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ELEVENTH CORE EDITION

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We the People

AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

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We the People

AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

Benjamin Ginsberg

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

Theodore J. Lowi

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Margaret Weir

BROWN UNIVERSITY

Caroline J. Tolbert

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA



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To Sandy, Cindy, and Alex Ginsberg

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contents

Preface xix

Acknowledgments xxi

PART I Foundations

1 ● American Political Culture 2

What Americans Think about Government 5

Trust in Government 6

Political Efficacy 9

Citizenship: Knowledge and Participation 9

The Necessity of Political Knowledge 10

“Digital Citizenship” 11

Government 12

Is Government Needed? 12

Forms of Government 13

Limiting Government 14

Access to Government: The Expansion of Participation 14

Influencing the Government through Participation: Politics 15

Who Are Americans? 16

Immigration and Ethnic Diversity 17

Immigration and Race 18

● WHO ARE AMERICANS? An Increasingly Diverse Nation 19

Twenty-First-Century Americans 20

● AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE Global Diversity 22

American Political Culture 24

Liberty 26

Equality 27

Democracy 30

American Political Culture and Your Future 31



- **WHO PARTICIPATES?** Who Participated in the 2012 Presidential Election? 33
- Study Guide 34
- For Further Reading 36
- Recommended Websites 37



2 ● The Founding and the Constitution 38

The First Founding: Interests and Conflicts 41

- British Taxes and Colonial Interests 41
- Political Strife and the Radicalization of the Colonists 42
- The Declaration of Independence 44
- The Articles of Confederation 44

The Second Founding: From Compromise to Constitution 45

- The Annapolis Convention 46
- Shays's Rebellion 46
- The Constitutional Convention 47

● **WHO ARE AMERICANS?** Who Benefits from the Great Compromise? 49

The Constitution 52

- The Legislative Branch 52
- The Executive Branch 54
- The Judicial Branch 55
- National Unity and Power 55
- Amending the Constitution 56
- Ratifying the Constitution 56
- Constitutional Limits on the National Government's Power 56

● **AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE** Comparing Systems of Government 57

The Fight for Ratification 60

- Federalists versus Antifederalists 60
- Reflections on the Founding 63

The Citizen's Role and the Changing Constitution 63

- Amendments: Many Are Called; Few Are Chosen 64
- Which Were Chosen? An Analysis of the 27 65
- The Supreme Court and Constitutional Change 67

The Constitution and Your Future 68

● **WHO PARTICIPATES?** Who Gained the Right to Vote through Amendments? 69

- Study Guide 70
- For Further Reading 72
- Recommended Websites 73

3 ● Federalism 74

Federalism in the Constitution 77

- The Powers of the National Government 77
- The Powers of State Government 77
- States' Obligations to One Another 79
- Local Government and the Constitution 82

The Changing Relationship between the Federal Government and the States 82

- Restraining National Power with Dual Federalism 83
- Federalism and the Slow Growth of the National Government's Power 85
- The Changing Role of the States 87

Who Does What? Public Spending and the Expanding Federal Framework 89

- The New Deal 89
- Federal Grants 90
- Cooperative Federalism 91
- Regulated Federalism and National Standards 92

New Federalism and State Control 96

● AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE Government Spending in Federal and Unitary Systems 97

- Devolution: For Whose Benefit? 98
- Federalism since 2000 100

● WHO ARE AMERICANS? Who Benefits from Federal Spending? 103

Federalism and Your Future 106

● WHO PARTICIPATES? Who Participates in State and Local Politics? 107

Study Guide 108

For Further Reading 110

Recommended Websites 111

4 ● Civil Liberties 112

A Brief History of the Bill of Rights 115

- Nationalizing the Bill of Rights 116

The First Amendment and Freedom of Religion 120

- Separation between Church and State 120
- Free Exercise of Religion 122

The First Amendment and Freedom of Speech and of the Press 123

- Political Speech 123
- Fighting Words and Hate Speech 125
- Student Speech 126
- Commercial Speech 126
- Symbolic Speech, Speech Plus, and the Rights of Assembly and Petition 127
- Freedom of the Press 128

The Second Amendment and the Right to Bear Arms 131



- Rights of the Criminally Accused** 133
 - The Fourth Amendment and Searches and Seizures 133
 - The Fifth Amendment 136
 - The Sixth Amendment and the Right to Counsel 138
 - The Eighth Amendment and Cruel and Unusual Punishment 139

- The Right to Privacy** 140
 - Birth Control 140
 - **WHO ARE AMERICANS?** Who Is in Prison? 141
 - Abortion 142
 - Sexual Orientation 143
 - **AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE** Civil Liberties around the World 144
 - The Right to Die 145

- Civil Liberties and Your Future** 145
 - **WHO PARTICIPATES?** Religious Affiliation and Freedom of Religion 147
- Study Guide 148
- For Further Reading 151
- Recommended Websites 151



5 ● Civil Rights 152

- The Struggle for Civil Rights** 155
 - Slavery and the Abolitionist Movement 156
 - The Link to the Women’s Rights Movement 156
 - The Civil War Amendments to the Constitution 157
 - Civil Rights and the Supreme Court: “Separate but Equal” 158
 - Organizing for Equality 159
 - Litigating for Equality after World War II 160
 - Civil Rights after *Brown v. Board of Education* 162
 - The Civil Rights Acts 165

- Extending Civil Rights** 174
 - Levels of Scrutiny under the Equal Protection Clause 174
 - Women and Gender Discrimination 175
 - **WHO ARE AMERICANS?** Have Women Achieved Equal Rights? 179
 - Latinos 180
 - Asian Americans 183
 - Native Americans 185
 - Disabled Americans 185
 - Gay Men and Lesbians 185
 - Do the Poor Have Civil Rights? 187
 - **AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE** Same-Sex Marriage around the World 188

- Affirmative Action** 189
 - The Supreme Court and the Burden of Proof 189

- Civil Rights and Your Future** 191
 - **WHO PARTICIPATES?** Who Has Fought for Their Rights? 193

Study Guide 194
For Further Reading 196
Recommended Websites 196

PART II Politics

6 ● Public Opinion 198

Defining Public Opinion 201

Political Values 203
Political Ideology 205

How We Form Political Opinions 208

Political Socialization 208
Social Groups and Public Opinion 211

Political Knowledge and Changes in Public Opinion 219

Political Knowledge 222

● WHO ARE AMERICANS? Who Thinks Economic Inequality Is a Problem? 225

The Media, Government, and Public Opinion 226

Political Leaders 226
Interest Groups 227
The Mass Media 228

Public Opinion and Government Policy 229

Government Responsiveness to Public Opinion 229
Does Everyone's Opinion Count Equally? 230

Measuring Public Opinion 231

● AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE Public Opinion on Climate Change 232

Measuring Public Opinion from Surveys 233
Framing Experiments within Surveys 237
When Polls Are Wrong 238
Big Data and Measuring Public Opinion 240

Public Opinion, Democracy, and Your Future 242

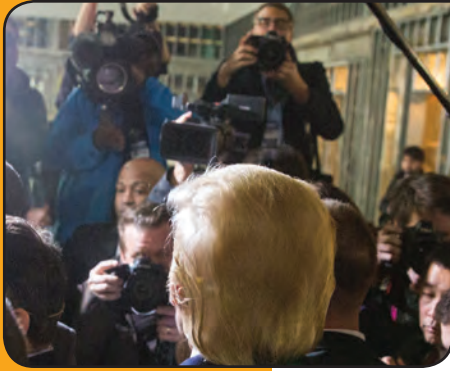
● WHO PARTICIPATES? Who Expresses Their Political Opinions? 243

Study Guide 244

For Further Reading 247

Recommended Websites 247





7 ● The Media 248

Traditional Media 251

- Print Media 251
- Broadcast Media 254
- Mass Media Ownership 257

New Media and Online News 258

- Digital Journalism 260
- Social Media 261
- Citizen Journalism 262
- Nonprofit Journalism 263
- Benefits of Online News 264
- Concerns about Online News 265

Media Influence 267

● WHO ARE AMERICANS? Where Do Americans Get Their News? 269

- How the Media Influence Politics 270
- Media and Public Knowledge 273

News Coverage 274

- Press Releases 274
- Media Leaks 274
- Adversarial Journalism 275

Regulation of the Media 277

● AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE Press Freedom around the World 279

The Media, Democracy, and Your Future 280

● WHO PARTICIPATES? Who Participates via Social Media? 281

- Study Guide 282
- For Further Reading 284
- Recommended Websites 285



8 ● Political Participation and Voting 286

Forms of Political Participation 289

- Traditional Political Participation 289
- AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE Voter Turnout in Comparison 294
- Digital Political Participation 295

Who Participates? 299

- Socioeconomic Status 300
- Age and Participation 301
- African Americans 303
- Latinos 305
- Asian Americans 306
- Gender and Participation 307
- Religious Identity 308

Political Environment and Participation 310

- Mobilization 310
- Electoral Competition 312
- Ballot Measures 313

State Electoral Laws and Participation 314
 Registration Requirements 314
 Other Formal Barriers 316
 ● **WHO ARE AMERICANS?** Which States Make Voting Easier? 317
 Voting and Registration Reforms 318
Political Participation and Your Future 319
 ● **WHO PARTICIPATES?** Who Voted in 2012? 321
 Study Guide 322
 For Further Reading 324
 Recommended Websites 325

9 ● Political Parties 326

What Are Political Parties? 329
 How Do Political Parties Form? 331
 The United States' Two-Party System 332
 What Political Parties Do 332
 ● **AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE** Two-Party Systems and Multi-Party Systems 333
Parties, Voter Mobilization, and Elections 334
 Recruiting Candidates 334
 Party Nominations and Primaries 335
 General Election and Mobilizing Voters 335
Parties as Organizations 336
 National Convention 337
 National Committees 338
 Congressional Campaign Committees 339
 State and Local Party Organizations 339
Parties in Government 340
 Parties and Policy 340
 Parties in Congress 341
 Parties and the President's Policy Agenda 342
Party Identification 342
 Who Are Republicans and Democrats? 344
 Recent Trends in Party Affiliation 348
 ● **WHO ARE AMERICANS?** Who Identifies with Which Party? 349
Party Systems 350
 The First Party System: Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans 350
 The Second Party System: Democrats and Whigs 351
 The Civil War and Post-Civil War Party System: Republicans and Democrats 352
 The System of 1896: Republicans and Democrats 352
 The New Deal Party System: Reversal of Fortune 353
 The Contemporary American Party System 353
 Electoral Alignments and Realignment 355
 Party Polarization 357
 Third Parties 359



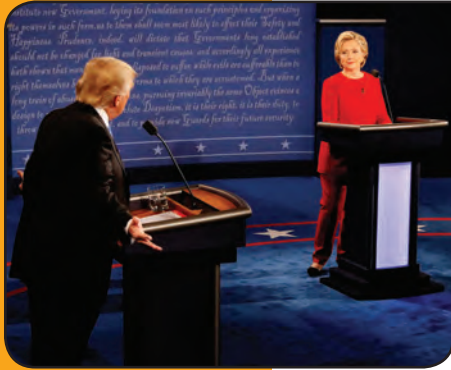
Political Parties and Your Future 362

● **WHO PARTICIPATES?** Who Votes in Primaries and Caucuses? 363

Study Guide 364

For Further Reading 366

Recommended Websites 367



10 ● Campaigns and Elections 368

Elections in America 371

What It Takes to Win 372

The Ballot 373

Legislative Elections and Electoral Districts 374

Presidential Elections 375

Direct-Democracy Elections 381

Election Campaigns 383

Advisers 383

Fundraising 384

Polling 386

Campaign Strategy 386

Money and Politics 391

The Courts and Campaign Spending 392

Sources of Campaign Funds 393

● **AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE** Campaign Laws in Comparison 394

How Voters Decide 397

Partisan Loyalty 397

Issues and Policy Preferences 398

Candidate Characteristics 399

The 2016 Elections 400

The Presidential Nomination 400

The General Election 402

Understanding the 2016 Results 405

● **WHO ARE AMERICANS?** Who Supported Trump in 2016? 407

Ramifications of the 2016 Election 410

Campaigns, Elections, and Your Future 412

● **WHO PARTICIPATES?** Who Donates to Political Campaigns? 413

Study Guide 414

For Further Reading 417

Recommended Websites 417

11 ● Groups and Interests 418

Defining Interest Groups 421

Common Types of Interest Groups 423

What Interests Are Not Represented? 425

● AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE Labor Union Membership in Global Decline 426

How Groups Organize 428

The Internet and Interest Groups 431

The Growth of Interest and Advocacy Groups 434

The Expansion of Government 434

Growth of Public Interest Groups in the 1960s and '70s 435

Interest Group Strategies 436

Direct Lobbying 436

Regulating Lobbying 441

Using the Courts 442

Mobilizing Public Opinion 442

Using Electoral Politics 445

● WHO ARE AMERICANS? Who Is Represented by PACs? 447

Interest Groups and Your Future 449

● WHO PARTICIPATES? How Much Do Major Groups Spend? 451

Study Guide 452

For Further Reading 454

Recommended Websites 454



PART III Institutions

12 ● Congress 456

Congress: Representing the American People 459

House and Senate: Differences in Representation 459

Trustee versus Delegate Representation 460

Sociological versus Agency Representation 461

● WHO ARE AMERICANS? Who Are the Members of Congress? 463

The Electoral Connection 465

Direct Patronage 470

The Organization of Congress 472

Party Leadership in the House 473

Party Leadership in the Senate 473

The Committee System 473

The Staff System: Staffers and Agencies 478

● AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE Legislatures in Comparison 479

Informal Organization: The Caucuses 480

Rules of Lawmaking: How a Bill Becomes a Law 480

Committee Deliberation 480

Debate 482



Conference Committee: Reconciling House and Senate Versions
of Legislation 484
Presidential Action 485

How Congress Decides 485

Constituency 485
Interest Groups 486
Party 487
When Congress Can't Decide 492

Beyond Legislation: Other Congressional Powers 495

Oversight 495
Advice and Consent: Special Senate Powers 496
Impeachment 496

Congress and Your Future 497

● **WHO PARTICIPATES?** Who Elects Congress? 499
Study Guide 500
For Further Reading 503
Recommended Websites 503



13 ● The Presidency 504

Establishing the Presidency 507

The Constitutional Powers of the Presidency 509

Expressed Powers 510
Delegated Powers 516

● **AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE** Executive Branches in Comparison 517

Inherent Powers 518

● **WHO ARE AMERICANS?** Who Are America's Presidents? 519

The Presidency as an Institution 521

The Cabinet 521
The White House Staff 522
The Executive Office of the President 523
The Vice Presidency 523
The First Spouse 525

The Contemporary Bases of Presidential Power 526

Going Public 527
The Administrative Strategy 529
The Limits of Presidential Power 535

Presidential Power and Your Future 537

● **WHO PARTICIPATES?** Who Voted for Donald Trump in 2016? 539
Study Guide 540
For Further Reading 542
Recommended Websites 543

14 ● Bureaucracy in a Democracy 544

Bureaucracy and Bureaucrats 547

What Bureaucrats Do 547

The Size of the Federal Service 551

The Organization of the Executive Branch 552

● AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE Bureaucracy in Comparison 555

Goals of the Federal Bureaucracy 556

Promoting the Public Welfare 556

Providing National Security 558

Maintaining a Strong Economy 564

Can the Bureaucracy Be Reformed? 566

● WHO ARE AMERICANS? Who Are “Bureaucrats”? 567

Termination 568

Devolution 569

Privatization 570

Managing the Bureaucracy 573

The President as Chief Executive 573

Congressional Oversight 575

Bureaucracy and Your Future 577

● WHO PARTICIPATES? Getting Information from the Bureaucracy 579

Study Guide 580

For Further Reading 582

Recommended Websites 583



15 ● The Federal Courts 584

The Legal System 587

Cases and the Law 587

Types of Courts 588

Federal Courts 592

Federal Trial Courts 592

Federal Appellate Courts 592

The Supreme Court 594

How Judges Are Appointed 594

● WHO ARE AMERICANS? Who Are Federal Judges? 597

The Power of the Supreme Court: Judicial Review 598

Judicial Review of Acts of Congress 598

Judicial Review of State Actions 599

● AMERICA SIDE BY SIDE Judicial Review across the Globe 600

Judicial Review of Federal Agency Actions 602

Judicial Review and Presidential Power 603

Judicial Review and Lawmaking 604

The Supreme Court in Action 606

Controlling the Flow of Cases 608

Lobbying for Access: Interests and the Court 610

The Supreme Court's Procedures 611



Explaining Supreme Court Decisions 615
Influences on Supreme Court Decision Making 615
Judicial Power and Politics 617

The Federal Judiciary and Your Future 620

● **WHO PARTICIPATES?** Influencing the Supreme Court? 621

Study Guide 622

For Further Reading 624

Recommended Websites 625

● **Appendix**

The Declaration of Independence A1

The Articles of Confederation A5

The Constitution of the United States of America A9

Amendments to the Constitution A15

The Federalist Papers A21

The Anti-Federalist Papers A27

Presidents and Vice Presidents A33

Glossary A35

Endnotes A45

Answer Key A81

Credits A83

Index A87

preface

This book has been and continues to be dedicated to developing a satisfactory response to the question more and more Americans are asking: Why should we be engaged with government and politics? Through the first ten editions, we sought to answer this question by making the text directly relevant to the lives of the students who would be reading it. As a result, we tried to make politics interesting by demonstrating that students' interests are at stake and that they therefore need to take a personal, even selfish, interest in the outcomes of government. At the same time, we realized that students needed guidance in how to become politically engaged. Beyond providing students with a core of political knowledge, we needed to show them how they could apply that knowledge as participants in the political process. The "Who Participates?" sections in each chapter help achieve that goal.

As events from the last several years have reminded us, "what government does" inevitably raises questions about political participation and political equality. The size and composition of the electorate, for example, affect who is elected to public office and what policy directions the government will pursue. Hence, the issue of voter ID laws became important in the 2016 election, with some arguing that these laws reduce voter fraud and others contending that they decrease participation by poor and minority voters. Other recent events have underscored how Americans from different backgrounds experience politics. Arguments about immigration became contentious during the 2016 election as the nation once again debated the question of who is entitled to be an American and have a voice in determining what the government does. And charges that the police often use excessive violence against members of minority groups have raised questions about whether the government treats all Americans equally. Reflecting all of these trends, this new Eleventh Edition shows more than any other book on the market (1) how students are connected to government, (2) why students should think critically about government and politics, and (3) how Americans from different backgrounds experience and shape politics. These themes are incorporated in the following ways:

- **Chapter introductions focus on "What Government Does and Why It Matters."**

In recent decades, cynicism about "big government" has dominated the political zeitgeist. But critics of government often forget that governments do a great deal for citizens. Every year, Americans are the beneficiaries of billions of dollars of goods and services from government programs. Government "does" a lot, and what it does matters a great deal to everyone, including college students. At the start of each chapter, this theme is

introduced and applied to the chapter's topic. The goal is to show students that government and politics mean something to their daily lives.

- **A twenty-first-century perspective on demographic change** moves beyond the book's strong coverage of traditional civil rights content with expanded coverage of contemporary group politics.
- **"Who Are Americans?" infographics**—including several new to the eleventh edition—ask students to think critically about how Americans from different backgrounds experience politics. These sections use bold, engaging graphics to present a statistical snapshot of the nation related to each chapter's topic. Critical-thinking questions are included in each infographic.
- **New "Who Participates?" infographics at the end of every chapter** show students how different groups of Americans participate in key aspects of politics and government. Each concludes with a "What You Can Do" section that provides students with specific, realistic steps they can take to act on what they've learned and get involved in politics. The InQuizitive course and Coursepack include accompanying exercises and multiple-choice questions that encourage students to engage with these features.
- **"America Side by Side" boxes** in every chapter use data figures and tables to provide a comparative perspective. By comparing political institutions and behavior across countries, students gain a better understanding of how specific features of the American system shape politics.
- **Up-to-date coverage**, with more than 20 pages and numerous graphics on the 2016 elections, including a 12-page section devoted to analysis of the 2016 elections in Chapter 10, as well as updated data, examples, and other information throughout the book.
- **"For Critical Analysis" questions** are incorporated throughout the text. "For Critical Analysis" questions in the margins of every chapter prompt students' own critical thinking about the material in the chapter, encouraging them to engage with the topic.
- **"Politics and Your Future" chapter conclusions** give students direct, personal reasons to care about politics. These sections focus on the political opportunities and challenges that students will face in their lives as a result of emerging social, political, demographic, and technological change. The conclusions reprise the important point made in the chapter introductions that *government matters* and prompt students to consider how political change will impact their futures.
- **This Eleventh Edition is accompanied by InQuizitive**, Norton's award-winning formative, adaptive online quizzing program. The InQuizitive course for *We the People* guides students through questions organized around the text's chapter learning objectives to ensure mastery of the core information and to help with assessment. More information and a demonstration are available at digital.wwnorton.com/wethepeople11core.

We continue to hope that our book will itself be accepted as a form of enlightened political action. This Eleventh Edition is another chance. It is an advancement toward our goal. We promise to keep trying.

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Benjamin Ginsberg
Theodore J. Lowi
Margaret Weir
Caroline J. Tolbert

October 2016

ELEVENTH CORE EDITION

We the People

AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

Most Americans share the core political values of liberty, equality, and democracy and want their government and its policies to reflect these values. However, people often disagree on the meaning of these values and what government should do to protect them.



American Political Culture

WHAT GOVERNMENT DOES AND WHY IT MATTERS Americans sometimes appear to believe that the government is an institution that does things to them and from which they need protection. Students may wonder why they have to fill in long, often complicated forms to apply for financial assistance. They may frown when they see the payroll tax deducted from their small paycheck. Like Americans of all ages, they may resent municipal “red-light” cameras designed to photograph traffic violators—and send them tickets.

Although most people complain about something that government does to them, most everyone wants the government to do a great deal *for* them. Some of the services that people expect from government are big-ticket items, such as providing national security and keeping the nation safe from terrorist attacks. We all know that government pays for and directs the military. Students attending a state university know that state and federal public dollars help support their education.

Yet many of the other services that government provides are far less visible, and often it is not even clear that government plays a role at all. For example, students grabbing a quick bite to eat between classes take it for granted that their hamburger will not contain bacteria that might make them sick. Without federal inspection of meat, however, chances of contracting food-borne illnesses would be much higher and the everyday task of eating would be much riskier. Driving to school would not be possible if not for the tens of billions of dollars spent each year on road construction and maintenance by federal, state, and municipal authorities. Like most Americans, young people expect to get reliable information about the weather for the week ahead and warnings about dangerous

events such as hurricanes. The National Weather Service and the National Hurricane Center both provide reliable forecasts for such simple calculations as whether to bring an umbrella to more significant calculations made by airlines and air traffic control to get travelers safely where they need to go. These daily decisions don't seem to involve government, but in fact they do. Indeed, most Americans would not be here at all if it were not for federal immigration policies, which set the terms for entry into the United States and for obtaining citizenship.

government institutions and procedures through which a territory and its people are ruled

politics conflict over the leadership, structure, and policies of governments

Government is the term generally used to describe the formal institutions through which a land and its people are ruled. As the government seeks to help and protect its citizens, it faces the challenge of doing so in ways that are true to the key American political values of liberty, equality, and democracy. Most Americans find it easy to affirm all three values in principle. In practice, however, matters are not always so clear; these values mean different things to different people, and they often seem to conflict. This is where politics comes in. **Politics** refers to conflicts and struggles over the leadership, structure, and policies of governments. As we will see in this chapter and throughout this book, much political conflict concerns policies and practices that seem to affirm one of the key American political values but may contradict another.

chaptergoals

- Explore Americans' attitudes toward government (pp. 5–9)
- Describe the role of the citizen in politics (pp. 9–12)
- Define government and forms of government (pp. 12–16)
- Show how the social composition of the American population has changed over time (pp. 16–24)
- Analyze whether the U.S. system of government upholds American political values (pp. 24–31)

● What Americans Think about Government

Explore Americans' attitudes toward government

Since the United States was established as a nation, Americans have been reluctant to grant government too much power, and they have often been suspicious of politicians. But over the course of the nation's history, Americans have also turned to government

for assistance in times of need and have strongly supported the government in periods of war. In 1933 the power of the government began to expand to meet the crises created by the stock market crash of 1929, the Great Depression, and the run on banks of 1933. Congress passed legislation that brought the government into the businesses of home mortgages, farm mortgages, credit, and relief of personal distress. More recently, when the economy threatened to fall into a deep recession in 2008 and 2009, the federal government took action to shore up the financial system, oversee the restructuring of the ailing auto companies, and inject hundreds of billions of dollars into the faltering economy. Today the national government is an enormous institution with programs and policies reaching into every corner of American life. It oversees the nation's economy, it is the nation's largest employer, it provides citizens with a host of services, it controls the world's most formidable military, and it regulates a wide range of social and commercial activities.

Much of what citizens have come to depend on and take for granted as somehow part of the natural environment is in fact created by government. Take the example of a typical college student's day, throughout which that student relies on a host of

The federal government maintains a large number of websites that provide useful information to citizens on such topics as loans for education, civil service job applications, the inflation rate, and how the weather will affect farming. These sites are just one way in which the government serves its citizens.

The screenshot shows the Federal Student Aid website. At the top, it says "Federal Student Aid" and "An OFFICE of the U.S. DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION". To the right, it says "PROUD SPONSOR of the AMERICAN MIND®" and has a search bar for "Search StudentAid.gov". Below this is a navigation menu with five items: "Prepare for College", "Types of Aid", "Who Gets Aid", "FAFSA: Applying for Aid", and "How to Repay Your Loans". The main content area features a banner with the text "Minds can achieve anything. We make sure they get to college. At Federal Student Aid, we make it easier to get money for higher education." Below the banner are five columns, each with a profile picture of a student and a question: "HOW DO I PREPARE FOR COLLEGE?", "WHAT TYPES OF AID CAN I GET?", "DO I QUALIFY FOR AID?", "HOW DO I APPLY FOR AID?", and "HOW DO I MANAGE MY LOANS?". Each column has a short paragraph of text below the question.

services and activities organized by national, state, and local government agencies. The extent of this dependence on government is illustrated by Table 1.1 on page 7.

Trust in Government

Ironically, even as popular dependence on the government has grown, the American public's view of government has turned more sour. Public trust in government has declined, and Americans are now more likely to feel that they can do little to influence the government's actions. The decline in public trust among Americans is striking. In the early 1960s, three-quarters of Americans said they trusted government most of the time. By 2015, only 19 percent of Americans expressed trust in government; 67 percent stated that they trusted government only some of the time¹ (see Figure 1.1). Different groups vary somewhat in their levels of trust: African Americans and Latinos express slightly more confidence in the federal government than do whites. But even among the most supportive groups, considerably more than half only trust the government some of the time.² These developments are important because politically engaged citizens and public confidence in government are vital for the health of a democracy.

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, a number of studies reported a substantial increase in popular trust in government.³ This view, expressed during a period of national crisis, may have been indicative less of a renewed *trust* in government to do the right thing than of a fervent *hope* that it would. And, indeed, by 2004, trust in government had fallen to near its pre-September 11 level.⁴

FIGURE 1.1

Public Trust in Government, 1958–2015

Participants in these polls were asked if they trusted the government to “do the right thing” always, most of the time, only some of the time, or never.

Since the 1960s, general levels of public trust in government have declined. What factors might help to account for changes in the public's trust in government? Why has confidence in government dropped again since September 11, 2001?

SOURCE: The American National Election Studies, 1958–2004; Pew Research Center, www.people-press.org/2015/11/23/beyond-distrust-how-americans-view-their-government/ (accessed 4/10/16). The Pew data after 2004 represent a “three survey moving average.”

PERCENTAGE RESPONDING
“MOST OF THE TIME” OR “ALWAYS”

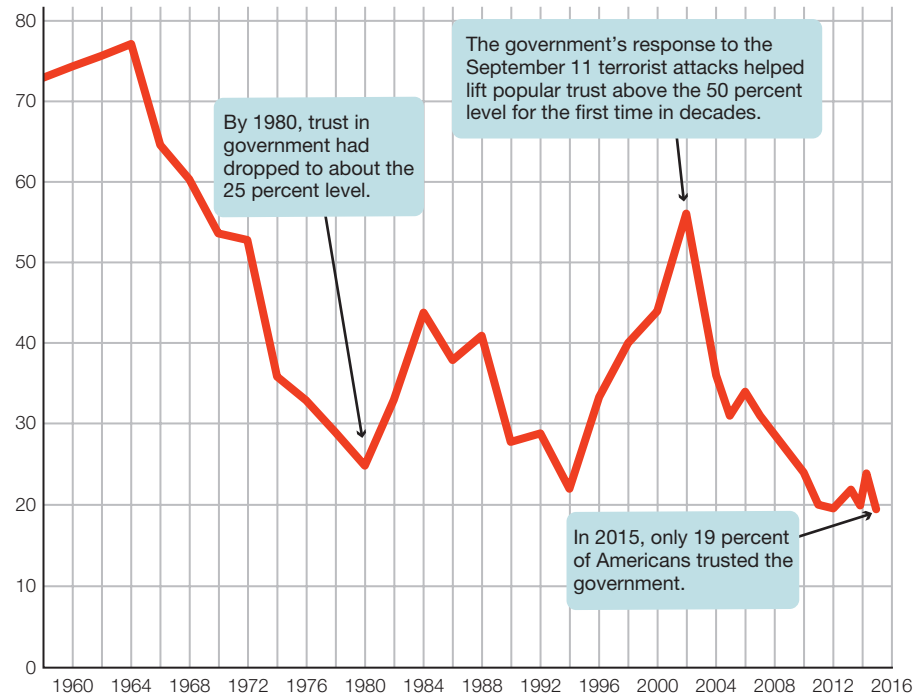


TABLE 1.1

The Presence of Government in the Daily Life of a Student at “State University”

TIME OF DAY	SCHEDULE
7:00 A.M.	Wake up. Standard time set by the national government.
7:10 A.M.	Shower. Water courtesy of local government, either a public entity or a regulated private company. Brush your teeth with toothpaste whose cavity-fighting claims have been verified by a federal agency. Dry your hair with an electric dryer manufactured according to federal government agency guidelines.
7:30 A.M.	Have a bowl of cereal with milk for breakfast. “Nutrition Facts” on food labels are a federal requirement, pasteurization of milk required by state law, freshness dating on milk based on state and federal standards, recycling the empty cereal box and milk carton enabled by state or local laws.
8:30 A.M.	Drive or take public transportation to campus. Air bags and seat belts required by federal and state laws. Roads and bridges paid for by state and local governments, speed and traffic laws set by state and local governments, public transportation subsidized by all levels of government.
8:45 A.M.	Arrive on campus of large public university. Buildings are 70 percent financed by state taxpayers.
9:00 A.M.	First class: Chemistry 101. Tuition partially paid by a federal loan (more than half the cost of university instruction is paid for by taxpayers), chemistry lab paid for with grants from the National Science Foundation (a federal agency) and smaller grants from business corporations made possible by federal income tax deductions for charitable contributions.
Noon	Eat lunch. College cafeteria financed by state dormitory authority on land grant from federal Department of Agriculture.
12:47 P.M.	Felt an earthquake! Check the U.S. Geological Survey at www.usgs.gov to see that it was a 3.9 on the Richter scale.
2:00 P.M.	Second class: American Government 101 (your favorite class!). You may be taking this class because it is required by the state legislature or because it fulfills a university requirement.
4:00 P.M.	Third class: Computer Lab. Free computers, software, and Internet access courtesy of state subsidies plus grants and discounts from Apple and Microsoft, the costs of which are deducted from their corporate income taxes; Internet built in part by federal government. Duplication of software prohibited by federal copyright laws.
6:00 P.M.	Eat dinner: hamburger and french fries. Meat inspected for bacteria by federal agencies.
7:00 P.M.	Work at part-time job at the campus library. Minimum wage set by federal, state, or local government; books and journals in library paid for by state taxpayers.
8:15 P.M.	Go online to check the status of your application for a federal student loan (FAFSA) on the Department of Education’s website at studentaid.ed.gov .
10:00 P.M.	Go home. Street lighting paid for by county and city governments, police patrols by city government.
10:15 P.M.	Watch TV. Networks regulated by federal government, cable public-access channels required by city law. Weather forecast provided to broadcasters by a federal agency.
10:45 P.M.	To complete your economics homework, visit the Bureau of Labor Statistics at www.bls.gov to look up unemployment levels since 1972.
Midnight	Put out the trash before going to bed. Trash collected by city sanitation department, financed by “user charges.”

In the 2016 presidential campaign, the popularity of nonestablishment, “outsider” candidates, such as businessman and reality-TV star Donald Trump, pointed to Americans’ continued frustration with and distrust of the federal government.



Several factors contributed to the decline in trust. Revelations about the faulty information that led up to the war in Iraq and ongoing concern about the war had increased Americans’ distrust of government. In March 2007, 54 percent of those surveyed believed that the Bush administration had deliberately misled the American public about whether Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

The lowest level of trust ever recorded was in October 2011, when, after a bitter congressional battle over raising the national debt limit, one poll showed that only 10 percent of Americans trusted government to do the right thing always or most of the time.⁵ By 2013 intense partisan conflict further undermined trust in government. The public watched with dismay as political differences over taxing and spending led to repeated threats to shut down the federal government. When political differences over the Affordable Care Act, the social program supported by President Obama to reform the American health care system, led to a government shutdown in 2013 and yet another dramatic showdown over raising the national debt limit, public trust once again dipped to historically low levels.

Distrust of government greatly influenced the primary elections in 2015 and 2016, when a number of “outsider” candidates, critical of government, attracted wide support. This trend was especially pronounced in the Republican primaries, in which candidates known for their strong anti-government rhetoric, such as Ted Cruz, and candidates with no government experience, notably Donald Trump, unexpectedly attracted wide support. Support for such outsiders reflected deep distrust in government among Republicans, only 11 percent of whom expressed trust in government in 2015, compared to 26 percent of Democrats.⁶ Among Democratic primary voters, strong support for Bernie Sanders, a democratic socialist, also indicated a desire to depart from business as usual in Washington. Sanders vigorously faulted the government for failing to take more forceful action against corporate misconduct and growing inequality.

Does it matter if Americans trust their government? For the most part, the answer is yes. As we have seen, most Americans rely on government for a wide range of services and laws that they simply take for granted. But long-term distrust in government can result in public refusal to pay the taxes necessary to support such widely approved public activities. Low levels of confidence may also make it difficult for government to attract talented and effective workers to public service.⁷ The weakening of government as a result of prolonged levels of distrust may ultimately harm the United States’ capacity to defend its national interest in the world economy and may jeopardize its national security. Likewise, a weak government can do little to assist citizens who need help in weathering periods of sharp economic or technological change.

for critical analysis

What recent events have affected Americans’ trust in government? What might it take to restore Americans’ trust in the federal government?

Political Efficacy

Another important trend in American views about government has been a declining sense of **political efficacy**, the belief that ordinary citizens can affect what government does, that they can make government listen to them. In 2015, 74 percent of Americans said that elected officials don't care what people like them think; in 1960, only 25 percent felt so shut out of government.⁸ Accompanying this sense that ordinary people are not heard is a growing belief that government is not run for the benefit of all the people. In 2015, 76 percent of the public disagreed with the idea that the "government is really run for the benefit of all the people."⁹ These views are widely shared across the age spectrum.

This widely felt loss of political efficacy is bad news for American democracy. The feeling that you can't affect government decisions can lead to a self-perpetuating cycle of apathy, declining political participation, and withdrawal from political life. Why bother to participate if you believe it makes no difference? Yet the belief that you can be effective is the first step needed to influence government. Not every effort of ordinary citizens to influence government will succeed, but without any such efforts, government decisions will be made by a smaller and smaller circle of powerful people. Such loss of broad popular influence over government actions undermines the key feature of American democracy—government by the people.

political efficacy the ability to influence government and politics

● Citizenship: Knowledge and Participation

Describe the role of the citizen in politics

The first prerequisite for achieving an increased sense of political efficacy is knowledge. Political indifference is often simply a habit that stems from a lack of knowledge about how your interests are affected by

politics and from a sense that you can do nothing to affect politics. But political efficacy is a self-fulfilling prophecy: if you think you cannot be effective, chances are you will never try. Most research suggests that people active in politics have a high sense of their own efficacy. This means they believe they can make a difference—even if they do not win all the time. Most people do not want to be politically active every day of their lives, but it is essential to American political ideals that all citizens be informed and able to act.

Even though the Internet has made it easier than ever to learn about politics, the state of political knowledge in the United States today is spotty. Most Americans know little about current issues or debates. Numerous surveys indicate that the majority of Americans have significant gaps in their political knowledge. For example, in 2015 only 31 percent of those surveyed could identify all three branches of the federal government and in 2014 only 27 percent knew that it takes a two-thirds vote in the House and the Senate to override a presidential veto. On the other hand, the public is more knowledgeable about politicians and individuals who have been prominent in the national media. For example, when shown pictures of public figures in 2015, 91 percent could identify Martin Luther King, Jr., and 51 percent could identify Senator Elizabeth Warren (see Table 1.2). Rather than dwell on the widespread political ignorance of many Americans, we prefer to view this as an opportunity for the readers of this book. Those of you who make the effort to become more knowledgeable will be much better prepared to influence the political system regarding the issues and concerns that you care most about.