



**GINSBERG
LOWI
WEIR
TOLBERT**



ELEVENTH EDITION

ELEVENTH EDITION

We the People

AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

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We the People

AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

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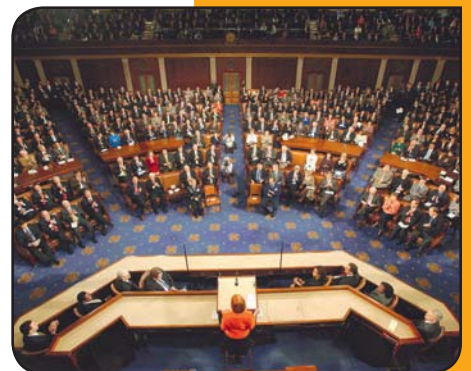
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preface

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/wethepeople11.

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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ELEVENTH 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 left is the logo "Federal Student Aid" with the tagline "An OFFICE of the U.S. DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION". To the right is the text "PROUD SPONSOR of the AMERICAN MIND®" and a search bar with the text "Search StudentAid.gov". Below the header 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 brief description of the content.

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”

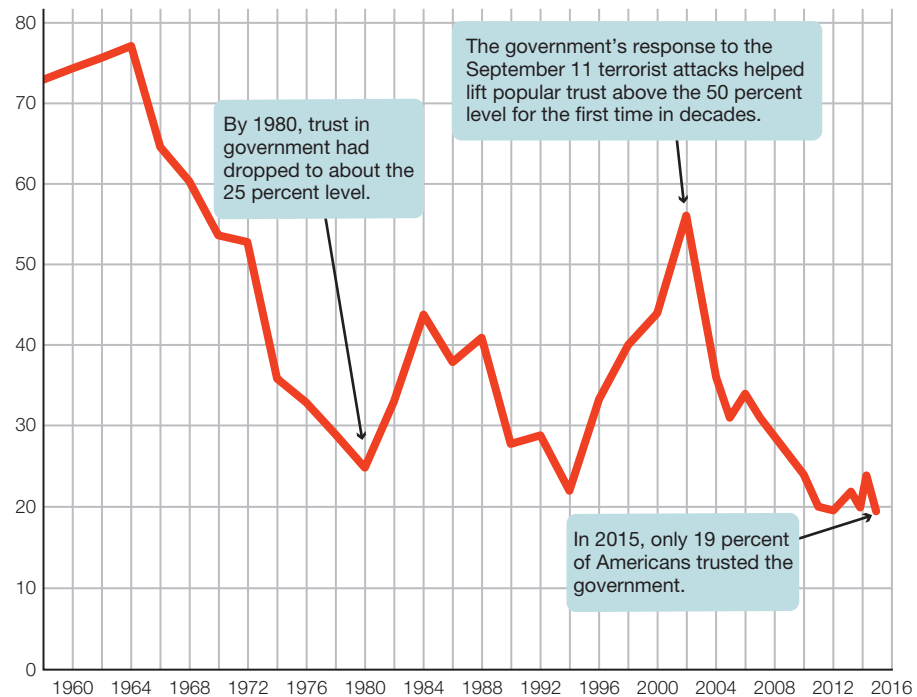


TABLE 1.1

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.