

# WE THE PEOPLE

An Introduction to American Government

TWELFTH EDITION



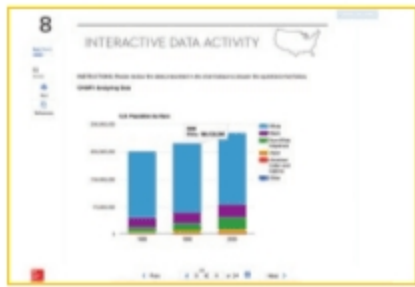
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WE THE PEOPLE

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AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

TWELFTH EDITION

**THOMAS E. PATTERSON**

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

**Mc  
Graw  
Hill**  
Education



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

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 LCR 21 20 19 18 17 16

ISBN 978-1-259-43918-6

MHID 1-259-43918-6

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Critical Thinking Zone: Photographs in the Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-DIG-highsm-12542]

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Patterson, Thomas E., author.

Title: We the people / Thomas E. Patterson, Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Description: Twelfth edition. | New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education, [2017]

Identifiers: LCCN 2016047736 | ISBN 9781259439186 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: United States—Politics and government. | BISAC: POLITICAL

SCIENCE / Government / National.

Classification: LCC JK276 .P38 2017 | DDC 320.473—dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016047736>

The Internet addresses listed in the text were accurate at the time of publication. The inclusion of a website does not indicate an endorsement by the authors or McGraw-Hill Education, and McGraw-Hill Education does not guarantee the accuracy of the information presented at these sites.

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*To My Children.  
Alex and Leigh*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Courtesy of Thomas Patterson

**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 PhD in 1971.

Since then, he has regularly taught introductory American government. In 2013 he was chosen as teacher of the year and adviser of the year by Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government students, 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 voter 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 50 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 a 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 five boxes that ask you to "think politically." Two of these—the "How the U.S. Differs" box and the "How the 50 States Differ" box—ask you to think critically about differences in governing systems. A third box—"Party Polarization"—asks you to critically analyze differences in the Republican and Democratic parties. A fourth box—"Case Study"—discusses a political event and then asks you to analyze the outcome. The final box—"Political Thinking"—asks you to justify your opinion on a leading issue. These boxes are rooted in the idea that critical thinking is a skill that can be nurtured and that, once acquired, can help you 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 a central goal of this text. If the only result of reading the text was to increase your factual knowledge of American government, I would judge it a failure. As Albert Einstein once

noted, “The value of a college education is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think.” Political science courses, like those in other social science and humanities disciplines, should help students hone their skill in critical thinking—the ability to assess and apply information through reflection and analysis. As I indicated, the “Political Thinking” boxes in each chapter 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 the chapter’s information through the application of the three skills—conceptualizing, analyzing, and synthesizing—that are the foundation of critical thinking.

Finally, in this program I have attempted 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 enrolled 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 your political interest if you are the second type of student, and kindle your interest if you are 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 1,000 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 suggestions on how to strengthen it. As they have done for several editions now, the University of Northern Colorado’s Steve Mazurana and his students graciously sent me 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

## RELEVANCY AND READABILITY TO ENGAGE TODAY'S STUDENT

Tom Patterson's *We the People* is a **concise** approach to American Government emphasizing **critical thinking** through **relevant** examples that appeal to today's students. This extremely **readable** program provides opportunities to **engage** with the political process through tools that help students **learn how to think about politics**, utilizing digital resources that connect students with the material in a highly **personalized** way.

## BETTER DATA, SMARTER REVISION, IMPROVED RESULTS

Students helped inform the revision strategy:

**STEP 1.** Over the course of two years, data points showing concepts that caused students the most difficulty were anonymously collected from McGraw-Hill Education's Connect<sup>®</sup> American Government's LearnSmart for *We the People*.

**STEP 2.** The data from LearnSmart was provided to the author in the form of a *Heat Map*, which graphically illustrated “hot spots” in the text that impacted student learning (see image on right).

**STEP 3.** The author used the *Heat Map* data to refine the content and reinforce student comprehension in the new edition. Additional quiz questions and assignable activities were created for use in Connect American Government to further support student success.

**RESULT:** Because the *Heat Map* gave the author empirically based feedback at the paragraph and even sentence level, he was able to develop the new edition using precise student data that pinpointed concepts that caused students the most difficulty.

158 CHAPTER 5: Equal Rights: Struggling toward Fairness

established by presidential action. The term *affirmative action* first appeared in an executive order issued in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy, who directed federal contractors to “take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed . . . without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin.” In 1967, President Lyndon Johnson extended affirmative action to include women and summarized the policy's goal: “We seek . . . not just equality as a right and a theory, but equality as a fact and a result.”

**17.2** *Equality of result* was a new concept. Other major civil rights policies had sought to eliminate **de jure discrimination**, which is discrimination based on law, as in the case of the state laws requiring black and white children to attend separate schools during the pre-*Brown* period. Affirmative-action policy sought to alleviate **de facto discrimination**—the condition whereby historically disadvantaged groups have fewer opportunities and benefits because of prejudice and economic circumstances, such as their inability to pay for a college education.

**17.2** Few issues have sparked more controversy than has affirmative action, and even today the public has a mixed response to it. Most Americans support programs designed to ensure that historically disadvantaged groups receive equal treatment, but oppose programs that would give them preferential treatment. Preference programs are deeply divisive. Whereas roughly 60 percent of African Americans and 50 percent of Hispanics support them, only about 20 percent of whites do so.<sup>39</sup>

Policies that pit individuals against each other typically end up in the Supreme Court, and affirmative action is no exception. In *University of California Regents v. Bakke* (1978), the Court issued its first affirmative-action ruling. A white male, Alan Bakke, had been rejected by a medical school that admitted minority applicants with significantly lower test scores. The Court ruled that the medical school, because it had reserved a fixed number (“a quota”) of admissions for minority applicants, had violated Bakke's right to equal protection. However, the Court did not strike down affirmative-action admissions per se, saying instead that race could be among the factors taken into account by schools in their



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## INFORMING AND ENGAGING STUDENTS ON POLITICAL CONCEPTS

Using Connect American Government, students can learn the course material more deeply and study more effectively than ever before.

At the *remember* and *understand* levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, **Concept Clips** help students break down key concepts in American Government. Using easy-to-understand audio narration, visual cues, and colorful animations, Concept Clips provide a step-by-step presentation that promote student retention and comprehension. New Concept Clips for this edition include the following:

- Explaining ideology
- Right of privacy
- Restrictions on voting
- Political socialization
- Realignment of parties
- Interest groups
- Legislative process
- Presidential powers
- Supreme Court procedures

## CONCEPT CLIP



INSTRUCTIONS: Watch the Concept Clip and then respond to the following questions.

How are Public Opinion Polls Evaluated?

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**Political public opinion** focuses on views on political institutions, political actors, and political events.



Also at the remember and understand level of Bloom's Taxonomy, **Newsflash** exercises tie current news stories to key American government concepts and learning objectives. After interacting with a contemporary news story, students are assessed on their ability to make the connections between real life events and course content. Examples include the 2016 election results, transgender bathroom bills, and the aftermath of Justice Antonin Scalia's death.

At the *apply*, *analyze*, and *evaluate* levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, **critical thinking activities** allow students to engage with the political process and learn by doing. Examples include:

- Quiz: What Is Your Political Ideology?
- Poll: Americans Confidence in the Police
- Research: Find Your Senator
- Infographic: Compare the Courts

Also at the *apply*, *analyze*, and *evaluate* levels, **Interactive Data Analysis** help students consume data in meaningful ways. Examples include:

- U.S. Population by Race
- Confidence in Government Institutions
- Independent Expenditures by Election
- Incumbency Advantage

Another way students are able to learn by doing is through Practice Government, an award-winning education game where students play the role of a member of Congress, doing everything from running for office to passing legislation. Practice Government weaves in every aspect of the American government course as students compete for political capital, approval, and recognition. In playing their role, students strengthen their understanding of aspects of American politics, including campaigns and Congress.



## LEARN TO THINK POLITICALLY, AND THINK CRITICALLY

Political thinking is a form of critical thinking that enables us, as citizens, to develop informed opinions about fundamental political principles, contemporary events, and enduring issues of how best to govern America. This text and its supporting program will not tell you *what* to think politically. Instead, it will help you learn *how* to think politically in order to strengthen your capacity for reasoned judgment. The text and its supporting program will do so by providing you with analytical tools from political science that can sharpen 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

## NEW! CASE STUDY BOXES

Each chapter has a new feature: a **Case Study** box. Based on the proven instructional value of case studies, each of these boxes discusses an event that illuminates a key aspect of American politics. The Case Study in the presidency chapter, for example, examines presidents' war-making power through the lens of President George W. Bush's efforts to generate public and congressional support for the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

<b>CASE STUDY</b>	<b>Case Study</b> <b>Russia's Takeover of Crimea</b> What options exist when a nation engages in naked aggression? War against that nation is one option. Angry denunciations are another. But there's also a third option, one that's increasingly being used. That option is economic sanctions. A case in point is the sanctions that the United States and its European allies imposed on Russia in response to its takeover of Crimea, which is part of Ukraine. The sanctions included freezes on the financial assets of wealthy Russians with close ties to Russian president Vladimir Putin. The sanctions hurt the Russian economy. The value of its currency, the ruble, fell sharply, as did its stock market, while its economic growth turned negative. But do economic sanctions get nations to change their behavior? Studies by David Lektzian and others indicate that sanctions occasionally succeed, they usually fail to do so. One reason is that the targeted country's top leaders rarely suffer personal hardship from sanctions. Their people may suffer but they don't. Top leaders can also turn the sanctions to their political advantage. Putin's popularity rose after he told Russians that the United States was trying through sanctions to "destroy" Russia. Then, too, economic sanctions can fail because they're not stiff enough. Sanctioning nations typically stop short of imposing measures that will greatly harm themselves. Despite such limitations, sanctions have become the preferred alternative to war as an instrument of foreign policy. As Jeremy Greenstock, former British ambassador to the United Nations, said: "Military action is increasingly unpopular . . . and words [alone] don't work. . . . So something in between these is necessary. What else is there [besides sanctions]?" <b>Q:</b> The Russian sanctions did not include shutting Russia out of the international banking system. Why might the United States and its European allies have stopped short of imposing that sanction? <b>ASK YOURSELF:</b> What would have happened to trade between Russia and Europe if the banking sanction had been imposed? What effect would it have had on Europe's access to Russia's natural gas and oil? Which country would Russia have turned to for help if that sanction had been used? Would the United States and Europe be helped or hurt if the bond between Russia and that country became stronger?
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## CONTENT CHANGES

This revision of *We the People* includes the many remarkable political developments of the past two years, ranging from the 2016 presidential elections to the escalation of the war against the Islamic State. Updates based on the most recent scholarly research on American politics are also found throughout the text.

The program's other revisions were guided by recent scholarship and developments in American politics. Listed below are chapter-by-chapter summaries of some of this edition's major changes.

**Chapter 1, Political Thinking and Political Culture: Becoming a Responsible Citizen.** The introductory portions of this chapter have been streamlined to provide a more concise introduction to the book's approach. In addition, a new "How the U.S. Differs" box explores America versus other countries in terms of immigrant population, a new "Case Study" box focuses on social welfare policy, and an updated "Party Polarization" box tracks the ever-widening gap between the Democratic and Republican parties in recent years.

**Chapter 2, Constitutional Democracy: Promoting Liberty and Self-Government.** Following a new introduction on the outcome of the 2016 presidential election, this chapter features a new "Case Study" box focused on the Watergate scandal, and clarifies the Framers' distinction between a democracy and a republic.

**Chapter 3, Federalism: Forging a Nation.** Revisions to this chapter include a new "Party Polarization" box focusing on the parties' perspectives on the power of the federal government, a fully revised "How the U.S. Differs" box on the topic of federal systems, and a new "Case Study" box about the 2010 health care reform act.

**Chapter 4, Civil Liberties: Protecting Individual Rights.** Updates to this chapter include discussion of recent Supreme Court rulings, including *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt* (2016) regarding women's access to abortion, *Montgomery v. Louisiana* (2016) extending the ban on life without parole sentences for juveniles, and *Utah v. Strieff* (2016) regarding using outstanding warrants for unrelated searches. In addition, the chapter features a new "Case Study" box focused on the landmark 2014 *Riley v. California* ruling on cell phone searches, a fully revised and updated "How the 50 States Differ" box on incarceration rates, and updated coverage of racial profiling.

**Chapter 5, Equal Rights: Struggling toward Fairness.** Numerous updates in this chapter include a new “Case Study” box focused on the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case, discussion of recent lower federal court challenges to voter ID laws, the Supreme Court’s *Fischer v. University of Texas* ruling (2016) upholding the University of Texas’s affirmative action program, a new “How the 50 States Differ” box on state minority populations, exploration of how unlawful immigration became a flash point in the 2016 presidential election, and analysis of the 2015 Supreme Court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage in the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case.

**Chapter 6, Public Opinion and Political Socialization: Shaping the People’s Voice.** In this chapter, the “Measurement of Public Opinion” section has been moved to earlier in the chapter and includes a new discussion of three major dimensions of public opinion: direction, intensity, and salience. In addition, the new “Case Study” box examines public opinion on gun control, the “Party Identification” section now examines independent voters in closer detail, the “How the 50 States Differ” and “Party Polarization” boxes have been thoroughly updated to reflect current trends, and the “Influence of Public Opinion on Policy” section has been fully revised and updated.

**Chapter 7, Political Participation: Activating the Popular Will.** In addition to an updated “How the U.S. Differs” box focused on group participation (moved from Chapter 9), this chapter includes a new “Case Study” box exploring party strategy and voter registration, a thoroughly updated “Party Polarization” box on voter turnout, updated coverage of campaigning, virtual participation, and volunteerism, reference to the Black Lives Matter movement, and a new section titled “The Next Political Movements?” that speaks to the implications of the strong showings of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the 2016 presidential race.

**Chapter 8, Political Parties, Candidates, and Campaigns: Defining the Voter’s Choice.** In light of the 2016 presidential race, this chapter has been thoroughly updated throughout, with key updates on the results of the race, recent Democratic and Republican party realignments, the increasing influence of the Hispanic vote, and the impact of minor parties like the Libertarian party in the 2016 election, as well as a new “Case Study” box focused on the Clinton–Sanders race.

**Chapter 9, Interest Groups: Organizing for Influence.** This chapter includes updated coverage of the increasing influence of lobbying activities, a new “How the U.S. Differs” box comparing the power of lobbying groups in

the United States to other countries, and a new “Case Study” box discussing the resistance of the auto lobby to the Dodd-Frank Act of 2010.

**Chapter 10, The News Media: Communicating Political Images.** Changes to this chapter include a new discussion of “framing,” a new “Case Study” box exploring the news media’s role in the Ebola scare, media coverage of the tumultuous 2016 Trump-Clinton campaign, a new “Political Thinking” box titled “How Important Is Your Newspaper?,” updated coverage of partisan talk shows, and an updated discussion of the widening partisan and information divides brought about by changes in the media system.

**Chapter 11, Congress: Balancing National Goals and Local Interests.** This chapter now includes a new “Case Study” box on Congress and the Veterans’ Jobs bill of 2011, new coverage of the Benghazi debate in a divided Congress, and the results of the 2016 House and Senate elections.

**Chapter 12, The Presidency: Leading the Nation.** Revised to reflect the 2016 presidential race and its results, this chapter provides details on the campaigns of Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, Bernie Sanders, and Ted Cruz, as well as the presidential contenders who ran less strongly. In addition, the chapter provides analysis of the 2016 presidential debates, a fully revised section on “Nature of the Issue: Foreign or Domestic,” and a new “Case Study” box focuses on President George W. Bush’s role in the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

**Chapter 13, The Federal Bureaucracy: Administering the Government.** This chapter includes a new “Case Study” box focused on federal funding of the F-22 fighter jet, as well as expanded discussion of the Office of Management and Budget and administrative rulemaking.

**Chapter 14, The Federal Judicial System: Applying the Law.** Opening with a discussion of the 2015 *Obergefell v. Hodges* Supreme Court decision, which legalized same-sex marriages in all 50 states, this chapter’s updates also include expanded discussion of federal court appointees (including the impact of the death of Justice Antonin Scalia in 2016), a new “How the U.S. Differs” box comparing judicial power in the United States versus other countries, and a new “Case Study” box focused on the controversial 2010 *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* case.

**Chapter 15, Economic and Environmental Policy: Contributing to Prosperity.** In addition to a new “Case Study” box examining the subprime

mortgage crisis of 2008, this chapter features expanded and updated coverage of environmental policy and global warming, a new “Party Polarization” box on taxes and the 2013 government shutdown, and an updated discussion of the Fed’s controversial “quantitative easing” policy.

**Chapter 16, Income, Welfare and Education Policy: Providing for Personal Security.** This chapter’s new title reflects the large-scale revision of its content. Opening with a discussion of how the presidential candidates all zeroed in on the decline of the American middle class in their campaigns, the chapter features a wholly new section titled “Income Politics and Policies” focused on the widening income gap, a thoroughly revised and updated section on welfare now titled “Welfare Politics and Policies,” a new “Case Study” box on the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, and a thoroughly revised and updated section on education now titled “Education Politics and Policies” with extensive discussion of the student loan issue.

**Chapter 17, Foreign Policy: Protecting the American Way.** This chapter features a new “Case Study” box on Russia’s takeover of Crimea, as well as updated coverage of developments in the Middle East (ISIS), North Korea, Russia, and China and their effects on foreign policy, and a thorough update of the “Economic Dimension of National Security Policy” section.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH *WE THE PEOPLE***

Available in Connect, the instructor’s manual includes for each chapter the following elements: learning objectives, focus points and main points, chapter summary, list of major concepts, and suggestions for complementary lecture topics. The test bank consists of approximately 50 multiple-choice questions and 5 suggested essay topics per chapter, with page references provided alongside the answers. PowerPoint slides 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 1,000 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 Twelfth Edition, I have benefited from the thoughtful advice of the many who responded to McGraw-Hill's online survey.

I also want to thank those at McGraw-Hill Education who contributed to the Twelfth Edition: Jason Seitz, Dawn Groundwater, Susan Trentacosti, Marianne Musni, Lauren D'Orazio, Alexandra Hodges, and Rachel Monfre, as well as freelance product developer Bruce Cantley. At Harvard, I had the painstaking and cheerful support of my extraordinary assistant, Kristina Mastropasqua. I owe her a deep thanks.

**Thomas Patterson**

WE THE PEOPLE

# 1

## CHAPTER

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



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

JOHN STUART MILL<sup>1</sup>

**A**s 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 citizens are unprepared to play the role democracy assigns them.<sup>5</sup> In a self-governing society, citizens are expected to take part in their governing. But how can they govern themselves if they are out of touch with reality?

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



People respond, not to the world as it is, but to the world as they *think* it is. That's as true today as during the time when people thought the world was flat and wouldn't sail out to sea because they feared sailing off the edge. Many of today's citizens hold opinions that are not quite so far-fetched but are nevertheless greatly at odds with reality. (© World History Archive/Alamy)

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>6</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>7</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, 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>8</sup>

Others pay closer attention, but they do so in counterproductive ways. A paradox of modern communication is that, although political information is now more widely available than before, it is also less trustworthy than before. Many talk show hosts, bloggers, and websites care little about the accuracy of the claims they make. They routinely slant information to fit their purpose while burying contradictory facts. A recent University of Maryland study concluded that “false or misleading information is widespread in [today’s] information environment.”<sup>9</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>10</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>11</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 the war on terror, leading some Americans to conclude that Iraq and al Qaeda were indistinguishable.

Many people prefer messages that conform to what they already believe. It is not surprising that liberal talk show hosts have an audience made up mostly of liberals, whereas conservative 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>12</sup> Rather than enriching people's thinking, such exposure tends to distort it.<sup>13</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>14</sup>



People differ in their views, which led theorist John Stuart Mill to conclude that citizens need to test their opinions, not just against what they personally think, but against what others think, and why.  
(© Ian Shaw/Alamy RF)

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 50 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>15</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 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. 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. Still other boxes present cases of actual events and ask you to think politically by analyzing these developments. 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>16</sup> These beliefs derive from the country's traditions and help 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>17</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. 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 (see “How the U.S. Differs”). 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>18</sup> In the words of the Declaration of Independence:

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



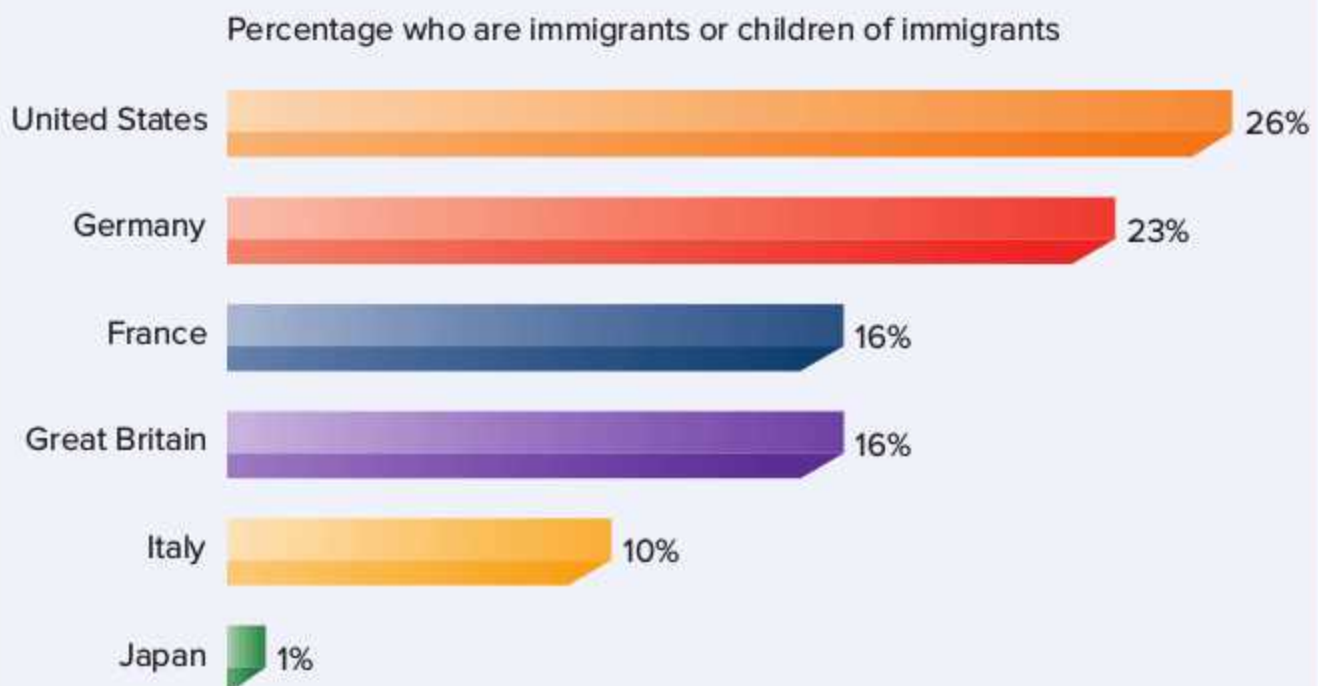
## HOW THE U.S. DIFFERS

### POLITICAL THINKING THROUGH COMPARISONS

#### A Nation of Immigrants

The United States has been called a “nation of immigrants.” Americans can trace their ancestral roots to nearly every country on earth. Even today, one in every seven Americans is an immigrant. If the children of immigrants are included, the figure is one in every four Americans.

Migrants make up a larger percentage of the population in the United States than they do in nearly every other country. Here are selected comparisons, based on the percentage of the population of high-school age who are immigrants or the children of immigrants.



Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2016.

**Q:** How might more recent U.S. immigrants differ from those who came to the United States earlier in its history?

**A:** The great majority of early immigrants to America came from Europe, which was facilitated by restrictions on immigrants from other parts of the globe. In 1965, legislation was enacted that eased restrictions on Latin American and Asian immigrants and, since then, they have constituted the majority of immigrants.

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, some 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>19</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 stretches of open territory gave ordinary people the chance to own property, provided they were willing to work hard enough to make it a success. Out of this experience grew a sense of self-reliance and a culture of "rugged individualism." **Individualism** is a commitment to personal initiative



Americans' cultural beliefs have their roots in the nation's formative years. The challenges and opportunities of North America's vast wilderness helped foster in settlers a commitment to liberty, equality, self-reliance, and self-determination. This nineteenth-century portrayal of frontier life is a hand-painted Currier & Ives lithograph created by Francis Flora Bond Palmer. She was one of the era's leading lithographic artists. (Source: Yale University Art Gallery)

and self-sufficiency. Observers from Tocqueville onward have seen fit to note that liberty in America, as in no other country, is tied to a desire for economic independence. Americans' chief aim, wrote Tocqueville, "is to remain their own masters."<sup>20</sup>

A third American political ideal is **equality**—the notion that all individuals are equal in their moral worth and thereby entitled to equal treatment under the law. Europe's rigid system of aristocratic privilege was unenforceable in frontier America. It was this natural sense of personal equality that Thomas Jefferson expressed so forcefully in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." However, equality has always been America's most elusive ideal. Even Jefferson professed not to know its exact meaning. A slave owner, Jefferson distinguished between free citizens, who were entitled to equal rights, and slaves, who were not. After slavery was abolished, Americans continued to argue over the meaning of equality, and the debate continues today. Does equality require that wealth and opportunity be widely shared? Or does it merely require that artificial barriers