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# Why Politics Matters

An Introduction to Political Science

4e

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# Why Politics Matters:

## An Introduction to Political Science 4e

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# Dedication

To my wife Lauren and our children Jack and Megan.

—K. L. D.

To my parents, Veena, Nikhil, Jaya, and to the memory  
of U.S. Congressman Edward J. Patten.

—J. N. P.



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## Why Politics *Should* Matter to You

With the start of each new semester comes the initial thrill of meeting new students enrolled in our introduction to political science course. At Monmouth University, where we teach, the introductory course has always been considered the “gateway” to the discipline—a general education requirement that attracts majors from across the academic spectrum. We meet students studying everything from accounting, marketing, and management to anthropology, biology, and music. Thus, the learning environment includes a wide variety of interesting and creative students majoring primarily in subjects other than political science. Although each section will also have a number of politically active, politically motivated undergrads, the classroom is mainly filled with nonmajors. In many ways, it was this reality that made us consider not only how we were teaching this course but also how we could design an appropriate text for students from all academic disciplines.

## Student Engagement Matters

Many of the books for this course are written for political science majors with a particular emphasis on comparative politics. But for today’s students, a mix of majors and nonmajors and those completely new to political science, we wanted to offer a broader understanding of the discipline and an opportunity for you to discover which areas of political science are most interesting to you. Our solution was to design a curriculum that would keep both groups engaged in the learning process, major and nonmajor alike, by taking a “big-picture” approach, evenly surveying the major areas within the field of political science, and emphasizing how the theoretical concepts of the discipline play out in the world around us.

The first thing you may have noticed about this book is this unique organization. We work outward from the student:

**Part I: Political Theory:** You will learn about the foundations of ancient and modern political thought. This is an important place to start because it is here that the philosophical foundations for modern governments are formed. We believe it is crucial for you to have a general understanding of key political

theorists for you to more effectively assess and critique the behavior of governments in our modern world.

**Part II: Comparing Governments:** Chapter 4 looks at American government and builds on the previous section by examining how the American Framers were influenced by ancient Greek and modern political philosophers when they drafted the American Constitution. Here, you will become more familiar with how these political theorists influenced the structure of the American system of government. This section is given special emphasis because it was the “American experiment” toward popular government that ignited democratic fires across the globe, which continues to shape today’s political landscape. It is also the system the majority of our readers will be most familiar with and is, therefore, a good springboard into our examination and comparison of other government structures around the world.

In Chapters 5 through 9, you will learn about how the world’s political systems are organized, where they differ and are alike, and how they tackle universal issues and those unique to their own particular societies. We will compare the foundations, structures, and modern issues associated with democratic legislatures, executives, and judicial systems. Then, we take an in-depth look at authoritarian states and how they differ.

**Part III: International Relations:** You will learn how the wide array of political systems and cultures interact with one another in our modern international system. Having a broad understanding of political systems and distinct regional cultures will shed light on why nations fight wars, what we can do to try to prevent them, and the challenges and opportunities we face as we attempt to solve global issues.

These sectional stepping-stones from political theory, to American government and comparative politics, to international relations build upon each other, producing a scholar who is able to balance the knowledge of the domestic with that of the global. You will then be given the opportunity to reflect upon all of the issues previously covered in the text and, upon completion, you will possess the skills to see the world through the intellectual prism of the entire field of political science. We’ve found that this is an accessible and intuitive organization for students.

This foundational framework is paired with (1) a focus on application and critical thinking, (2) excerpts from the classic and contemporary thinkers who shaped this discipline, (3) the latest global events, and (4) vibrant illustrations to bring political science to life! It is because we take so much pleasure in teaching political science to students from all academic majors that writing

this book was a labor of love. It's fun to convey these important themes to our students, and we believe reading this book will be a stimulating, eye-opening, and enjoyable experience for you as well, as we set out to prove in the pages that follow.

## Participation Matters

At the heart of this book, we strive to answer the questions we sometimes hear in the introduction to political science classroom: *Why do I have to take this course? I'm not a political science major and I don't plan to work in government, so why should this matter to me?* The answers surround each and every one of us, whether we know it or not. An understanding of politics is necessary for participation in a globalized world, a concept we stress in the book's opening chapter, "Why Politics Matters," and throughout with a special feature titled "Why Politics Matters to You!" You will come away aware of the challenges of the twenty-first century and with a new perspective on where political beliefs come from. You will be able to identify the opportunities available to you through which you can make an impact, and you will possess a strong confidence in your overview of the field at the book's completion. You are enthusiastically invited to join in this dialog. We've written the book in a conversational style, with thought-provoking questions at every turn.

## Why Theory Matters— Applying Theory to Today!

Throughout, we'll look into the relationship between the theoretical underpinnings (theory) and the formation and interplay of political entities (practice). This theme is emphasized throughout the narrative and within special "Theory and Practice" features in every chapter. We highlight this important concept to encourage critical thought when assessing and interpreting our political world, as well as to help you apply these concepts to your life. You will come away with not just a series of case studies but also with the tools you'll need to analyze and affect your political surroundings well into the future.

## New to This Edition

The fourth edition of *Why Politics Matters: An Introduction to Political Science* examines major political events such as the issue of abortion rights after the *Dobbs* decision, the new and growing influence of Super PACs on American

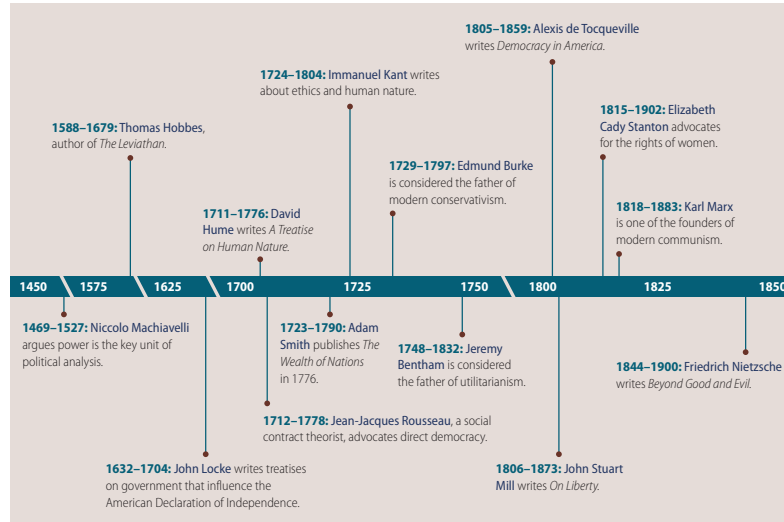
politics, the student debt crisis in the United States, the erosion of democratic norms in some democratic countries, and reviews the Russia-Ukraine conflict from the three levels of analysis perspective. This new edition also emphasizes the role of women in politics and the impact of the gender gap on the 2022 midterm congressional election and the 2024 presidential election in the United States.

This book has also been updated throughout to include changes in world leadership, the state of the world economy, the rise of China as a world leader, developments in the Middle East and North Korea, and updated statistics and new figures, tables, maps, and photographs.

# Features that Teach

- ▼ **Why Politics Matters** brings the subject to life and encourages student interaction through engaging, conversational prose; a bold, full-color design with photographs, maps, figures, and **visual timelines**; and **critical thinking questions** in every boxed feature and throughout the narrative.

Figure 3.1 Timeline of Important Modern Political Thinkers and Social Activists



“both visually and intellectually interesting”

—Keeley Mahanes,  
Student at Northern Arizona University

“The first thing I enjoyed was the enthusiasm and passion the authors have towards their subject matter....[they] do a good job in making a host of complex topics user friendly for college students.”

—Cyrus Hayat,  
Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis



## ► Questions to Consider

1. How have you been socialized by your family, friends, and peers? Have your political beliefs been challenged since you entered college?

Most of us are politically socialized by family and friends. You might or might not find that your political views change during your time in college or during your career after college.

- ◀ **Questions to Consider Before Reading This Chapter** open every chapter, serving as learning objectives to guide students’ reading.
- ▶ **A marginal glossary** defines key terms as students read, and lists of **Key Terms** and **Key People** at the end of every chapter help students review the material.

# Theory and Practice

## Theory and Practice

### Do Women Justices View Legal Issues Differently Than Male Justices?

In 2022, the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* was decided by the United States Supreme Court. The case involved the constitutionality of Mississippi's Gestational Age Act—a state law that banned most abortions after fifteen weeks of pregnancy. The majority of Supreme Court justices upheld the Mississippi law and in doing so overturned the landmark cases of *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) that provided federal protection for abortion rights. This decision gave the states the right to determine their own abortion laws, essentially arguing that the issue of reproductive rights is one for elected officials and not members of the judiciary.

The dissenting justices—Stephen Breyer, Elena Kagan, and Sonia Sotomayor—argued that this decision was a political overreach and one that dismantled decades

of women's rights. While public polling reveals women are only marginally more supportive of reproductive rights than men, some studies have examined whether the gender of the justice impacts how legal issues are framed and decided. Although Justice Amy Coney Barrett sided with the majority overturning *Roe*, two of the three dissenting judges are women. So, do female justices view abortion differently than their male counterparts? Do female justices view other issues differently as well? Furthermore, why have there been so many more male justices?

The aforementioned justice, Elena Kagan, was confirmed with little fanfare to the Supreme Court in August 2010. Out of the 114 justices who have served on the Court throughout our history, only six of them have been women. Why is that? Do women justices interpret

◀ **Theory and Practice** features demonstrate how political thought directly influences modern-day situations, institutions, and policies, in turn teaching students how to apply overarching political ideas to the current events and political practice around them and analyze both.

**"I think it is vital to show how these theories work in practice....** I really like how this textbook is organized and written. It highlights the different sub-fields of political science giving equal time and energy to each, while providing excellent resources and tools within the textbook for the instructor to use. The book reflects my own philosophy of teaching an Intro to Politics course."

—**Ryan Fitzharris,**  
Pima Community College

**"It does a great job relating the ideas to current issues, which makes it seem relevant and therefore engaging."**

—**Kaitlyn Andrey,**  
Student at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania

# Why Politics Matters to You!

## Why Politics Matters to You!

### Rare Earth Minerals and the Future of Global Leadership: Is Africa China's Second Continent?

China overtook the United States as the continent of Africa's largest trading partner in 2008. It has also been active in constructing and funding massive infrastructure projects, such as the new 470-mile electrified railway project connecting Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, to the neighboring country of Djibouti.<sup>15</sup> In 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with African leaders and pledged \$60 billion in funding over a three-year period to help in the economic development of African countries.<sup>16</sup> This new economic relationship has, not surprisingly, evolved into a strategic partnership, as evidenced by China's new military base in Djibouti, which is located just eight miles away from an American military base. Howard W. French more fully explains the sprouting relationship in his 2015 book titled *China's Second Continent: How a Million Migrants Are Building a New Empire in Africa*.

But at this point, you are still probably wondering what China's relationship with Africa has to do with you.

Well, 80 percent of China's imports from Africa are mineral products. Rare earth minerals are important because they are needed to build most modern appliances, such as your family's refrigerator and your cell phone. There are seventeen different types of rare earth metals, and cell phones use all of them except promethium, which is radioactive.<sup>17</sup> Tantalum, for instance, is a powdery mineral that has allowed the size of cell phones to shrink from the oversized ones of the 1980s to those that fit inside your shirt pocket today. It has allowed scientists to create "passive capacitors . . . [which] regulate voltage at high temperatures."<sup>18</sup> In short, it has provided cell phone developers the ability to control the high temperatures caused by cellular technology in a device that can fit in the palm of your hand without the risk of shock or fire. In scientific terms, tantalum has been a major breakthrough. In economic terms, however, its use in cell phones has caused its value to skyrocket,

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# 1

## Why Politics Matters



**Image 1.1** Pro-choice advocates assembled in Washington Square Park in New York City on June 24, 2022, to protest the Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022). The *Dobbs* case overturned a woman's constitutional right to an abortion that was established in the *Roe v. Wade* (1973) case almost 50 years prior to *Dobbs*. Many states have since banned abortions altogether, while other states have placed stricter regulations on abortions, and still other states have extended the right to abortions that existed prior to *Dobbs*. Michael M. Santiago/Getty Images

## Chapter Outline

Introduction: What is Political Science? .....	2
Political Science as the Study of Power.....	5
Political Science as an Academic Discipline.....	13

### ► Questions to Consider

1. How have you been socialized by your family, friends, and peers? Have your political beliefs been challenged since you entered college?
2. What are political ideologies? What are the differences between left-wing and right-wing ideologies?
3. What is the difference between “hard power” and “soft power” in the realm of international politics?
4. What do you think it takes to win a policy debate? How can the skills you learn in debate help you influence policy issues?
5. What are the different areas that political scientist’s study?

## Introduction: What is Political Science?

There is an adage that states one should never discuss religion or politics when attending dinner parties with casual acquaintances. Many of us have been taught that arguments focused on our cultural differences, health care law, or partisan viewpoints frequently grow tense and might prevent friends from enjoying each other’s company or, more importantly, dessert. Those who adhere to the social etiquette of proper dinner conversation are probably smart to do so. A clashing of political views can bring about a stressful social environment and cause awkward moments for unsuspecting dinner guests.

Lucky for you, however, you are in a political science class, which happens to be the most appropriate and exciting place to discuss such things. Here, you are encouraged and even rewarded for respectfully engaging in a wide variety of political observations and cultural perspectives. Learning how to discuss politics in a civil manner requires practice and a thick skin. Although we are certainly not required to agree with any particular outlook, we all have a responsibility to at least try to understand the viewpoints of others. We want to see that you can articulate and understand

some of the challenges that face us in the coming century and to succeed in making this world a better and more secure place.

The challenges ahead are great. But so were the challenges that faced George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, Alice Paul, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela. All these men and women demonstrated a commitment to change, but most of all, they recognized that politics matters. In fact, it is probably one of the most defining features of the human experience. We are above all else, as the great Greek philosopher Aristotle noted, “political animals.” Unlike other members of the animal kingdom, humans possess the ability to reason and then, through language, to carry that reason into action in the form of legally constructed communities. So, although you may never have thought of yourself or your friends as being *political*—you are. You have the ability to reason, the ability to articulate your ideas, and the ability to carry those thoughts into action.

At times, politics and debates about politics can become a passionate endeavor, one that can cause disagreements over what is considered right and wrong. Has there ever been a time when a fellow student said something you completely disagreed with? Or have you ever been offended by another's comments? If so, that is because each of us has been socialized by the many groups to which we belong. Political scientist Thomas M. Magstadt has defined **political socialization** as the process by which citizens develop the values, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions that enable them to support the political system.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the various groups that define our lives contribute to the way we view the world.

**Political Socialization:**  
The process by which one's attitudes and values are shaped.

Other students will likely process discussions that take place in this class differently from you because of the influences of their gender, race, religion, friends, sexual orientation, family, level of education, and socioeconomic status. These differences should be celebrated both in and beyond this class because learning from the experiences of others helps to inform our own beliefs. Perhaps Thomas Jefferson put it best when he said that he "never considered differences of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend."

Some political scientists examine how our differences influence whether and how we participate in the political process. Tables 1.1 to 1.3 highlight how race, gender, and education have impacted voter turnout rates in recent presidential elections. These tables reveal that some groups of Americans are more likely to vote than others. On closer inspection, Table 1.1 shows that in 2012, Black voters (for the first time) voted in higher percentages than White voters and other ethnic groups. But then voter turnout rates of Black voters dipped seven percentage points (i.e., 67 percent to 60 percent) in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The 2020 presidential election, however, saw an increase in Black voter turnout to 63 percent. What might explain such fluctuations? Political scientists notice these types of behavioral trends and seek to explain through empirical research why they are happening. In Chapter 4, for example, we discuss whether the *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013)

**Table 1.1** Voting Turnout in Recent U.S. Presidential Elections by Race and Ethnicity, 2008–2020<sup>2</sup>

	Non-Hispanic White Voting (%)	Black Voting (%)	Hispanic Voting (%)	Asian Voting (%)
2008	66	65	50	47
2012	64	67	48	47
2016	65	60	48	49
2020	71	63	54	59

Question: Why do you believe some racial or ethnic groups vote at higher rates than others?

**Source:** Jacob Fabina, Despite Pandemic Challenges, 2020 Election had largest increase in voting between presidential elections on record. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/record-high-turnout-in-2020-general-election.html#:~:text=The%202020%20election%20also%20featured,compared%20to%2060%25%20in%202016.>

Why do you believe that women vote at a higher rate than men?

**Table 1.2** Voting Turnout in Recent Presidential Elections by Gender, 1996–2020<sup>3</sup>

	Women (%)	Men (%)
1996	59.6	57.1
2000	60.7	58
2004	65.4	62.1
2008	65.6	61.5
2012	63.7	59.8
2016	63.3	59.3
2020	68.4	65.0

**Source:** Center for American Women and Politics, 2022. “Gender Differences in Voter Turnout.” Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, found at <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/voters/gender-differences-voter-turnout#GGN>

Why might those with more education be more likely to vote than those with less education?

**Table 1.3** Voting Turnout in Recent Presidential Elections by Education, 1996–2016<sup>4</sup>

	Some College or College Bachelor’s Degree (%)	Did Not Complete High School (%)	Difference in Voting Turnout (%)
1996	67	39	28
2000	69	39	30
2004	73	40	33
2008	71	40	31
2012	70	38	32
2016	68	33	35
2020	78	38	40

**Source:** United States Election Project. “Voter Turnout Demographics,” found at <http://www.electionproject.org/home/voter-turnout/demographics>

Supreme Court case, where the Court struck down a key provision of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, might have played a role in the seven-point drop-in Black voter turnout rates in 2016. Approximately 60 percent of eligible Black voters voted in the 2016 presidential election, compared with 65 percent of White voters and 48 percent of Hispanic voters. In 2020, the incumbent President Donald Trump’s race against the challenger Joe Biden witnessed the highest voter turnout amongst all groups.

Table 1.2 also indicates that women were more likely to vote than men in the 2020 American presidential election, with 68 percent of women and 64 percent of men casting a ballot for either Donald Trump, Joe Biden, or a third-party candidate. However, the most dramatic predictor of whether a person is likely to vote is educational attainment. Table 1.3 highlights that people with at least some experience in college were much more likely to vote (78 percent voter turnout) in the 2020 presidential election than those without a high school diploma (38 percent voter turnout).



Although you may never have considered the influence that all or some of these groups have had on your life, certain political scientists have. For example, there are a number of political scientists who conduct and then analyze the results of public opinion polls. **Public opinion polls** allow individuals to see how certain *demographics* view specific political issues or problems. **Demographics**, which refer to some of the ways people are categorized (e.g., women, people of color, small business owners, union members, 18- to 24-year-olds with college degrees, Catholics, etc.), allow political scientists to determine if

relationships exist between group identities and political views. Public opinion polls may ask you your age, race/ethnicity, religion, and level of education and what you think about health care reform, gun control, homeland security, or your political leaders. By answering these questions, political scientists can determine if there are relationships between one's demographic and one's opinions about the political world.

So, in this abstract way, you are already political. What this text attempts to do is to help you see that politics matters in a much deeper sense than the material covered on an exam or expressed in a research paper (although these also matter for obvious reasons).

## Political Science as the Study of Power

In his 1936 book, political scientist Harold Lasswell said that “politics is who gets what, when, and how.” This simple expression sums up the essence of this book and the field of political science at large. Political science is in many respects concerned with the study of *power*. In this book, you will learn how important ancient and modern political theorists viewed power and how political leaders exercise it in the current era. Political power can broadly be defined as the ability to get others to do what they would not do on their own. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and other ancient philosophers believed political power should only be applied as a means to the end of social justice. These thinkers laid the theoretical foundation of Western civilization by maintaining that political power should be brandished by the wisest and most ethical members of society because leaders, above all else, have a responsibility to promote social harmony and the public good. They believed that only those educated on the virtues of justice should wield power because they will more likely place the public's interest over their own.



**Image 1.2** An election monitor collecting votes in Germantown, Maryland in October 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic caused many voters to vote by mail.

Bloomberg/Getty Images

### **Public Opinion Polls:**

Surveys that seek to determine how different groups of people perceive political issues.

### **Demographics:**

Classifications of different groups of people that usually refer to one's race, class, ethnicity, gender, level of wealth, age, place of residence, employment status, level of education, and so on.

Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), in his book *The Prince*, wandered away from this classical view by asserting that power, not justice, is the most important unit of analysis in politics. He claimed that to truly comprehend the nuances of politics, it is more important to understand how leaders can best acquire and maintain political control over the populace. Machiavelli’s amoral approach to politics stressed that the primary purpose of government is to prevent civil unrest and to promote security at home and abroad.

The discussion of how governmental power should be structured is later joined by some of the leading **social contract theorists** such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. These theorists focused mostly on the power relationship between government and the individual. In Chapter 3, we highlight how social contract theorists typically make observations on whether humans are more generally cooperative or competitive with one another, the types of problems that are likely to occur in the absence of government, and their preferred form of government for addressing these problems. Thomas Hobbes’s (1588–1679) classic text *Leviathan* sets out to prove the correctness of Machiavelli’s contention that power rather than justice is the most important variable in studying politics. In this book, Hobbes argued that the purpose of political power should not be used to primarily promote ethical governance but should instead be used to promote the more limited goal of preventing social turmoil and war. Hobbes’s social contract advocated for an *authoritarian system of government*, where individuals surrender all political power to the government so government can more efficiently prevent civil unrest and violence. In Table 1.4, we include definitions of different types of political systems and the economic systems and political ideologies that influence them.

### Social Contract

**Theorists:** Thinkers beginning in the seventeenth century who sought to explain human nature by looking at the terms by which governments are set up in the first place.

**Table 1.4** Different Types of Political Systems, Economic Systems, and Political Ideologies<sup>5</sup>

Political Ideologies	
<b>Anarchism</b>	A doctrine that advocates the abolition of organized authority. Anarchists believe all government is corrupt and evil.
<b>Conservatism</b>	A political philosophy that tends to support the status quo and advocates change only in moderation. Conservatism upholds the value of tradition and seeks to preserve all that is good about the past.
<b>Feminism</b>	The theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes.
<b>Liberalism</b>	A person who believes it is the duty of government to ameliorate social conditions and create a more equitable society.
<b>Libertarianism</b>	A political ideology that believes that the government should not interfere in the lives of citizens other than to provide police and military protection.
<b>Meritocracy</b>	A society in which power is wielded by those who deserve it, based on their talents, industry, and success in competition, rather than through membership in a certain class or possession of wealth.
<b>Pacifism</b>	The doctrine holding that war is never justified and that all disputes between nations should be settled peacefully.
<b>Social Contract</b>	The political theory that a state and its citizens have an unwritten agreement between them, a social contract into which they voluntarily enter.
<b>Terrorism</b>	The pursuit of a political aim by means of violence and intimidation.

(Continued)

**Table 1.4 (Continued)**

<b>Utilitarianism</b>	A political philosophy developed in England in the nineteenth century by thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, which says that the duty of government is to promote the greatest good for the greatest number.
<b>Political Systems</b>	
<b>Authoritarian</b>	A form of government in which a large amount of authority is invested in the state at the expense of individual rights.
<b>Autocracy</b>	A system of government in which almost all power rests with the ruler. The Soviet Union under Stalin and Iraq under Saddam Hussein are examples of autocracies.
<b>Direct Democracy</b>	Democracy in which the people make direct decisions, rather than have those decisions made for them by elected representatives.
<b>Fascism</b>	A nationalistic, authoritarian, anticommunist movement founded by Benito Mussolini in 1919. Fascism was a response to the economic hardship and social disorder that ensued after the end of World War I.
<b>Feudalism</b>	A medieval form of social, economic, and political organization. Feudalism had a pyramidal structure. At its head was the king; below the king was a hierarchal chain of nobles, down to the lords of individual manors—the manor being the basic social and economic unit.
<b>Monarchy</b>	Form of rulership whereby a queen or king, empress or emperor holds absolute or limited power, usually inherited.
<b>Nation-State</b>	Usually used to describe the modern state but strictly speaking applies only when the whole population of a state feels itself to belong to the same nation.
<b>Oligarchy</b>	A political system that is controlled by a small group of individuals who govern in their own interests.
<b>Plutocracy</b>	Government by the wealthy, or a group of wealthy people who control or influence a government.
<b>Representative Democracy</b>	A system of government in which the people elect agents to represent them in a legislature.
<b>Republic</b>	The form of government in which ultimate power resides in the people, who elect representatives to participate in decision-making on their behalf.
<b>Economic Systems</b>	
<b>Capitalism</b>	An economic system in which the means of production, such as land and factories, are privately owned and operated for profit.
<b>Communism</b>	The political ideology under which the economy, including capital, property, major industries, and public services, is controlled and directed by the state and in that sense is “communal.”
<b>Marxism</b>	The theory developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, which became the official doctrine of communism. According to Marxism, the key to how society operated was economics; all other aspects of society, such as politics and religion, were conditioned by the economic system.
<b>Socialism</b>	A political system in which the means of production, distribution, and exchange are mostly owned by the state and used, at least in theory, on behalf of the people.
<b>Theocracy</b>	A state or government that is run by priests or clergy.
<b>Totalitarianism</b>	A system of government where the ruling authority extends its power over all aspects of society and regulates every aspect of life.

**Source:** United States Election Project. “Voter Turnout Demographics,” found at <http://www.electionproject.org/home/voter-turnout/demographics>

Other social contract theorists such as John Locke (1632–1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) believed that power should be more widely dispersed among the people in democratic systems of government to achieve social harmony. Locke advocated for a representative democracy, where government possesses limited powers and where the people select representatives to make decisions on their behalf.

The American Framers were particularly influenced by Locke's writings as they grappled with how best to form a new government in the late eighteenth century. Thomas Jefferson referenced Locke when he penned the U.S. Declaration of Independence in what has become one of the most widely cited sentences ever written: "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." It was this line of thinking that also paved the way for the expansion of political rights for ethnic minorities and women (refer to the Theory and Practice box about women judges). Rousseau, on the other hand, criticized representative democracies, claiming they facilitate the exploitation of the masses by political elites. He instead called for universal political participation in a direct democracy form of government, where the people make decisions for themselves.

Leading experts in American politics discuss political power in the context of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. One major debate involves whether the American president has taken on "imperial" qualities and whether the executive branch has too much power over the other two branches of government. Famed presidential scholar Richard Neustadt, known by some as the American Machiavelli, argues that presidents must above all else have the political skills to "persuade" the Washington establishment and the American public to act on their agendas.

## Theory and Practice

### Do Women Justices View Legal Issues Differently Than Male Justices?

In 2022, the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* was decided by the United States Supreme Court. The case involved the constitutionality of Mississippi's Gestational Age Act—a state law that banned most abortions after fifteen weeks of pregnancy. The majority of Supreme Court justices upheld the Mississippi law and in doing so overturned the landmark cases of *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) that provided federal protection for abortion rights. This decision gave the states the right to determine their own abortion laws, essentially arguing that the issue of reproductive rights is one for elected officials and not members of the judiciary.

The dissenting justices—Stephen Breyer, Elena Kagan, and Sonia Sotomayor—argued that this decision was a political overreach and one that dismantled decades

of women's rights. While public polling reveals women are only marginally more supportive of reproductive rights than men, some studies have examined whether the gender of the justice impacts how legal issues are framed and decided. Although Justice Amy Coney Barrett sided with the majority overturning *Roe*, two of the three dissenting judges are women. So, do female justices view abortion differently than their male counterparts? Do female justices view other issues differently as well? Furthermore, why have there been so many more male justices?

The aforementioned justice, Elena Kagan, was confirmed with little fanfare to the Supreme Court in August 2010. Out of the 114 justices who have served on the Court throughout our history, only six of them have been women. Why is that? Do women justices interpret

(Continued)

## Theory and Practice (Continued)

legal facts differently from their male counterparts? There is some research in political science suggesting that women justices might frame legal issues differently than male justices when hearing oral arguments and drafting legal opinions.

Former Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, for example, was most vocal on a case questioning whether school officials in Arizona could legally strip-search a 13-year-old female student while searching for drugs. While some of the other male justices downplayed the significance of the girl's embarrassment, Justice Ginsburg, as the lone female justice on the Supreme Court at the time, empathized with the girl's humiliation. In a subsequent interview, Justice Ginsburg stated, "they [the male judges] have never been a 13-year-old girl . . . it's a very sensitive age for a girl. I don't think my colleagues, some of them, quite understood."<sup>6</sup>

To place this within a historical perspective, the first woman to serve on the Supreme Court was Sandra Day O'Connor, who was nominated to the bench by President Ronald Reagan in 1981. In 2010, Justice Kagan joined two other women justices: Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, appointed by President Bill Clinton in 1993, and Justice Sonia Sotomayor, nominated by President Barack Obama in 2009. Following the death of Justice Ginsburg, President Trump nominated Justice Amy Coney Barrett, a politically conservative jurist, to the bench. Coney Barrett's addition changed the ideological consistency of the liberal female justices' positions on a variety of social issues. In 2022,

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson was appointed to the bench by President Joe Biden, marking the first time a Black woman has served on the Supreme Court. Racial and gender differences between Supreme Court justices have already had and most likely will continue to have consequences on future court decisions. It has also challenged the way that political scientists attempt to determine the way justices arrive at their opinions. One's gender plays a role, but as we have seen with voter turnout, there are other indicators involved as well. Most current research in the area of judicial decision-making shows that the political ideology of a justice plays a stronger role than gender in predicting judicial rulings.<sup>7</sup>

A larger question might be related to the overall number of female judges across the country and why more have not been nominated and confirmed. Approximately 33 percent of all state and federal judges in the United States are women, which matches the percentage of women justices serving on the U.S. Supreme Court and is slightly higher than the 27 percent international average.<sup>8</sup> By now, one would think that there would be greater gender parity in judicial selection, but clearly there is not.

### Think It Through

1. Is the gender composition of the U.S. Supreme Court relevant to how it makes decisions?
2. Should a person's gender, race, and/or ethnicity be considered when selecting judges? Why or why not?

## Political Power in International Affairs

The struggle for power around the world continues to shape our political landscape today. Terrorism, civil unrest, and warfare create instability, which results in massive shifts in global power. Take, for instance, the ongoing war in Ukraine; a war that has its roots in the historical tensions between Russia and Ukraine. Russia's desire to recapture parts of the former Soviet Union to enhance its global position has led to a power shift in the region. The war that began in February 2022 is a product of Russian expansion into Ukraine's territory. Russian President Vladimir Putin has used nationalism as a way to drive a wedge within Ukraine. Recognizing that the eastern part of Ukraine is composed of many ethnic Russians, Putin has sought to destabilize the government in Kiev by fomenting dissent. Nevertheless, it was the specific events of 2014 that laid the groundwork for the current conflict.