

2017–2018 Edition

American Government and Politics Today

The Essentials



Bardes • Shelley • Schmidt

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AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

and Politics Today

THE ESSENTIALS

2017–2018 Edition

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Australia • Brazil • Mexico • Singapore • United Kingdom • United States

**American Government
and Politics Today,
The Essentials**
2017–2018 Edition
Bardes, Shelley, Schmidt

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A Letter to INSTRUCTORS

The fundamental theme of *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials, 2017–2018 Edition* continues to be the importance of participating in active citizenship, emphasizing critical thinking about political issues, and encouraging students to take action and become involved in the political process. Whether the topic is immigration, trade deals, Supreme Court rulings, or taxation, we constantly strive to involve students in the analysis. Our goal is to make sure that politics is not just an abstract process, but a very human enterprise. We emphasize how different outcomes can affect students' civil rights and liberties, employment opportunities, and economic welfare. To make sure students understand the link between themselves and the subject matter they are reading, new **Why Should You Care about...?** features grab students' attention while they are reading the materials. We further encourage interaction with the political system by ending each chapter with a feature titled **How You Can Make a Difference**, which shows students how to become politically involved and why it is important that they do so. **Which Side Are You On?** features challenge students to find the connection between a current controversy and their personal positions. And to help students think critically about the world around them and spark discussion in your classroom, we pose questions for critical analysis with almost every boxed feature, table, chart, exhibit, and photo.

New to This Edition

We have made numerous changes to this volume for the 2017–2018 Edition. We have rewritten the text as necessary, added many new features, and updated the book to reflect the events of the past two years. For a detailed list of changes, please contact your Cengage learning consultant.

- Because we know that students respond to up-to-date information about political events, we incorporate compelling, thought-provoking current examples throughout. We also include the results of the November 2016 elections and analyze how the rise of Donald Trump will change the way we look at American politics. In each **new Election 2016** feature, we place the election results in the context of the chapter's subject matter.

- The 2017–2018 Edition includes a **separate Chapter 10 on The Media**. Because the new media have become so important, we felt it necessary to devote an entire chapter to this topic. We look at content providers and aggregators. We look at the importance of media in campaigns. Net neutrality is an important topic in this chapter. Finally, we examine the issue of media bias and talk radio.
- **More demographics material** is included throughout, particularly in Chapter 1, which presents material on positive and negative trends, such as unemployment and inequality, and falling crime and teen pregnancy rates, and rising mortality rates among members of the rural white working class.
- **Major updates to the content** have been made in the areas of public opinion, interest groups, modern political parties, social media in politics, and the Obama legacy. The chapters on Domestic and Economic Policy and Foreign Policy have been completely updated and modernized. The text reflects the current events that most interest you and your students, including recent Supreme Court rulings and state legislation on same-sex marriage, marijuana, privacy and recent NSA revelation coverage, current civil rights issues including the role of the police, foreign policy coverage of Syria and Ukraine, and more!

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A Letter to STUDENTS

The 2016 presidential elections proved to be the most consequential in years. If Democrat Hillary Clinton had been elected, the nation would have carried on much as it had under the last six years of the Barack Obama administration. We would have a Democratic president constrained by a Republican House of Representatives. That is not what happened, however. Republican Donald Trump is now president of the United States of America. Republicans control both chambers of Congress. Furthermore, Trump is not a conventional Republican. Would he really impose major restrictions on imports? Deport millions of unauthorized immigrants? Snuggle up to Russia's Vladimir Putin? Above all, how can he meet the expectations of his millions of energized supporters? What will happen to the economy? How far will Congress go in unraveling the Obama legacy? Whatever Trump and the Republicans do, the effect is likely to be felt by every citizen.

You'll learn about all of these developments and more in the *2017–2018 Edition of American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials*.

Our hope is that this book inspires you to join the exciting process of being an active, informed citizen. Your American Government course and the material you'll read here will give you the knowledge you'll need to understand our political system and develop well-informed opinions on the current issues and controversies you'll encounter in your daily life. We strive to highlight how American government and politics directly affect you in every chapter. We also suggest easy ways that you can take action in your community and become involved in the political process.

Special Features

- **Take Action: A Guide to Political Participation** is filled with resources and suggestions to help students stay informed and get involved in the political process.
- Thought-provoking **What If . . . ?**, **Beyond Our Borders**, and **Consider the Source** features help you understand key concepts and current events as well as develop a more informed and global perspective.
- **Why You Should Care about . . . ?** marginal features demonstrate why the topic at hand directly affects you and matters in your life.
- **Which Side Are You On?** sections challenge you to take a stand on controversial issues.
- **How You Can Make a Difference** features conclude each chapter with ways in which you can become actively involved in American politics.
- **Election 2016** features highlight the important impact of the 2016 elections and include an analysis of the campaigns and election results.
- **Critical-thinking questions** now accompany almost all boxed features, figures, tables, and photo captions, helping you apply and analyze the information presented.
- **Learning Outcomes** appear in each chapter opener, correlate to each major section to help you target your reading, and are revisited in each Chapter Summary and end-of-chapter Quiz to help you assess your comprehension and master the book's key concepts. Every chapter also concludes with key terms and a list of additional print and media resources. And the book is now seamlessly integrated with MindTap, directing you to a variety of online interactive activities that will help you test yourself on the book's Learning Outcomes.

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Instructor Companion Web Site for *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials, 2017–2018 Edition*

ISBN: 9781337091381

This Instructor Companion Web site is an all-in-one multimedia online resource for class preparation, presentation, and testing. Accessible through cengage.com/login with your faculty account, you will find available for download: book-specific Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentations; a Test Bank compatible with multiple learning management systems; an Instructor’s Manual; Microsoft® PowerPoint® Image Slides; and a JPEG Image Library.

The Test Bank, offered in Blackboard, Moodle, Desire2Learn, Canvas, and Angel formats, contains Learning Objective–specific multiple-choice, critical thinking short answer questions, and essay questions for each chapter. Import the test bank into your Learning Management System to edit and manage questions and to create tests.

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Cognero for American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials, 2017–2018 Edition

ISBN: 9781337091374

Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero is a flexible, online system that allows you to author, edit, and manage test bank content from multiple Cengage Learning solutions, create multiple test versions in an instant, and deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want. The test bank for *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials* contains Learning Objective–specific multiple-choice and essay questions for each chapter.

CourseReader for American Government

CourseReader for MindTap is available through the MindTap Instructor's Resource Center. This new feature provides access to Gale's authoritative library reference content to aid in the development of important supplemental readers for political science courses. Every Political Science MindTap provides Faculty access to a CourseReader database of readings, images, and videos from the resource center, all of which can be immediately added to MindTap with the click of a button. This capability can replace a separate reader and conveniently keeps all course materials in one place within a single MindTap. The selections within CourseReader are curated by experts and designed specifically for introductory courses.

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Schmidt likes to snow ski, ride hunter jumper horses, race sailboats, and scuba dive.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES:

Political Science

Introduction

It is no secret that college graduates are facing one of the toughest job markets in the past fifty years. Despite this challenge, those with a college degree have done much better than those without since the 2008 recession. One of the most important decisions a student has to make is the choice of a major. Many consider future job possibilities when making that call. A political science degree is useful for a successful career in many different fields, from lawyer to policy advocate, pollster to humanitarian worker. Employer surveys reveal that the skills that most employers value in successful employees—critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and clarity of verbal and written communication—are precisely the tools that political science courses should be helping you develop. This brief guide is intended to help spark ideas for what kinds of careers you might pursue with a political science degree and the types of activities you can engage in now to help you secure one of those positions after graduation.

Careers in Political Science

Law and Criminal Justice

Do you find that your favorite parts of your political science classes are those that deal with the Constitution, the legal system, and the courts? Then a career in law and criminal justice might be right for you. Traditional jobs in the field range from lawyer or judge to police or parole officer. Since 9/11, there has also been tremendous growth in the area of homeland security, which includes jobs in mission support, immigration, and travel security, as well as prevention and response.

Public Administration

The many offices of the federal government combined represent one of the largest employers in the United States. Flip to the bureaucracy chapter of this textbook and consider that each federal department, agency, and bureau you see looks to political science majors for future employees. A partial list of such agencies would include the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Federal Trade Commission. There are also thousands of staffers who work for members of Congress

or the Congressional Budget Office, many of whom were political science majors in college. This does not even begin to account for the multitude of similar jobs in state and local governments that you might consider as well.

Campaigns, Elections, and Polling

Are campaigns and elections the most exciting part of political science for you? Then you might consider a career in the growing industry based around political campaigns. From volunteering and interning to consulting, marketing, and fundraising, there are many opportunities for those who enjoy the competitive and high-stakes electoral arena. For those looking for careers that combine political knowledge with statistical skills, there are careers in public opinion polling. Pollsters work for independent national organizations such as Gallup and YouGov, or as part of news operations and campaigns. For those who are interested in survey methodology there are also a wide variety of non-political career opportunities in marketing and survey design.

Interest Groups, International and Nongovernmental Organizations

Is there a cause that you are especially passionate about? If so, there is a good chance that there are interest groups out there that are working hard to see some progress made on similar issues. Many of the positions that one might find in for-profit companies also exist in their non-profit interest group and nongovernmental organization counterparts, including lobbying and high-level strategizing. Do not forget that there are also quite a few major international organizations—such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the International Monetary Fund—where a degree in political science could be put to good use. While competition for those jobs tends to be fierce, your interest and knowledge about politics and policy will give you an advantage.

Foreign Service

Does a career in diplomacy and foreign affairs, complete with the opportunity to live and work abroad, sound exciting for you? Tens of thousands of people work for the State Department, both in Washington, D.C., and in consulates throughout the world. They represent the diplomatic interests of the United States abroad. Entrance into the Foreign Service follows a very specific process, starting with the

Foreign Service Officers Test—an exam given three times a year that includes sections on American government, history, economics, and world affairs. Being a political science major is a significant help in taking the FSOT.

Graduate School

While not a career, graduate school may be the appropriate next step for you after completing your undergraduate degree. Following the academic route, being awarded a Ph.D. or Master's degree in political science could open additional doors to a career in academia, as well as many of the professions mentioned earlier. If a career as a researcher in political science interests you, you should speak with your advisors about continuing your education.

Preparing While Still on Campus

Internships

One of the most useful steps you can take while still on campus is to visit your college's career center to discuss an internship in your field of interest. Not only does it give you a chance to experience life in the political science realm, it can lead to job opportunities later down the road and add experience to your resume.

Skills

In addition to your political science classes, there are a few skills any number of which will prove useful as a complement to your degree:

Writing: Like anything else, writing improves with practice. Writing is one of those skills that is applicable regardless of where your career might take you. Virtually every occupation relies on an ability to write cleanly, concisely, and persuasively.

Public Speaking: An oft-quoted 1977 survey showed that public speaking was the most commonly cited

fear among respondents. And yet oral communication is a vital tool in the modern economy. You can practice this skill in a formal class setting or through extracurricular activities that get you in front of a group.

Quantitative Analysis: As the Internet aids in the collection of massive amounts of information, the nation is facing a drastic shortage of people with basic statistical skills to interpret and use this data. A political science degree can go hand-in-hand with courses in introductory statistics.

Foreign Language: One skill that often helps a student or future employee stand out in a crowded job market is the ability to communicate in a language other than English. Solidify or set the foundation for your verbal and written foreign language communication skills while in school.

Student Leadership

One attribute that many employers look for is "leadership potential," which can be quite tricky to indicate on a resume or cover letter. What can help is a demonstrated record of involvement in clubs and organizations, preferably in a leadership role. While many people think immediately of student government, most student clubs allow you the opportunity to demonstrate your leadership skills.

Conclusion

We hope that reading this has sparked some ideas on potential future careers. As a next step, visit your college's career placement office, which is a great place to further explore what you have read here. You might also visit your college's alumni office to connect with graduates who are working in your field of interest. Political science opens the door to a lot of exciting careers; have fun exploring the possibilities!



TAKE ACTION

A GUIDE TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION



It's easy to think of politics as a spectator sport—something that politicians do, pundits analyze, and citizens watch. But there are many ways to get engaged with politics, to interact with the political world and participate in it, and even to effect change.



GET INFORMED.

Find Out Where You Fit and What You Know

- You already have some opinions about a variety of political issues. Do you have a sense of where your views place you on the political map? Get a feel for your ideological leanings by taking The World's Smallest Political Quiz: www.theadvocates.org/quiz/.
- Which Founding Founder Are You? The National Constitutional Center can help you with that. Go to

constitutioncenter.org/foundersquiz/ to discover which Founding Father's personality most resembles your own.

- The U.S. Constitution is an important part of the context in which American politics takes place. Do you know what the Constitution says? Take the Constitution I.Q. Quiz: www.constitutionfacts.com/. Was your score higher than the national average?

- At the National Constitution Center you can explore the interactive Constitution and learn more about provisions in that document: constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution.
- Find out what those who want to become U.S. citizens have to do—and what they have to know. Go to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website at www.uscis.gov/. What is involved in applying for citizenship? Take the Naturalization Self-Test at <https://myuscis.gov/preptest/civics>. How did you do?

Think about How Your Political Views Have Been Shaped

- Giving some thought to how agents of political socialization—your family, your schools, your peers, for example—have contributed to your political beliefs and attitudes may help you understand why others might not share your views on politics. Then have conversations with people in your classes or in your residence hall about the people, institutions, and experiences that influenced the way they view the political world.
- Explore how your views on political issues compare with those of a majority of Americans. There are a number of good polling sites that report public opinion on a range of topics.
 - The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press conducts regular polls on politics and policy issues: www.people-press.org/.
 - Public Agenda reports poll data and material on major issues: publicagenda.org/.
 - The results of recent polls and an archive of past polls can be found at Gallup: www.gallup.com/.
 - The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research is a leading archive of data from surveys of public opinion: ropercenter.cornell.edu/.
 - PollingReport organizes public opinion data from various sources by keyword: pollingreport.com/.
- Keep up with news—print, broadcast, and online. Remember that different news organizations (or media brands) will report the same information in



GET CONNECTED.

different ways. Don't avoid certain news sources because you think you might not agree with the way they report the news. It's just as important to know how people are talking about issues as it is to know about the issues themselves.

- One of the best ways to get to the source of the news is to get your information from the same place that journalists do. Often they take their cues or are alerted to news events by news agencies like the nonprofit cooperative, Associated Press: ap.org/.
- Installing a few key apps on your phone or tablet can make all the difference in being informed. Try downloading the Associated Press (AP) app for short updates from news around the world, as they happen. There are tons of other great political apps, some of which are fairly polarized, others that are neutral, and still others that are just plain silly.

Blogs

The blogosphere affords views of politics that may be presented differently than the way the mainstream media does it. In the last several decades, blogs have surged in popularity as a source for political news and opinion.

Social Media

Staying connected can be as simple as following local, national, or international politics on social media. U.S. House Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy, President Barack Obama, Senator Elizabeth Warren, House Speaker Paul Ryan, and even the White House have Instagram accounts worth following. Numerous politicians and political outlets are also on Twitter and Facebook.

Check the Data

- It's not always easy to figure out whether a news report or public statement is accurate. PolitiFact, a project of the *Tampa Bay Times*, is a good place to go to get the facts: www.politifact.com/. Check out the Truth-O-Meter, and get it on your smartphone or tablet.
- A project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, www.factcheck.org/ is a nonpartisan, nonprofit "consumer advocate" for voters that monitors the factual accuracy of what political players are saying in TV ads, speeches, and interviews.

Keep Up During Election Season

- Project Vote Smart offers information on elections and candidates: votesmart.org/
- Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight features election analysis, in addition to covering sports and economics: www.fivethirtyeight.com/
- Stay connected to the horse-race aspect of electoral politics by tracking election polls. There are many good sources:
 - For a comprehensive collection of election polls, go to the RealClearPolitics website: realclearpolitics.com/polls/. RealClearPolitics is a good source for other political news and opinions as well.

- Polls for U.S. federal elections, including state-by-state polls, can be found at electoral-vote.com/.
- HuffPost Pollster publishes pre-election poll results combined into interactive charts: elections.huffingtonpost.com/pollster/. During presidential elections, additional maps and electoral vote counts can be found at HuffPost Politics Election Dashboard.

Monitor Money and Influence in Politics

The Center for Responsive Politics website is an excellent source for information about who's contributing what amounts to which candidates: www.opensecrets.org/. You can also use the lobbying database to identify the top lobbying firms, the agencies most frequently lobbied, and the industries that spend the most on lobbying activities. Explore the site's information on the revolving door, which identifies the lobbying firms, agencies, and industries that have the highest numbers of people who have moved between government and interest group positions.

Connect with Congress

You can, of course, learn a lot about what's going on in Congress from the websites of the House of Representatives and the Senate: www.house.gov/ and www.senate.gov/. But check out GovTrack to find out where your representative and senators fall on the leadership and ideology charts, as well as their most recently sponsored bills and votes on legislation: www.govtrack.us/.





GET INVOLVED.

Take an Interest in Your Community—Offer to Help

Every community—large or small—can use energetic people willing to help where there is a need. Local nonprofit agencies serving the homeless, battered women, or troubled teens often welcome volunteers who are willing to pitch in. You can learn a lot about the public policies that focus on social services while doing some good for others.

The Internet also has abundant resources about nonprofits and charities and how you can get involved:

- **Idealist.org** is a great place to find organizations and events that are looking for employees, interns, and volunteers. Filter by type and area of focus (women, disaster relief, animals, etc.) to find a cause that fits you.
- **Tinyspark.org** is a watchdog for nonprofits and charity organizations. It highlights individuals and groups that are doing good things in communities and around the globe and checks on those who may not be doing as much good as you'd think. Tinyspark also has a podcast.
- **Charitynavigator.org** is another tool for checking on charities. It reports on charities in terms of how much of their donations go to the cause, which charities are in the red, which are worth promoting, and so on—it's kind of like opensecrets.org for charities.

Design Your Own Ways to Take Action

- Start a network to match those who need assistance and those who want to help. For example, there may be

people on your campus who, because of a disability or recent injury, need someone to help carry belongings, open doors, or push wheelchairs.

- Do you want to raise awareness about an issue? Is there a cause that you think needs attention? Talk with friends. Find out if they share your concerns. Turn your discussions into a blog. Create videos of events you think are newsworthy and share them online.

Join a Group on Campus

You probably see fliers promoting groups and recruiting members posted all over campus—in the student center, in the residence halls, in classroom buildings. Chances are, there's a group organized around something you're interested in or care about. Maybe it's an organization that works to bring clean water to remote parts of the world. Perhaps it's an organization that works to foster tolerance on campus. The American Civil Liberties Union may have a chapter on your campus. The American Red Cross may be there, too. You'll find College Republicans, College Democrats, groups organized around race or culture, groups that go on alternative spring break trips to give direct service to communities in need, service organizations of all kinds; groups that serve to create community among culturally underrepresented students, and groups that care about the environment. The list goes on and on.

If you have an interest that isn't represented by the groups on your campus, start your own. Your college or university should have an office of campus life (or something similar) that can help you navigate the process for establishing a student organization.

Remember, too, that there are hundreds of political interest groups with national reach. Check out their Web sites to see if you want to join.

Vote (But Don't Forget to Register First)

- Voting is one of the most widely shared acts of participation in American democracy. You can learn about the laws governing voting in your state—and all of the others—by going to the Web site of the National Conference of State Legislatures and its link to Voter Identification Requirements: www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id/
- Register: Enter “register to vote in [your state]” in a search engine. The office in your state that administers voting and elections (in some states it's the office of the Secretary of State, in others it might be the State Board of Elections) will have a website that outlines the steps you will need to follow. If you need to vote absentee, you'll find out how to do that here, too.
- If you want to view a sample ballot to familiarize yourself with what you'll be looking at when you go to the polls, you will probably be able to view one online. Just enter “sample ballot” in a search engine. Your local election board, the League of Women Voters, or your district library often post a sample ballot online.
- Vote: Make sure you know the location and hours for your polling place.

Work for a Campaign

Candidates welcome energetic volunteers. So do groups that are supporting (or opposing) ballot measures. While sometimes tiring and frustrating, working in campaign politics can also be exhilarating and very rewarding. Find the contact information for a campaign you're interested in on their website and inquire about volunteer opportunities.

Be Part of Campus Media

Do you have a nose for news and do you write well? Try reporting for the university newspaper. Work your way up to an editor's position. If broadcast media is your thing, get involved with your college radio station or go on air on campus TV.

Try Your Hand at Governing

Get involved with student government. Serve on committees. Run for office.

Engage with Political Institutions, Government Agencies, and Public Policymakers— at Home and Abroad

- Remember that your U.S. Representative has district offices—one may be in the town in which you live. Your U.S. Senators also have offices in various locations around the state. Check to see if internships are available or if there are opportunities for volunteering. If you plan to be in Washington, D.C. and want to visit Capitol Hill, you can book a tour in advance through your senators' or representative's offices. That's where you get gallery passes, too.
- Spend some time in Washington. Many colleges and universities have established internship programs with government agencies and institutions. Some have semester-long programs that will bring you into contact with policymakers in Congress and in the bureaucracy, with journalists, and with a variety of other prominent newsmakers. Politics and government come alive, and the contacts you make while participating in such programs can often lead to jobs after graduation.
- If you're interested in the Supreme Court and you're planning a trip to Washington, try to watch oral argument. Go to the Court's website to access the link for oral arguments: www.supremecourt.gov/. You'll find the argument calendar and a visitor's guide. (The secret is to get in line early.)



GET INFORMED.

GET CONNECTED.

GET INVOLVED.

- If you can't make it to Washington, D.C. for a semester-long program or even a few days, become a virtual tourist. Take the U.S. Capitol Virtual Tour: www.aoc.gov/virtual-tours/capitolbldg/tourfiles/.
- You can take a virtual tour of the Supreme Court at the Web site of the Oyez Project at IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law: www.oyez.org/tour/. And you can listen to Supreme Court oral arguments wherever you are. Go to the Oyez site and check ISCOTUSnow (blogs.kentlaw.iit.edu/iscotus/).
- Studying abroad, of course, is a great way to expand your horizons and to get a feel for different cultures and the global nature of politics and the economy. There are programs that will take you virtually anywhere in the world. Check with the Study Abroad Office at your college or university to find out more.
- You can gain some insight into dealing with global issues even if you stay stateside. Participate in the Model UN Club on your campus (or start a Model UN Club if there isn't one). By participating in Model UN, you will become aware of international issues and conflicts and recognize the role that the United Nations can play in forging collective responses to global concerns. Model UN conferences are simulations of a session of the United Nations; your work as part of a country's UN delegation will give you hands-on experience in diplomacy.



7 THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

A voter-registration drive on a university campus. *What do we call a system in which we elect the people who govern us?*

Blend Images/Alamy



*These five **LEARNING OUTCOMES** below are designed to help improve your understanding of this chapter:*

- 1:** Define the terms *politics, government, order, liberty, authority, and legitimacy*.
- 2:** Distinguish the major features of direct democracy and representative democracy, and describe majoritarianism, elite theory, and pluralism.
- 3:** Summarize the conflicts that can occur between the values of liberty and order, and between those of liberty and equality.
- 4:** Discuss conservatism, liberalism, and other popular American ideological positions.
- 5:** Explain how a changing American population and other social trends may affect the future of our nation.

What if...

We Had No Bill of Rights?

Background

You know that you have the right to speak freely about the government without fear of being arrested for what you say. You have probably heard of the right to bear arms. These rights come from the Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Because of these amendments, the government may not pass laws that limit freedom of speech, religion, and many other freedoms. You will learn more about the civil liberties guaranteed by the Bill of Rights in Chapter 4.

The Bill of Rights is built into the founding document that guides our government. As a result, it commands a certain reverence. Merely by its existence, it can dissuade citizens and government leaders from impairing the civil liberties of fellow Americans.

What If We Had No Bill of Rights?

Because the Bill of Rights protects our fundamental liberties, some people jump to the conclusion that, without it, we would have no rights. Consider, though, that almost all state constitutions enumerate many of the same rights. It is true that if the rights of the people were not written into state and national constitutions, these rights would be entirely dependent on the political process—on elections and on laws passed by the U.S. Congress and state legislatures. Popular rights would still be safe. Unpopular ones would be in danger.

The Right To Bear Arms

Take as an example the Second Amendment, which guarantees to citizens the right to bear arms. If the Bill of Rights did not exist, would it mean that individuals would be unable to keep firearms in their homes? Probably not. Few localities in the United States have tried to ban handguns completely. Almost all states have gun laws that are far more permissive than they have to be under the Constitution. Indeed, it was not until 2008 and 2010 that the highest court in the land, the Supreme Court, even addressed this issue. The Court ruled that complete bans on possessing handguns are unconstitutional.

The Rights of Criminal Defendants

According to the Sixth Amendment, accused individuals have the right to a speedy and public trial. Also, according to the Fifth Amendment, no accused “shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” These rules protect people who are accused of crimes. Certainly, without the Bill of Rights, we could imagine many more restrictions on the rights of criminal defendants. Why? Because those accused of crimes are not a popular group of people. Many of the protections now given to criminal defendants would probably not exist if there were no Bill of Rights.

Free Speech

Without the Bill of Rights, we would probably see many more laws restricting political contributions and advertising. We could expect laws against violent video games and pornography on the Internet. In contrast, given current popular attitudes, it is unlikely that “subversive” speech would be greatly restricted. Most Americans and their elected representatives support the right to denounce the government.

For Critical Analysis

► **The Fifth Amendment guarantees that no one can lose her or his liberty or property without due process. Yet, during World War II, we imprisoned tens of thousands of Japanese American citizens, based solely upon their race. Could that happen today to some other group of citizens, such as Muslim Americans? Why or why not?**

► **Which of the rights mentioned in this feature do you think are the most important? Why?**



Tom Carter/Alamy

Image 1–1 A conservative protester holds up a copy of the Bill of Rights. Which of the rights mentioned here might be especially popular with conservatives?

Politics, for many people, is the “great game”—better than soccer, better than chess. Scores may be tallied only every two years, at elections, but the play continues at all times. The game, furthermore, is played for high stakes. Politics can affect what you spend. It can determine what you can legally do in your spare time. (The *What If . . .* feature that opened this chapter examined some of the ways in which your freedoms might be restricted if the Bill of Rights did not exist.) In worst-case circumstances, politics can even threaten your life.

Few topics are so entertaining as politics—and so important. How did the great game turn out in the elections held on November 8, 2016? We address that question in this chapter’s *Election 2016* feature.

In our democratic republic, citizens play an important role by voting. Although voting is extremely important, it is only one of the ways that citizens can exercise their political influence. Americans can also join a political organization or interest group, stage a protest, or donate funds to a political campaign or cause. There are countless ways to become involved. Informed participation begins with knowledge, however, and this text aims to provide you with a strong foundation in American government and politics.

Politics and Government

What is politics? **Politics** can be understood as the process of resolving conflicts and deciding, as political scientist Harold Lasswell put it in his classic definition, “who gets what, when, and how.”¹ More specifically, politics is the struggle over power or influence within organizations or informal groups that can grant benefits or privileges.

We can identify many such groups and organizations. In every community that makes decisions through formal or informal rules, politics exists. For example, when a church decides to construct a new building or hire a new minister, the decision is made politically. Politics can be found in schools, social groups, and any other organized collection of individuals. Of all the organizations that are controlled by political activity, however, the most important is the government.

What is the government? Certainly, it is an **institution**—that is, an ongoing organization that performs certain functions for society. An institution has a life separate from the lives of the individuals who are part of it at any given moment in time. The **government** can be defined as an institution within which decisions are made that resolve conflicts and allocate benefits and privileges. The government is also the preeminent institution within society because it has the ultimate authority for making these decisions.

Government Is Everywhere

The government is even more important than politics. Many people largely ignore politics, but it is impossible to ignore government. It is everywhere, like the water you drink and the air you breathe. Both air and water, by the way, are subject to government pollution standards. The food you eat comes from an agricultural industry that is heavily regulated and subsidized by the government. Step outside your residence, and almost immediately you will walk down a government-owned street or drive on a government-owned highway.

From Your Birth. The county government records your birth. Your toys, crib, and baby food must meet government safety standards. After a few years, you’ll start school, and 86 percent of all children attend public—which is to say, government—schools. Some children attend private schools or are home schooled, but their education must also meet government

Learning Outcome 1:

Define the terms *politics, government, order, liberty, authority, and legitimacy.*

politics

The struggle over power or influence within organizations or informal groups that can grant benefits or privileges.

institution

An ongoing organization that performs certain functions for society.

government

The institution that has the ultimate authority for making decisions that resolve conflicts and allocate benefits and privileges within a society.

1. Harold Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, and How* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith Publisher, 1990; originally published in 1936).