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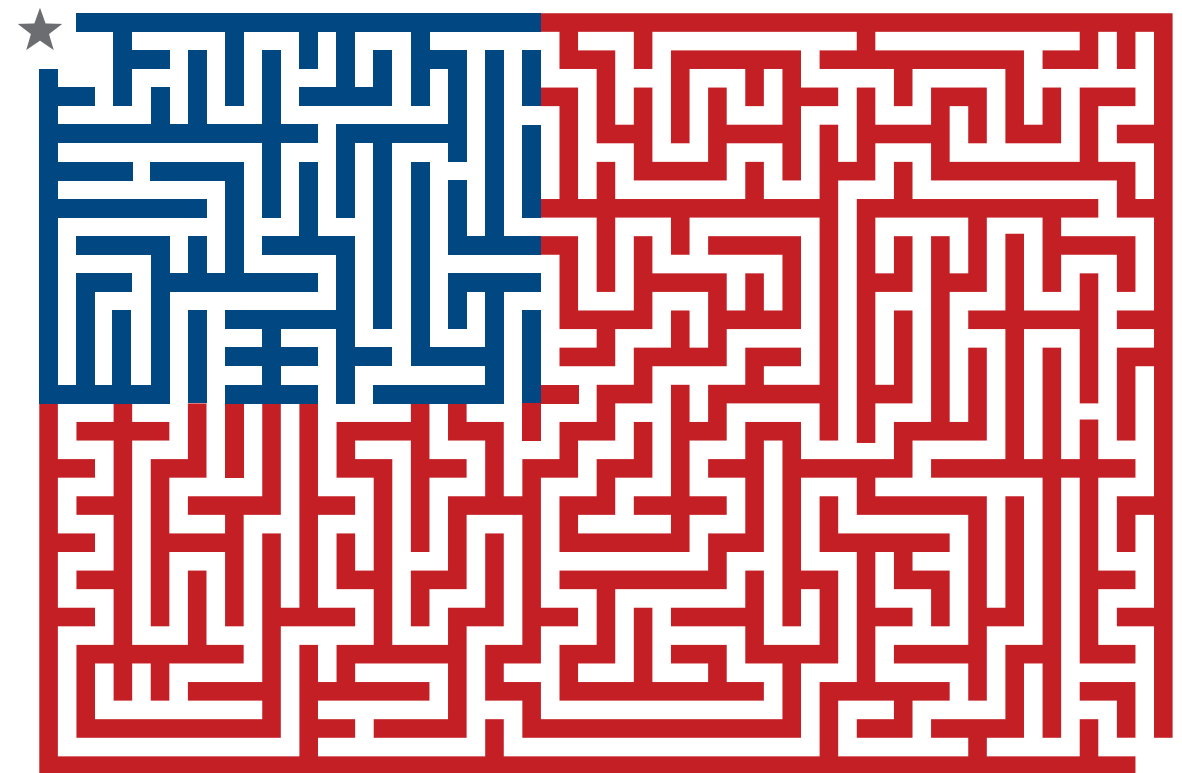
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VAVRECK  
JOHNSON

THE  
**LOGIC OF AMERICAN POLITICS**

TENTH  
EDITION

# THE **LOGIC** OF AMERICAN POLITICS

TENTH EDITION



Samuel  
**KERNELL**

Gary C.  
**JACOBSON**

Thad  
**KOUSSER**

Lynn  
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# **The Logic of American Politics**

**10th Edition**

*To Dianne, Kate, Jeff, and Julie*

The following dedication to James Madison is from the oldest American government textbook we have found: William Alexander Duer's *Outlines of the Constitutional Jurisprudence of the United States*, published in 1833.

*To you, Sir, as the surviving member of the august assembly that framed the Constitution, and of the illustrious triumvirate who, in vindicating it from the objections of its first assailants, succeeded in recommending it to the adoption of their country; to you, who, in discharging the highest duties of its administration, proved the stability and excellence of the Constitution, in war as well as in peace, and determined the experiment in favor of republican institutions and the right of self-government; to you, who in your retirement, raised a warning voice against those heresies in the construction of that Constitution which for a moment threatened to impair it; to you, Sir, as alone amongst the earliest and the latest of its defenders,—this brief exposition of the organization and principles of the National Government, intended especially for the instruction of our American youth, is most respectfully, and, in reference to your public services, most properly inscribed.*

*Columbia College, N.Y.  
August 1st, 1833.*

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# The Logic of American Politics

10th Edition

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# Preface

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Donald Trump's election and his first term in office seem only to point out the *illogic* of American politics. Since his historic election in 2016, America's politics has been in continuous tumult. The question we confront as we take the Trump presidency and the COVID-19 pandemic into account asks, does Donald Trump's election and first term in office break the mold, requiring us to rethink *Logic's* approach to the systematic forces and processes that govern the play of politics in Washington and across the nation? Perhaps not. The tumultuous events of these years (and of 2020 in particular) might represent the proverbial "exception that proves the rule." If the latter, Trump's election and presidency allow us to glean new insights into American politics in other political actors' responses to Trump's unconventional behavior. Answering this question lies at the heart of this revision.

Obviously, assessment of the COVID-19 crisis and the extraordinary 2020 election are major topics of **Chapter 11's** coverage of voting and elections. Sizing up Trump's first term occupies much of the attention of **Chapter 7** on the presidency. In both we seek to square the Trump years with the stable systematic forces at work in both arenas. But this question pervades every other chapter as well. We close **Chapter 2** ("The Constitution") by considering the proliferation of contentious separation of powers issues that in some instances preceded the Trump presidency but that his policies have made more salient and problematic. **Chapter 3's** coverage of federalism explores the question of how our layered government facilitates and interferes with addressing a pandemic, spotlighting the cutthroat competition between states for medical and testing supplies that took place in early 2020. **Chapter 4** reports on the ongoing tribulations on two fronts: policing practices when dealing with minorities and the still unresolved Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy affecting several hundred thousand children brought into the country illegally. This chapter also considers the Supreme Court's intervention in the fight over rights for LGBTQ people. With Democrats controlling the House and Republicans the Senate and White House during the 116th Congress, **Chapter 6** explores where they found agreement and when partisan polarization set the chambers and branches at odds.

We learn in **Chapter 8** just how extensive presidents' administrative authority is, in chronicling President Trump's directions to administration officials to roll back the Obama administration's extensive formal and informal regulations of businesses and state administration of federal programs. **Chapter 9** finds the federal judiciary giving new meaning to activism in which an increasing number of district judges in the states weigh in on national policy by issuing national injunctions, again lining up consistently with the

preferences of the party of the president who appointed them. **Chapter 10** takes a close look at public opinion, paying particular attention to issues on which it has changed over the last several decades but also to issues on which opinion has been remarkably stable. **Chapter 12** notes the increasingly important role of political parties in shaping American politics and highlights the central function of parties: to make it easier for candidates to get votes and easier for voters to make choices.

**Chapter 13** introduces the story of Alexandria Villasenor, a 14-year-old activist who spent every Friday for 41 weeks demonstrating for climate action at the headquarters of the United Nations, sitting through rain, sleet, snow, and the polar vortex, as an example of a grassroots approach to interest group influence. **Chapter 14** addresses the ever-changing role of the media in American politics. In this edition, we separate media into legacy media, digital-only media, and social media and discuss how the news is produced and consumed for each type. And in **Chapter 15**, we use the logic of politics to explain what drove President Trump to shut down the government in 2019 in the attempt to obtain federal funding for a wall, probe the incentives that Congressional Democrats responded to in this policy debate, and explain the eventual political and policy outcomes of this high-stakes battle.

One of the themes of *The Logic of American Politics* is that, alongside the outsized personalities that inhabit Washington, DC, and the idiosyncratic events that appear to drive it, systematic forces remain at work. The book's goal is to help students understand these forces and to see how they shape the choices of political leaders today. We want to help readers discern the rationale embedded in the extraordinary and complex array of American political institutions and practices. To accomplish this goal, we analyze political institutions and practices as (imperfect) solutions to problems facing people who need to act collectively. We highlight recurring obstacles to collective action in various contexts to illuminate the diverse institutional means that American politicians have created to overcome them. These obstacles include the conflict over values and interests, the difficulty of aggregating individual preferences into collective decisions, the need for coordination, and the threat of renegeing implicit in every collective undertaking. Stable political communities strengthen their capacity to act collectively and reduce the costs of doing so by fashioning appropriate institutions. These institutions feature majority and plurality rules and procedures that convert votes into representation, delegate authority to agents, and permit some institutional actors to propose courses of action while allocating to others the right to veto proposals. Throughout the book we emphasize the strategic dimension of political action, from the Framers' tradeoffs in crafting the Constitution to the efforts of contemporary officeholders to shape policy, so students can understand current institutions as the products of political conflicts, as well as the venues for resolving them.

New challenges pose fresh problems for collective action for which current institutions may seem inadequate. The institutions created to deal with the challenges of collective action at one historical moment can continue to shape politics long after those challenges have receded. Therefore, we pay a good deal of attention to the historical development of political institutions, a narrative that reveals politicians and citizens grappling

intellectually, as well as politically, with their collective action problems and discovering the institutional means to resolve them.

This book is the product of our nearly forty years of teaching American politics in a way that seeks to go beyond the basics. In addition to introducing students to descriptive facts and fundamental principles, we have sought to help them cultivate an ability to analyze and understand American politics for themselves. Each of us is variously associated with the rational choice school, yet over time our research and teaching have benefited from many of its insights, especially those familiarly referred to as “the new institutionalism.” We have found these insights helpful in making sense of American politics in terms that students can grasp intuitively. Having absorbed these ideas into our own scholarly thinking, we employ them here to help students understand what the American political system looks like and why it has assumed its present shape.

## Approach

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Our emphasis on the primacy of institutions extends well beyond collecting and processing the preferences of citizens and politicians. In that institutions may structure the choices available to voters and their leaders, we view them as indispensable in explaining public opinion and the strategic behavior of the political organizations that seek to influence and mobilize these preferences. We therefore have adopted a somewhat unorthodox structure for the book. We cover the rules of the game and the formal institutions of government before discussing the “input” side of the political process—public opinion, elections, parties, and interest groups—because we emphasize the way rules and institutions structure the actions and choices of citizens and politicians alike.

The introduction offers ideas and concepts employed throughout the text. They can be classified under two broad categories: *collective action problems* and *institutional design concepts*. Both sets of ideas have deeply informed each chapter’s argument. Because this is an introduction to American politics, rather than to political theory, we have intentionally sublimated the analytic ideas in favor of enlisting them to explicate real politics. Along with traditional concepts that remain indispensable to understanding American politics—such as representation, majority rule, and separation of powers—we introduce students to a number of ideas from economics that political scientists have found increasingly useful for exploring American politics. These include the focal points of coordination, prisoner’s dilemma, free riding, tragedy of the commons, transaction costs, principal–agent relations, and public goods.

## Organization of the Book

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The substantive chapters are arranged in four parts.

**Part I** covers the foundational elements of American politics: the Constitution, federalism, civil rights, and civil liberties. The chapters that cover these topics give students an

understanding of the political origins and development of the basic structure and rules of the national polity.

**Part II** examines the major formal institutions of national government: Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the federal judiciary. These chapters reveal how the politics and logic of their development have shaped their current organizational features, practices, and relations with one another.

**Part III** analyzes the institutions that link citizens with government officials, again in terms of their historical development, political logic, and present-day operations. Chapters in this section are devoted to public opinion; voting, campaigns, and elections; political parties; interest groups; and the news media.

**Part IV** features a concluding chapter that evaluates American policymaking through the lens of our collective action framework. Through five vignettes that span policies from health care reform to global climate change, this chapter uses the concepts covered throughout the book to yield insights into the sources of policy problems, point to possible solutions, and explain why agreement on those solutions is often difficult to achieve. Equipped with this understanding of the logic of policymaking, students can apply the same logic underlying these examples to other policy challenges, from immigration reform to pork barrel spending and U.S. disputes with other nations. Students come away from the chapter and the book as a whole with the tools needed to think in new ways about how American government works.

## Instructional Features

*The Logic of American Politics* includes special features designed to engage students' attention and to help them think analytically about the subject.

- Learning objectives and key thematic questions at the beginning of each chapter preview important themes and set the tone for critical thinking.
- Each chapter opens with a story from the real world of politics that introduces one or more of the central issues to be explored in that chapter.
- In addition, important terms and concepts throughout the text appear in bold-face the first time they are defined. These key terms are listed at the end of each chapter, with page references to their explanations, and are defined in a glossary at the back of the book.
- The **Logic of Politics** boxes explain the logical rationale or implications of some institutional feature presented in the text.
- Another set of boxes, **Strategy and Choice**, explores how politicians use institutions and respond to the incentives that institutions provide in pursuing their personal or constituencies' interests.

- In addition to examining the logic of the policymaking process in our concluding chapter, we continue to cover public policy where it is most relevant to the discussion, incorporating policy issues throughout the book. **Politics to Policy** boxes explain how policies reflect the underlying political rationale of the institutions that produce them.
- To encourage students to continue their studies of American politics beyond the pages of this volume, we have included annotated reading lists at the end of each chapter.

## Digital Resources

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This text includes an array of instructor teaching materials designed to save you time and to help you keep students engaged. To learn more, visit [sagepub.com](http://sagepub.com) or contact your SAGE representative at [sagepub.com/findmyrep](http://sagepub.com/findmyrep).

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# A Note to Students

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## Plan of the Book

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Our analysis of the logic of American politics begins in Chapter 1 with an introduction to the analytical concepts we draw on throughout the text. Although these concepts are straightforward and intuitive, we do not expect you to understand them fully until they have been applied in later chapters. The rest of the text is arranged in four main parts.

**Part I** looks at the foundational elements of the political system that are especially relevant to understanding modern American politics. It begins with the constitutional system (Chapter 2, “The Constitution”) and then moves on to the relations between the national government and the states (Chapter 3, “Federalism”); the evolution of civil rights and the definition of citizenship (Chapter 4, “Civil Rights”); and the establishment of civil liberties, such as freedom of speech and religion (Chapter 5, “Civil Liberties”). A recurring theme of Part I is *nationalization*, the gradual shift of authority from state and local governments to the national government.

**Part II** examines the four basic institutions of America’s national government: Congress (Chapter 6), the presidency (Chapter 7), the bureaucracy (Chapter 8), and the federal judiciary (Chapter 9). The development of effective, resourceful institutions at the national level has made it possible for modern-day politicians to tackle problems that in an earlier time they would have been helpless to solve. We explain how all four institutions have evolved along the paths initiated and confined by the Constitution in response to the forces of nationalization and other social and economic changes.

**Part III** surveys the institutions that keep citizens informed about what their representatives are doing and enable them to influence their elected officials through voting and other forms of participation. Chapter 10, “Public Opinion,” explores the nature of modern political communication by focusing on the ins and outs of mass public opinion. Chapter 11, “Voting, Campaigns, and Elections,” examines the ways in which candidates’ strategies and voters’ preferences interact at the polls to produce national leaders and, on occasion, create mandates for policies. The Constitution mentions neither political parties nor interest groups, and the Framers were deeply suspicious of both. But they are vital to helping citizens make sense of politics and pursue political goals effectively. In Chapter 12, “Political Parties,” and Chapter 13, “Interest Groups,” we explain how and why parties and interest groups have flourished as intermediaries between citizens and government officials. President Woodrow Wilson once aptly observed that “news is the

atmosphere of politics.” Chapter 14 looks at the news media both as channels of communication from elected leaders to their constituents and as independent sources of information about the leaders’ performance. The chapter also considers the implications of the rise of the Internet in coordinating the collective efforts of unorganized publics.

**Part IV**, which consists of Chapter 15, concludes our inquiry by evaluating American public policymaking through the lens of our collective action framework to discern the logic of the policymaking process.

## Special Features

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This book contains several special features designed to help you grasp the logic of American politics. Because these features, including the substantive captions, play an integral role in the presentation and discussion, *you should read them with as much care as you do the text.*

- At the outset of each chapter are key questions that preview important themes and, we hope, will pique your curiosity.
- Within each chapter, thematic boxes labeled **Logic of Politics** consider more fully the logical rationale and implications of certain features of government design introduced in the core text.
- Another set of boxes, **Strategy and Choice**, focuses on the sometimes imaginative ways politicians enlist institutions to advance their agendas and their constituents’ goals.
- A third set of thematic boxes, **Politics to Policy**, treats some of the public policy issues that have sprung forth from the political process.
- Additional boxes, tables, figures, photographs, and other visuals clarify and enliven the text.
- To encourage you to pursue more information on topics you find particularly interesting, we have included annotated lists of suggested readings at the end of each chapter.

## How to Read the Graphs

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A picture is worth a thousand words. You may think this book is too long as it is, but it would be a lot longer if we couldn’t use figures and graphs to show you important relationships. Figures tell stories, and if we have a figure in a chapter it is because the story it tells is important to your understanding or thinking about the concepts in the chapter. Don’t skip the figures! They are an important element in really understanding what we’re talking about.

Because figures are so important to learning, imagination, and discovery, it is important you are comfortable interpreting them and feel at home looking at data presented visually. Before we get started with substantive material, we wanted to make sure you know how to evaluate the figures we use.

There are several types of figures. We use a few repeatedly:

- **Bar graphs** show numbers that are *independent* of each other. Examples might include things like the number of people who preferred each of the presidential candidates in the last election.
- **Line graphs** show you how numbers have *changed over time*. They are used when you have data that are connected, and to show trends, for example, average support for the president in each month of the year.
- **Cartesian graphs** or **scatter plots** have numbers on both axes, which therefore allow you to see *how changes in one thing affect another*. For example, we may want to show how changes in consumer sentiment are related to changes in presidential approval.

The first step in reading any figure or graph is understanding what you are looking at.

- The place to start is with the axes. Graphs generally have two axes, the lines that run across the bottom of the figure and typically up the left side.
- The line along the bottom is called the horizontal or x-axis, and the line up the side is called the vertical or y-axis. (An easy way to remember which one is which is to think of the letter Y and its stem extending down the vertical axis line.)
- Both axes can contain either numbers or categories of things. They generally start with the lowest value at the origin of the axes (the place where both lines meet, the bottom left corner of the figure). The numbers or categories typically increase (if they are cardinal in nature) as you move to the right on the horizontal axis and up on the vertical axis.
- A good figure has labels on both axes to help the reader interpret the data. A good figure also starts and ends at reasonable numbers. Checking the axes is an important first step in reading a figure. They answer the questions, what is the purpose of this figure, and how will it show me the data?
- The data in figures are often presented as lines, markers (like dots), or bars. In scatter plots, which show the relationship between what is on the horizontal and vertical axes, figures often contain a line across the diagonal at forty-five degrees. This line is called the forty-five-degree line. It is helpful especially if the axes of the figure take on the same values. In this case, the forty-five-degree line represents the cases (the dots) where the values on the horizontal

axis match the values on the vertical axis *exactly*. Dots on the line are exact matches. Dots off the line are not—specifically, those above the line are cases in which values are higher on the y-axis than on the x-axis, and dots below the line are the opposite.

- In addition to these important elements on the graph, the information around the figure is also important. Good figures have a title that tells you exactly what the story in the figure is. Figures should also give you a time frame for the data they present and a note that tells you the source of the data shown and when it was collected.

Practice interpreting a few graphs so you will be ready to think about the figures in the chapters to come!

### One More Thing

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Politics, like every significant human endeavor, becomes more intriguing the more deeply it is explored and understood. Our book aims to give you not only a strong basic foundation for understanding political life in the present-day United States but also a glimpse of how intellectually enjoyable it can be to grapple with its puzzles and paradoxes.