliefs of its people about politics.<sup>24</sup> These beliefs derive from the country's traditions and help to define the relationship of citizens to their government and to each other.

Although every country has a distinctive political culture, the United States, as the British writer James Bryce observed, is a special case.<sup>25</sup> Americans' beliefs are the foundation of their national identity. Other people take their identity from the common ancestry that led them gradually to gather under one flag. Thus, long before there was a France, Germany, or Japan, there were French, German, and Japanese people, each a kinship group united through ancestry. Even today, it is kinship that links them. There is no way to become fully Japanese except to be born of Japanese parents. Not so for Americans. They are a multitude of people from different lands—England, Germany, Ireland, Africa, Italy, Poland, Mexico, and China, to name just a few. Americans are linked not

by a shared ancestry but by allegiance to a common set of ideals. The French writer Alexis de Tocqueville was among the first to recognize how thoroughly certain beliefs were embedded in the American mind. “Habits of the heart” was how he described them.

America’s core ideals are rooted in the European heritage of the first white settlers. They arrived during the Enlightenment period, when people were awakening to the idea of individual choice, a possibility that was much larger in the New World than in the Old World. Ultimately, the colonists overturned the European way of governing. The American Revolution was the first successful large-scale rebellion in human history driven largely by the desire to create a radically different form of society.<sup>26</sup> In the words of the Declaration of Independence:

A Declaration by the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in General Congress assembled.

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for <sup>one</sup> a people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with <sup>another</sup>, and to assume among the powers of the earth the ~~spotless and equal~~ <sup>spotless and equal</sup> station to which the laws of nature & of nature's god entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> separation.

We hold these truths to be ~~self-evident~~ <sup>self-evident</sup>; that all men are created equal, ~~independent~~; that ~~they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, & the pursuit of happiness;~~ <sup>they are endowed by their Creator with equal rights that among these are</sup> that all men are entitled to life, liberty, & the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these <sup>rights</sup> governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government shall become destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it & to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles & organising it's powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety & happiness. prudence indeed will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light & transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed but when a long train of abuses & usurpations, begun at a distinguished period & pursuing invariably the same object, wins a design to ~~reduce~~ <sup>reduce</sup> them ~~under~~ <sup>under</sup> absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government & to provide new guards for their future security, such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies & such is now the necessity which constrains them to ~~exchange~~ <sup>exchange</sup> their former systems of government. the history of <sup>the</sup> present <sup>history of Great Britain</sup> is a history of ~~unnumbered~~ <sup>unnumbered</sup> injuries and usurpations, [among which, ~~one solitary fact~~ <sup>one solitary fact</sup> to contradict the uniform tenor of the rest, ~~all of which~~ <sup>all of which</sup> have] in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states, to prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world. [for the truth of which we pledge a faith yet unswerving by falsehood]

This is a portion of Thomas Jefferson’s handwritten draft of the Declaration of Independence, a formal expression of America’s governing ideals.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these, are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

A decade later, in the drafting of the Constitution of the United States, many of these ideas were put into writing: leaders would be required to govern within a set of rules designed to protect people's rights and interests.

## Core Values: Liberty, Individualism, Equality, and Self-Government

An understanding of America's cultural ideals begins with recognition that the individual is paramount. Government is secondary. Its role is to serve the people, as opposed to a system where people are required to serve it. No clearer statement of this principle exists than the Declaration of Independence's reference to "unalienable rights"—freedoms that belong to each and every citizen and that cannot lawfully be taken away by government.

Liberty, individualism, equality, and self-government are widely regarded as America's core political ideals. **Liberty** is the principle that individuals should be free to act and think as they choose, provided they do not infringe unreasonably on the freedom and well-being of others. The United States, as political scientist Louis Hartz said, was "born free."<sup>27</sup> Political liberty was nearly a birthright for early Americans. They did not have to accept the European system of absolute government when greater personal liberty was as close as the next area of unsettled land. Religious sentiments also entered into the thinking of the early Americans. Many of them had fled Europe to escape religious persecution and came to look upon religious freedom as part of a broader set of rights, including freedom of speech. Unsurprisingly, these early Americans were determined, when forming their own government, to protect their liberty. The Declaration of Independence rings with the proclamation that people are entitled to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The preamble to the Constitution declares that the U.S. government was founded to secure "the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

Early Americans also enjoyed unprecedented economic opportunities. Unlike Europe, America had no hereditary nobility that owned virtually all the land. The New World's great distance from Europe and its vast