2018–2019 Edition

American Government and Politics Today

Brief Edition

Schmidt ▪ Shelley ▪ Bardes

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***American Government and Politics Today,* 2018–2019 Brief Edition**

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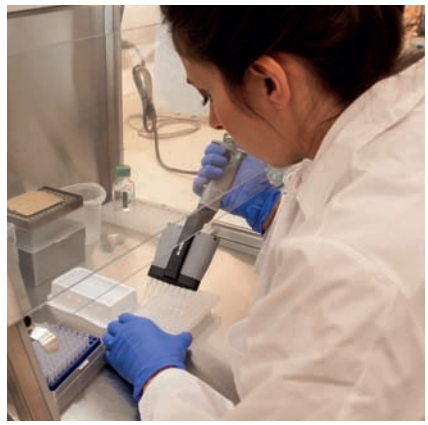

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Preface

In November 2016, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump triumphed over Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. The Republicans also maintained control of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, although they did suffer minor losses. Trump certainly has one of the most unusual backgrounds ever for a president, with no experience in elected or appointed public office. One consequence of his victory has been an explosion of interest in political news. Online news sites, including that of the *New York Times*, have experienced large increases in viewership. The same goes for cable news networks such as Fox News and MSNBC. For many people, American politics and government have never been more interesting.

Trump won the presidency by carrying the vote in the electoral college, even though Clinton's popular vote was more than 2 percentage points greater than his. Many have wondered how a candidate could become president while losing the popular vote, and that is one of many things that students will learn in this text. Now more than ever, it is important to understand America's complex and fascinating political system.

One thing was and continues to be certain: American politics today will never be without tension, drama, and conflict. Throughout this Brief Edition of *American Government and Politics Today*, you will read about how our government has responded to past issues and how it is responding to current conflicts.

This edition is basically a condensed and updated version of the larger editions of *American Government and Politics Today*. It has been created specifically for those of you who want a text that presents the fundamental components of the American political system while retaining the quality and readability of the larger editions. You will find that this edition is up to date in every respect. The text, figures, tables, and all pedagogical features reflect the latest available data. We have also included coverage of all recently issued laws, regulations, and court decisions that have—or will have—a significant impact on American society and our political system.

Like the larger editions, this volume places a major emphasis on political participation and involvement. This brief, fourteen-chapter text has been heralded by reviewers as the best essentials text for its affordability, conciseness, clarity, and readability.

New to This Edition

Of course, every chapter has been thoroughly revised and updated. But there is more.

Now in Full Color Throughout

A major objective of the Brief Edition has always been to provide students with an affordable textbook. To that end, previous editions have been limited to using a single color for contrast in most of the text. With this edition, however, we have been able—for the first time—to produce a text in full color and still keep it affordable. The use of color not only makes the chapters more attractive, but it also adds to the impact of the various charts and graphs that appear throughout.

Major Topical Updates

By far the most important change in American politics and government since the last Brief Edition has been the rise of Donald Trump. We give ample space to Trump's populist campaign and his use of the media, including Twitter. In *Chapter 1 The Democratic Republic* and *Chapter 6 Public Opinion, Political Socialization, and the Media*, we describe Trump's supporters and the problems facing the white working class. We describe the alleged scandals faced both by Trump and by Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, in particular concerning questions about Russian involvement in the 2016 elections. *Chapter 11 The Executive Branch* explains Trump's firing of FBI director James Comey. Other major new topics include:

- In *Chapter 3 Federalism*, the limits on what the national government can do to coerce the states.
- In *Chapter 4 Civil Liberties*, political correctness and government surveillance.
- In *Chapter 5 Civil Rights*, how black men are treated by the police. We also have a major new section on transgender individuals.
- In *Chapter 7 Interest Groups and Political Parties*, the growth in party polarization and the changing bases of the major parties.
- In *Chapter 8 Campaigns and Elections*, the limits of the "invisible primary," the role of superdelegates, and restrictions on the right to vote.
- In *Chapter 9 Congress*, the House Freedom Caucus and the conflict around replacing the late Supreme Court justice Antonin Scalia.
- *Chapter 11 The Executive Branch*, has been more appropriately renamed *The Executive Branch*. We focus on whistleblowers and those who leak national security information.
- *Chapter 13 Domestic and Economic Policy* describes the Republican struggle to replace the Affordable Care Act.
- Finally, *Chapter 14 Foreign Policy* highlights Trump's transactional foreign policy and trade issues with China and Europe.

Key to High Student Interest—Topical Debate-Style Features

Every *At Issue* feature focuses on a controversial topic and concludes with a *For Critical Analysis* question to invite critical thinking. Most of these features are new:

- Chapter 1: **Does Entitlement Spending Corrupt Us?**
- Chapter 2: **Is America a Christian Nation?**
- Chapter 3: **Should Recreational Marijuana Be Legal?**
- Chapter 3: **Should We Let Uber and Lyft Pick Up Passengers?**
- Chapter 4: **Do Police Use Excessive Force against Black Men?**

- Chapter 5: **Should We Deport Unauthorized Immigrants?**
- Chapter 8: **Can Money Buy Elections?**
- Chapter 9: **Is It Time to Get Rid of the Filibuster?**
- Chapter 10: **Should We Elect the President by Popular Vote?**
- Chapter 10: **Should President Trump Send U.S. Ground Forces to Syria?**
- Chapter 11: **Should We Simplify the Income Tax System?**
- Chapter 12: **Should State Judges Be Elected?**
- Chapter 13: **Should States Raise the Minimum Wage?**
- Chapter 14: **How Dangerous Is Putin's Russia?**

Making a Difference Features

At the end of every chapter, a feature entitled *Making a Difference* enhances our emphasis on student participation. These features provide newly updated, useful information for active citizenship. We offer tips on how to find information on issues, how to learn about your elected representatives, how to join and participate in advocacy organizations, how to protect your civil rights and liberties, and more.

Other Special Pedagogical Aids

The 2018–2019 Brief Edition of *American Government and Politics Today* retains many of the pedagogical aids and features of the larger editions, including the following:

- **Learning Outcomes**—A section-by-section focus on crucial questions that students should learn to address.
- **Key Terms**—Important terms that are boldfaced and defined in the text when they are first used. These terms are defined in the text margins, listed at the end of the chapter with the page numbers on which they appear, and included in the Glossary at the back of the book.
- **InterAct**—A mini-feature that directs students to selected websites and encourages them to take one or more actions when they get there.
- **Chapter Summary**—A point-by-point summary of the chapter text.
- **Test Yourself**—A quiz and an essay question at the very end of each chapter.

Appendices

The Brief Edition of *American Government and Politics Today* includes, as appendices, both the Declaration of Independence (Appendix A) and the U.S. Constitution (Appendix B). The text of the Constitution has been annotated to help you understand the meaning and significance of the various provisions in this important document. Appendix C presents *Federalist Papers* No. 10 and No. 51. These selections are also annotated to help you grasp their importance in understanding the American philosophy of government. Appendix D contains pie charts that explain the expenditures and revenues of the federal government.

MindTap

MindTap is here to simplify your workload as an instructor, organize and immediately grade your students' assignments, and allow you to customize your course as you see fit. Through deep-seated integration with your Learning Management System (LMS), grades are easily exported and analytics are pulled with just the click of a button. MindTap provides you with a platform to easily add current events videos and RSS feeds from national or local news sources. Looking to incorporate more recent and late-breaking news into the course? Utilize our KnowNow American Government Blog for weekly updated news coverage and pedagogy.

Instructor Supplements

The **Instructor Companion Website** (ISBN: 9781337559782) is an all-in-one multimedia online resource for class preparation, presentation, and testing. Accessible through Cengage .com/login with your faculty account, you will find the following available for download:

- Book-specific Microsoft® **Powerpoint® slides** of lecture outlines, as well as photos, figures, and tables from the text. These presentations make it easy for you to assemble lectures for your course.
- Cognero **Test Bank** (ISBN: 9781337559775): Multiple-choice and essay questions, along with their answers and text references, that are compatible with multiple Learning Management Systems.
- An **Instructor's Manual** that includes learning outcomes, chapter outlines, discussion questions, class activities and project suggestions, tips on integrating media into your class, suggested readings and Web resources, and a section specially designed to help teaching assistants and adjunct professors.

Acknowledgments

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Any errors, of course, remain our own. We welcome comments from instructors and students alike. Suggestions that we received on previous editions have helped us to improve this text and to adapt it to the changing needs of instructors and students.

S.W.S.
M.C.S.
B.A.B.

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the 21st Century (with Joyce M. Mercier and Steven Garasky); and *Quality Research in Literacy and Science Education: International Perspectives and Gold Standards* (with Larry Yore and Brian Hand).

His leisure time includes traveling, working with students, and playing with the family dog and cats.

BARBARA A. BARDES

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Bardes has written articles on public opinion and foreign policy, and on women and politics. She has authored *Thinking about Public Policy; Declarations of Independence: Women and Political Power in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction;* and *Public Opinion: Measuring the American Mind* (with Robert W. Oldendick).

Bardes's home is located in a very small hamlet in Kentucky called Rabbit Hash, famous for its 150-year-old general store. Her hobbies include traveling, gardening, needlework, and antique collecting.

1 The Democratic Republic

Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

People celebrating at a campaign rally in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 2016. ***What do people mean when they wave the U.S. flag?***

The five **Learning Outcomes (LOs)** below are designed to help improve your understanding of this chapter. After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

LO1 Define the terms *politics, government, order, liberty, authority,* and *legitimacy*.

LO2 Distinguish the major features of direct democracy and representative democracy.

LO3 Describe majoritarianism, elite theory, and pluralism as theories of how democratic systems work.

LO4 Summarize the conflicts that can occur between the values of liberty and order, and between those of liberty and equality.

LO5 Discuss conservatism, liberalism, and other popular American ideological positions.

Check your understanding of the material with the Test Yourself section at the end of the chapter.

Politics, for many people, is the "great game," and it is played for high stakes. After all, the game involves vast sums and the very security of the nation. In the last few years, the stakes have grown higher still. In 2016, American voters picked Republican Donald Trump to be the next president of the United States. Trump's political values and personal background were unprecedented among major-party presidential candidates. True, Democrat Hillary Clinton won more votes than Trump, but as we explain throughout this text, Americans choose their president through the *electoral college*, not the popular vote. Trump's electoral vote margin was decisive. While the Democrats picked up a few seats in Congress, Republicans still controlled both the U.S. House and Senate. A new era of conservative governance appeared certain, to the delight of some and the dismay of others.

Politics and Government

LO1: Define the terms *politics, government, order, liberty, authority,* and *legitimacy.*

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

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

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

Why Is Government Necessary?

Perhaps the best way to assess the need for government is to examine circumstances in which government, as we normally understand it, does not exist. What happens when multiple groups compete violently with one another for power within a society? There are places around the world where such circumstances exist. A current example is the Middle Eastern nation of Syria, run by the dictator Bashar al-Assad. In 2011, peaceful protesters were killed, which led to an armed rebellion. The government lost control of much of the country, and its forces repeatedly massacred civilians in contested areas. Some rebels, such as the so-called Islamic State (ISIS), were extreme Islamists. Others were more moderate. By 2013, rebels were fighting each other as well as the government. In much of Syria, law and order had broken down completely. By 2017, almost 500,000 people had been killed, and about half of the country's people had been driven from their homes.

As the example of Syria shows, one of the foundational purposes of government is the maintenance of security, or **order.** By keeping the peace, a government protects its people from violence at the hands of private or foreign armies and criminals. If order is not present, it is not possible for the government to provide any of the other benefits that people expect from it. Order is a political value to which we will return later in this chapter.

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

Institution
An ongoing organization that performs certain functions for society.

Government
The preeminent institution within a society. Government has the ultimate authority to decide how conflicts will be resolved and how benefits and privileges will be allocated.

Order
A state of peace and security. Maintaining order by protecting members of society from violence and criminal activity is the oldest purpose of government.

Limiting Government Power

A complete collapse of order and security, as seen in Syria, actually is an uncommon event. Much more common is the reverse—too much government control. In January 2017, the human rights organization Freedom House judged that forty-nine of the world's countries were "not free." These nations contained 36 percent of the world's population. Such countries may be controlled by individual kings or dictators. Saudi Arabia's king, Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and North Korea's Kim Jong-un are obvious examples. Alternatively,

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

a political party, such as the Communist Party of China, may monopolize all the levels of power. The military may rule, as in Thailand since 2014.

In all of these examples, the individual or group running the country cannot be removed by legal means. Freedom of speech and the right to a fair trial are typically absent. Dictatorial governments often torture or execute their opponents. Such regimes may also suppress freedom of religion. Revolution, whether violent or nonviolent, is often the only way to change the government.

In short, protection from the violence of domestic criminals or foreign armies is not enough. Citizens also need protection from abuses of power by their own government. To protect the liberties of the people, it is necessary to limit the powers of the government. **Liberty**—the greatest freedom of the individual consistent with the freedom of other individuals—is a second major political value, along with order. We discuss this value in more detail later in this chapter.

TAUSEEF MUSTAFA/Getty Images

U.S. soldiers in Mosul, Iraq. They are assisting Iraqi forces in a campaign to clear ISIS forces from the city. ISIS terrorists have become famous for their brutality. ***What might inspire them to act in this way?***

Authority and Legitimacy

Every government must have **authority**—that is, the right and power to enforce its decisions. Ultimately, the government's authority rests on its control of the armed forces and the police. Few people in the United States, however, base their day-to-day activities on fear of the government's enforcement powers. Most people, most of the time, obey the law because this is what they have always done. Also, if they did not obey the law, they would face the disapproval of friends and family. Consider an example: Do you avoid injuring your friends or stealing their possessions because you are afraid of the police—or because if you undertook these actions, you no longer would have friends?

Under normal circumstances, the government's authority has broad popular support. People accept the government's right to establish rules and laws. When authority is broadly accepted, we say that it has **legitimacy.** Authority without legitimacy is a recipe for trouble.

Events in several Arab nations since 2011 can serve as an example. The dictators who ruled Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia had been in power for decades. All three dictators had some popular support when they first gained power. None of these nations had a tradition of democracy, and so it was possible for undemocratic rulers to enjoy a degree of legitimacy. After years of oppressive behavior, these regimes slowly lost that legitimacy. The rulers survived only because they were willing to employ violence against any opposition. In Egypt and Tunisia, the end came when soldiers refused to use force against massive demonstrations. Having lost all legitimacy, the rulers of these two countries then lost their authority as well. In Libya, the downfall and death of the dictator Muammar Gaddafi came only after a seven-month civil war. (As it happens, Egypt's shaky new democracy collapsed in 2013 when the army seized power.)

Liberty
The greatest freedom of the individual that is consistent with the freedom of other individuals in the society.

Authority
The right and power of a government or other entity to enforce its decisions and compel obedience.

Legitimacy
Popular acceptance of the right and power of a government or other entity to exercise authority.

Democracy and Other Forms of Government

LO2: Distinguish the major features of direct democracy and representative democracy.

The different types of government can be classified according to which person or group of people controls society through the government.

Types of Government

Totalitarian Regime
A form of government that controls all aspects of the political, social, and economic life of a nation.

Authoritarianism
A type of regime in which only the government itself is fully controlled by the ruler. Social and economic institutions exist that are not under the government's control.

Democracy
A system of government in which political authority is vested in the people.

Direct Democracy
A system of government in which political decisions are made by the people directly, rather than by their elected representatives.

Legislature
A governmental body primarily responsible for the making of laws.

Initiative
A procedure by which voters can petition to vote on a law or a constitutional amendment.

Referendum
An electoral device whereby legislative or constitutional measures are referred by the legislature to the voters for approval or disapproval.

Recall
A procedure allowing the people to vote to dismiss an elected official from office before his or her term has expired.

At one extreme is a society governed by a **totalitarian regime.** In such a political system, a small group of leaders or a single individual—a dictator—makes all decisions for the society. Every aspect of political, social, and economic life is controlled by the government. The power of the ruler is total (thus, the term *totalitarianism*). Examples of such regimes include Germany under Adolf Hitler and the former Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin.

A second type of system is authoritarian government. **Authoritarianism** differs from totalitarianism in that only the government itself is fully controlled by the ruler. Social and economic institutions, such as churches, businesses, and labor unions, exist that are not under the government's control.

Many of our terms for describing the distribution of political power are derived from the ancient Greeks, who were the first Western people to study politics systematically. One form of rule was known as *aristocracy*, literally meaning "rule by the best." In practice, this meant rule by wealthy members of ancient families. Another term from the Greeks is *theocracy*, which literally means "rule by God" (or the gods). In practice, theocracy means rule by self-appointed religious leaders. Iran is a rare example of a country in which supreme power is in the hands of a religious leader, the Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. One of the most straightforward Greek terms is *oligarchy*, which simply means "rule by a few."

The Greek term for rule by the people was **democracy.** Within the limits of their culture, some of the Greek city-states operated as democracies. Today, in much of the world, the people will not grant legitimacy to a government unless it is based on democracy.

Direct Democracy as a Model

The Athenian system of government in ancient Greece is usually considered the purest model for **direct democracy** because the citizens of that community debated and voted directly on all laws, even those put forward by the ruling council of the city. The most important feature of Athenian democracy was that the **legislature** was composed of all of the citizens. (Women, resident foreigners, and slaves, however, were excluded because they were not citizens.) This form of government required a high level of participation from every citizen. That participation was seen as benefiting the individual and the city-state. The Athenians believed that although a high level of participation might lead to instability in government, citizens, if informed about the issues, could be trusted to make wise decisions.

Direct democracy also has been practiced at the local level in Switzerland and, in the United States, in New England town meetings. At these town meetings, important decisions—such as levying taxes, hiring city officials, and deciding local ordinances—are made by majority vote. (In recent years, however, turnout for such meetings has declined.) Some states provide a modern adaptation of direct democracy for their citizens. In these states, representative democracy is supplemented by the **initiative** or the **referendum.** Both processes enable the people to vote directly on laws or constitutional amendments. The **recall** process, which is available in many states, allows the people to vote to remove an official from state office before his or her term has expired.

The Dangers of Direct Democracy

Although they were aware of the Athenian model, the framers of the U.S. Constitution were opposed to such a system. Democracy was considered to be dangerous and a source of instability. But in the 1700s and 1800s, the idea of government based on the *consent of the people* gained increasing popularity. Such a government was the main aspiration of the American Revolution in 1775, the French Revolution in 1789, and many subsequent revolutions. At the time of the American Revolution, however, the masses were still considered to be too uneducated to govern themselves, too prone to the influence of demagogues (political leaders who manipulate popular prejudices), and too likely to subordinate minority rights to the tyranny of the majority.

AP Images/Toby Talbot

These Woodbury, Vermont, residents cast their ballots after a town meeting to vote on the school budget and sales taxes. ***What type of political system does the town meeting best represent?***

James Madison, while defending the new scheme of government set forth in the U.S. Constitution, warned of the problems inherent in a "pure democracy":

> *A common passion or interest will, in almost every case, be felt by a majority of the whole . . . and there is nothing to check the inducements to sacrifice the weaker party or an obnoxious individual. Hence it is that such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention, and have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths.*[2]

Like other politicians of his time, Madison feared that pure, or direct, democracy would deteriorate into mob rule. What would keep the majority of the people, if given direct decision-making power, from abusing the rights of those in the minority?

A Democratic Republic

The framers of the U.S. Constitution chose to craft a **republic,** meaning a government in which sovereign power rests with the people, rather than with a king or a monarch. A republic is based on **popular sovereignty.** To Americans of the 1700s, the idea of a republic also meant a government based on common beliefs and virtues that would be fostered within small communities.

The U.S. Constitution created a form of republican government that we now call a **democratic republic.** The people hold the ultimate power over the government through the election process, but all national policy decisions are made by elected officials. For the founders, even this distance between the people and the government was not sufficient. The Constitution made sure that the Senate and the president would not be elected by

Republic
A form of government in which sovereign power rests with the people, rather than with a king or a monarch.

Popular Sovereignty
The concept that ultimate political authority is based on the will of the people.

Democratic Republic
A republic in which representatives elected by the people make and enforce laws and policies.

2. James Madison, in Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 10 (New York: Signet, 2003), p. 71. See Appendix C of this book.

a direct vote of the people. Senators were chosen by state legislatures, although a later constitutional amendment allowed for the direct election of senators. The founders also established an *electoral college* to choose the president, in the hope that such a body would prevent voters from ultimately making the choice.

Despite these limits, the new American system was unique in the amount of power it granted to the ordinary citizen. Over the course of the following two centuries, democratic values became more and more popular, at first in Western nations and then throughout the rest of the world. The spread of democratic principles gave rise to another name for our system of government—**representative democracy.** The term *representative democracy* has almost the same meaning as *democratic republic*, with one exception. Recall that in a republic, not only are the people sovereign, but there is no king. What if a nation develops into a democracy but preserves the monarchy as a largely ceremonial institution? That is exactly what happened in Britain. The British, who have long cherished their kings and queens, found the term *democratic republic* unacceptable. A republic, after all, meant there could be no monarch. The British therefore described their system as a representative democracy instead.

Principles of Democratic Government. All representative democracies rest on the rule of the people as expressed through the election of government officials. In the 1790s in the United States, only free white males were able to vote, and in some states they had to be property owners as well. Women in many states did not receive the right to vote in national elections until 1920, and the right to vote was not secured in all states by African Americans until the 1960s. Today, **universal suffrage** is the rule.

Because everyone's vote counts equally, the only way to make fair decisions is by some form of majority will. But to ensure that **majority rule** does not become oppressive, modern democracies also provide guarantees of minority rights. If political minorities were not protected, the majority might violate the fundamental rights of members of certain groups—especially groups that are unpopular or dissimilar to the majority population, such as racial minorities.

Representative Democracy
A form of government in which representatives elected by the people make and enforce laws and policies, but in which the monarchy may be retained in a ceremonial role.

Universal Suffrage
The right of all adults to vote for their representatives.

Majority Rule
A basic principle of democracy asserting that the greatest number of citizens in any political unit should select officials and determine policies.

Limited Government
A government with powers that are limited either through a written document or through widely shared beliefs.

To guarantee the continued existence of a representative democracy, there must be free, competitive elections. Thus, the opposition always has the opportunity to win elective office. For such elections to be totally open, freedom of the press and freedom of speech must be preserved so that opposition candidates can present their criticisms of the government to the people.

Constitutional Democracy. Another key feature of Western representative democracy is that it is based on the principle of **limited government.** Not only is the government dependent on popular sovereignty, but the powers of the government are also clearly limited, either through a written document or through widely shared beliefs. The U.S. Constitution sets down the fundamental structure of the government and the limits to its activities. Such limits are intended to prevent political decisions based on the whims or ambitions of individuals in government rather than on constitutional principles.

What Kind of Democracy Do We Have?

LO3: Describe majoritarianism, elite theory, and pluralism as theories of how democratic systems work.

Political scientists have developed a number of theories about American democracy, including *majoritarianism*, *elite theory*, and *pluralism*. Advocates of these theories use them to describe American democracy either as it actually is or as they believe it should be.

Some scholars argue that none of these three theories, which we discuss next, fully describes the workings of American democracy. These experts say that each theory captures a part of the true reality but that we need all three theories to gain a full understanding of American politics.

Democracy for Everyone

Many people believe that in a democracy, the government ought to do what the majority of the people want. This simple proposition is the heart of majoritarian theory. As a theory of what democracy should be like, **majoritarianism** is popular among both political scientists and ordinary citizens. Many scholars, however, consider majoritarianism to provide a surprisingly poor description of how U.S. democracy actually works. Policies adopted by the U.S. government are often strikingly different from the ones endorsed by the public in opinion polls. One example is religion in the public schools. Solid majorities have long advocated a greater role for religion in the public schools, even to the point of teachers leading students in prayer. Most elected officials, however, have tried to uphold the constitutional principle of "separation of church and state." Another example: the average voter supports programs such as Social Security, Medicare—and high taxes on the rich—far more strongly than do the nation's leaders. (We discuss programs such as Social Security and Medicare later in this chapter.)

Jim West/Alamy

Members of the United Automobile Workers marching on Labor Day, 2016. They are encouraging union members to vote. ***What kind of democracy are these citizens likely to support?***

Democracy for the Few

If ordinary citizens are not really making policy decisions with their votes, who is? One theory suggests that elites really govern the United States. **Elite theory** holds that society is ruled by a small number of people who exercise power to further their self-interest. American democracy, in other words, is a sham democracy. Few people today believe it is a good idea for the country to be run by a privileged minority. In the past, however, many people believed that it was appropriate for the country to be governed by an elite. Consider the words of Alexander Hamilton, one of the framers of the Constitution:

> *All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and the wellborn, the other the mass of the people. . . . The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct, permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second, and as they cannot receive any advantage by a change, they therefore will ever maintain good government.*[3]

Some versions of elite theory assume that there is a small, cohesive elite class that makes almost all the important decisions for the nation,[4] whereas others suggest that voters choose among competing elites. Popular movements of varying political persuasions often advocate simple versions of elite theory.

Majoritarianism
A political theory holding that in a democracy, the government ought to do what the majority of the people want.

Elite Theory
The argument that society is ruled by a small number of people who exercise power to further their self-interest.

3. Alexander Hamilton, "Speech in the Constitutional Convention on a Plan of Government," in Joanne B. Freeman, ed., *Alexander Hamilton: Writings* (New York: Library of America, 2001).
4. Michael Parenti, *Democracy for the Few*, 9th ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing, 2011).

Democracy for Groups

A different school of thought holds that our form of democracy is based on group interests. Even if the average citizen cannot keep up with political issues or cast a deciding vote in any election, the individual's interests will be protected by groups that represent her or him.

Theorists who subscribe to **pluralism** see politics as a struggle among groups to gain benefits for their members. Given the structure of the American political system, group conflicts tend to be settled by compromise and accommodation. Because there are a multitude of interests, no one group can dominate the political process. Furthermore, because most individuals have more than one interest, conflict among groups need not divide the nation into hostile camps.

Many political scientists believe that pluralism works very well as a descriptive theory. As a theory of how democracy *should* function, however, pluralism has problems. Poor citizens are rarely represented by interest groups. At the same time, rich citizens may be overrepresented. (Still, the unorganized poor do receive useful representation from religious and liberal groups.) There are also serious doubts as to whether group decision making always reflects the best interests of the nation. Indeed, critics see a danger that groups may grow so powerful that all policies become compromises crafted to satisfy the interests of the largest groups. The interests of the public as a whole, then, are not considered. Critics of pluralism have suggested that a democratic system can be almost paralyzed by the struggle among interest groups.

Fundamental Values

LO4: Summarize the conflicts that can occur between the values of liberty and order, and between those of liberty and equality.

The writers of the U.S. Constitution believed that the structures they had created would provide for both popular sovereignty and a stable political system. They also believed that the nation would be sustained by its **political culture**—the patterned set of ideas, values, and ways of thinking about government and politics that characterized its people. Even today, there is considerable consensus among American citizens about certain concepts—including the rights to liberty, equality, and property—that are deemed to be basic to the U.S. political system.

Pluralism
A theory that views politics as a conflict among interest groups. Political decision making is characterized by bargaining and compromise.

Political Culture
The patterned set of ideas, values, and ways of thinking about government and politics that characterizes a people.

Political Socialization
The process by which people acquire political beliefs and values.

Civil Liberties
Those personal freedoms, including freedom of religion and of speech, that are protected for all individuals in a society.

Most Americans are descendents of immigrants who came from diverse cultural and political backgrounds. You can see how immigration will continue to change the composition of the nation in future years in Figure 1–1. Given the changing nature of our population, now and in the past, how can we account for the broad consensus that exists around basic values? Primarily, it is the result of **political socialization**—the process by which political beliefs and values are transmitted to new immigrants and to our children. The two most important sources of political socialization are the family and the educational system.

The most fundamental concepts of the American political culture are those of the dominant culture. The term *dominant culture* refers to the values, customs, and language established by the groups that traditionally have controlled politics and government in a society. The dominant culture in the United States has its roots in Western European civilization. From that civilization, American politics inherited a bias in favor of individualism, private property, and Judeo-Christian ethics.

Liberty versus Order

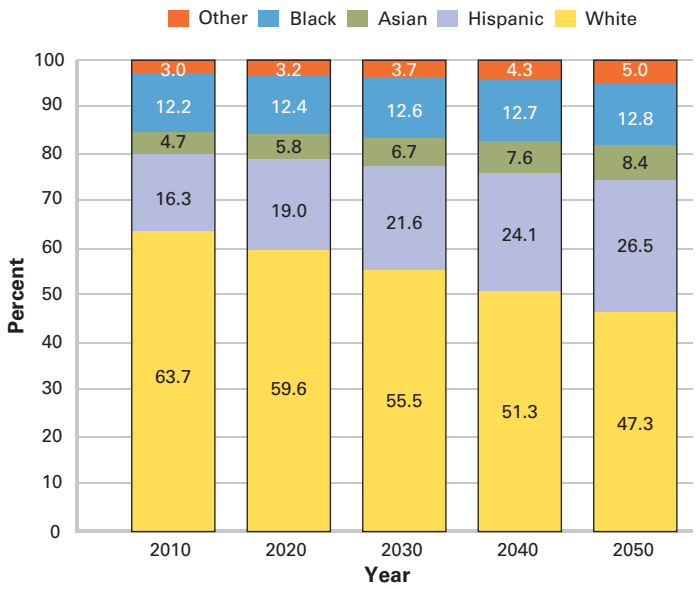
In the United States, our **civil liberties** include religious freedom—both the right to practice whatever religion we choose and the right to be free from any state-imposed religion. Our civil liberties also include freedom of speech—the right to express our opinions freely

on all matters, including government actions. Freedom of speech is perhaps one of our most prized liberties, because a democracy could not endure without it. These and many other basic guarantees of liberty are found in the **Bill of Rights,** the first ten amendments to the Constitution.

Liberty, however, is not the only value widely held by Americans. A substantial portion of the American electorate believes that certain kinds of liberty threaten the traditional social order. The right to privacy is a particularly controversial liberty. The United States Supreme Court has held that the right to privacy can be derived from other rights that are explicitly stated in the Bill of Rights. The Supreme Court has also held that under the right to privacy, the government cannot ban either abortion or private homosexual behavior by consenting adults.[5] Some Americans believe that such rights threaten the sanctity of the family and the general cultural commitment to moral behavior. Of course, others disagree with this point of view.

FIGURE 1–1 Projected Changes in U.S. Ethnic Distribution

What political changes could result when non-Hispanic whites are no longer a majority of the U.S. population?



Data for 2010 from the 2010 census. Data for 2020 through 2050 are Census Bureau projections.

Hispanics (Latinos) may be of any race. The chart categories *White, Black, Asian,* and *Other* are limited to non-Hispanics. *Other* consists of the following non-Hispanic groups: *American Indian, Native Alaskan, Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander,* and *two or more races.*

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census and author's calculations.

Security is another issue that follows from the principle of order. When Americans have felt particularly fearful or vulnerable, the government has emphasized national security over civil liberties. Such was the case after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, which led to the U.S. entry into World War II. Thousands of Japanese Americans were held in internment camps, based on the assumption that their loyalty to this country was in question. More recently, the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, renewed calls for greater security at the expense of some civil liberties.

Liberty versus Equality

The Declaration of Independence states, "All men are created equal." The proper meaning of *equality*, however, has been disputed by Americans since the Revolution. Much of American history—and indeed, world history—is the story of how the value of **equality,** the idea that all people are of equal worth, has been extended and elaborated.

First, the right to vote was granted to all adult white males, regardless of whether they owned property. The Civil War resulted in the end of slavery and established that, in principle at least, all citizens were equal before the law. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s sought to make that promise of equality a reality for African Americans. Other

Bill of Rights
The first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Equality
As a political value, the idea that all people are of equal worth.

5. *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973) and *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003).