

GOVERNMENT IN AMERICA

PEOPLE, POLITICS, AND POLICY



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MyPoliSciLab®

2012 ELECTION EDITION



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TO THE STUDENT

In 2012, American voters reelected President

Barack Obama, a Democrat, while simultaneously keeping control of the House of Representatives in the Republicans' hands. You may be puzzled about why—after such a long, expensive, and hotly contested campaign—voters divided political power in Washington. And you might also wonder why our political system permits, and even encourages, such mixed verdicts. We have found that election results like these lead many students to conclude that government in America is incredibly complex and hard to make sense of. We are not going to make false promises and tell you that American government is easy to understand. However, we do intend to provide you with a clear roadmap to understanding our complex political system.

The framers of our Constitution could have designed a much simpler system, but they purposely built in complexities as insurance against the concentration of power. Despite these complexities, many of the founders, such as Jefferson, were confident that the American people would be able to navigate their constitutional system and effectively govern themselves within it. In writing this book, we are similarly confident that young adults in the twenty-first century can participate effectively in our democracy.

The major message that we convey in this book is that politics and government matter to everyone. *Government in America* explains how policy choices make a difference and shape the kind of country in which we live. We will show you how these choices affect the taxes we pay, the wars we fight, the quality of our environment, and many other critical aspects of our lives.

Students often ask us whether we are trying to convey a liberal or conservative message in this book. The answer is that our goal is to explain the major viewpoints, how they differ, and how such differences matter. We wish to give you the tools to understand American politics and government. Once you have these tools, you can make your own judgment about policy choices and become a well-informed participant in our democratic process. In the twenty-first century, it is often said that “knowledge is power.” We sincerely hope that the knowledge conveyed in this book will help you exercise your fair share of political power in the years to come.

Meet Your Authors



Watch on MyPoliSciLab

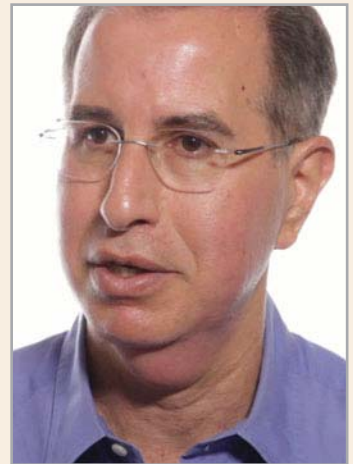
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TO THE INSTRUCTOR

In 2008, the United States elected Barack Obama as

president in the hope of making progress on a host of issues, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, immigration, climate change, and health care. Some changes did occur: health care reform expanded health insurance coverage to millions of Americans and protected millions of others against abuses by insurance companies; new regulations on Wall Street were put in place in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008; and immigration policy limited the deportation of young illegal immigrants.

More generally, however, the nation faced gridlock, especially following the substantial Republican gains in the 2010 congressional elections. The national government even came close to defaulting on its debt. Democrats and Republicans have been further apart in their thinking about the role of government than at any time since Reconstruction, and Republicans have pledged to undo the Democrats' health care reform.

The 2012 Election Edition of *Government in America* explains the reasons we have such a difficult time resolving differences over public policy and the stakes we all have in finding solutions to the challenges facing our nation. We frame its content with a public policy approach to government in the United States and continually ask—and answer—the question, “What difference does politics make to the policies that governments produce?” It is one thing to describe the Madisonian system of checks and balances and separation of powers or the elaborate and unusual federal system of government in the United States; it is something else to ask how these features of our constitutional structure affect the policies that governments generate.

The essence of our approach to American government and politics is that *politics matters*. The national government provides important services, ranging from retirement security and health care to recreation facilities and weather forecasts. The government may also send us to war or negotiate peace with our adversaries, expand or restrict our freedom, raise or lower our taxes, and increase or decrease aid to education. In the twenty-first century, decision makers of both political parties are facing difficult questions regarding American democracy and the scope of our government. Students need a framework for understanding these questions.

We do not discuss policy at the expense of politics, however. We provide extensive coverage of four core subject areas: constitutional foundations, patterns of political behavior, political institutions, and public policy outputs; but we try to do so in a more analytically significant—and interesting—manner. We take special pride in introducing students to relevant work from current political scientists, for example, on the role of PACs and SuperPACs or the impact of divided party government—something we have found instructors to appreciate.



New to This Edition

Government in America, 2012 Election Edition, has been substantially revised and updated to reflect recent changes—often of a historic magnitude—in politics, policy, and participation. Naturally, we have full coverage of the **2012 presidential and congressional elections** and of the latest Supreme Court decisions on civil liberties, civil rights, federalism, and congressional and presidential powers. The historic struggles over the budget and national debt, health care reform, **economic policy**, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan also receive significant coverage.



Extensive changes in this edition make the text even more accessible and relevant to students. For example, we have changed the content of many of our chapter-opening vignettes and features to make them as relevant as possible to current concerns and to pique student interest. From the first chapter, we emphasize the significance of government to young people and the importance of their participation. We have streamlined our presentation of material by combining our chapter on campaigns, nominations, and elections with our chapter on voting behavior, as well as by combining our chapters on economic and social welfare policymaking. We have reorganized our discussion of federalism to make it easier for students to grasp, and have done the same for Supreme Court decision making, clarifying the different bases of decisions, such as original meaning, original intent, and personal ideology.

In addition, we have a great deal of new material in the chapters. For example, not only is there extensive coverage of the 2012 elections, but a completely revised and updated discussion of campaign financing places new focus on the role of money in campaigns. We also have new material on the increasingly ideological presentation of the news on cable television and its potential consequences. The updating of Supreme Court decisions includes recent key decisions such as those on health care reform and immigration. In our chapter on the presidency and throughout the book, we have broad coverage of the Obama administration, in areas ranging from budgetary policy and relations with Congress in this era of polarization to foreign policy challenges such as the upheaval in the Middle East. The entire chapter on the core issue of the budget has been thoroughly updated, with new graphics, to reflect the central importance of taxing and spending in American government and the core issues of the fiscal and debt crises. We have the latest on all the policies we cover, from health care reform and Medicare to the war in Afghanistan and relations with Iran.

The mother and teenager attending the National Rifle Association's annual meeting are enjoying the right to bear arms. This right is not absolute, however.

Defendants' Rights

4.6

Defendants' constitutional rights and identify issues that arise in their representation.

The Bill of Rights contains only 45 words that guarantee the freedoms of religion, speech, press, and assembly. Most of the remaining words concern the rights of people accused of crimes. The Founders included these rights to protect the accused from political excess and to honor British ideas of national political freedom as well as to honor the memory of American citizens. Today the courts apply the protections in the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Amendments mostly to criminal justice cases.

It is useful to think of the criminal justice system as a funnel. Following a crime there is (sometimes) an arrest which is (sometimes) followed by a prosecution, which is (sometimes) followed by a trial which (usually) results in a verdict of innocence or guilt. The funnel gets smaller and smaller. For example, the rate of cases reported to courts made it about 1 in 100. At each stage of the criminal justice system, the Constitution protects the rights of the accused (see Figure 4.13).

The language of the Bill of Rights comes from the late 1700s and is often vague. For example, just how speedy is a "speedy trial"? How "trial and without" does a prosecution have to be in order to violate the Rights Amendment? The courts continually must rule on the constitutionality of actions by public prosecutors, judges, and legislators—actions that citizens or group would claim violate certain rights. Defendants' rights, just like those rights protected by the First Amendment, are not clearly defined in the Bill of Rights.

One thing is clear, however: The Supreme Court's decisions have amended specific provisions of the Bill of Rights—many by one—into the status quo part of the general process.

Over 30% of the **photos** in this edition are new. They capture major events from the last few years, of course, but to illustrate the relevance of politics, they show political actors and processes as well as people affected by politics and policies, creating a visual narrative that enhances rather than repeats the text. Also, all of the **figures and tables** reflect the latest available data, and we take pride in continuously improving our graphical presentations of this data.

Finally, to create a tighter pedagogical connection between this book and **MyPoliSciLab**, we integrated several new features that move students from the book to online active learning opportunities. (NB: The icons listed throughout the book lead to learning resources on MyPoliSciLab.)

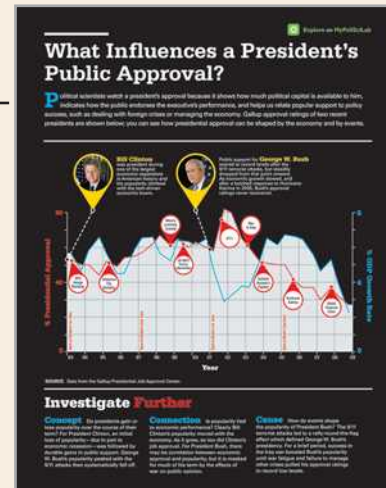
- A new design simplifies the presentation of content to facilitate print *and* digital reading experiences. It also focuses reading by turning our book's **learning objectives** into a clear learning path backed by personalized study plans on MyPoliSciLab.
- **Videos** now support the narrative in each chapter. We—the authors—frame each chapter topic, and interviews with political scientists and everyday citizens look at interesting aspects of each topic. We list the

MyPoliSciLab Video Series Watch on MyPoliSciLab

- 1** **My Big Picture** What does the Constitution have to do with you? Author George C. Edwards II shows you why the government is structured and how understanding the Constitution allows us to adjust expectations for what the government can—and cannot—accomplish.
- 2** **The Basics** What is the purpose of a Constitution? In this video, you will discover the reasons why the Framers wrote the Constitution and how the Constitution works up checks and balances, the protection of liberties, and the framework we need for a functioning democracy.
- 3** **1787** Why is it unusual that the United States Constitution has remained in force for over 200 years? Author George C. Edwards II explains why the Constitution is such a rarity and how it has succeeded in an ever-changing American society.
- 4** **Thinking Like a Political Scientist** How do the institutions created by the U.S. Constitution operate and how have they changed over time? Political University political scientist Corbin Paragossios examines this and other emerging issues in their research and in the study of the Constitution.
- 5** **In the Real World** How well does the system of checks and balances in the United States work, and if it doesn't? Four people describe their opinions on whether or not the system is working better or if Congress or the president is to blame for the problems—and vice versa.
- 6** **So What?** Discover why change in the government sometimes seems inevitable. Author George C. Edwards II illustrates how the Constitution empowers government to move slowly, and provides some reasons why maybe that's not such a bad thing.

videos at the start of each chapter, and students can watch them on MyPoliSciLab.

- **Infographics** demonstrate how political scientists use data to answer questions like “How Long Did It Take to Ratify the Constitution?” or “What Influences a President’s Public Approval?” On MyPoliSciLab, students can use interactive data to investigate further the same question.
- In every chapter, **On MyPoliSciLab** helps students review what they just read. In addition to a chapter summary, key term list, chapter test, and further reading list, there are reminders to use the chapter audio, practice tests, and flashcards on MyPoliSciLab.



On MyPoliSciLab

Review the Chapter Listen to Chapter 3 on MyPoliSciLab

Defining Federalism

3.1 Define federalism and contrast it with alternative forms of government. Federalism is a way of organizing a nation so that two or more levels of government have limited authority over the same area and people. Federal systems are more decentralized than unitary systems but are not as decentralized as confederal systems.

The Constitutional Basis of Federalism

3.2 Explain the constitutional basis for the division of power between national and state governments, the relationship of national supremacy and states' obligations to each other. The Constitution divides power between the national government and state governments and makes the national government supreme within its sphere. The national government has implied as well as enumerated powers, as *McCulloch v. Maryland* made clear. The Civil War also helped establish the primacy of the national government and, over the years, the Supreme Court has interpreted these powers—particularly Congress's interstate-commerce power—in *Wolfe*. Washington has since used state responsibilities to deal with matters such as the economy and civil rights. States have obligations to pay full faith and credit to the public acts, records, and judicial proceedings of other states, except in cases where a treaty, statute, or other state law in that state, and second citizens of other states the privileges and immunities enjoyed by their own citizens.

Intergovernmental Relations

3.3 Discuss the shift from dual to cooperative federalism and the role of federalism in intergovernmental relations. States no longer have exclusive responsibility for government functions within their spheres but instead share those responsibilities with the federal government. Through categorical

and block grants, the federal government provides state and local governments with substantial portions of their budgets, and it uses this leverage to influence policy by attaching conditions to receiving the grants. Sometimes Washington mandates state policy without providing the resources to implement the policy.

Diversity in Policy

3.4 Compare the impact of federalism on diversity in public policy among the states. Federalism allows for considerable diversity among the states in their policies. This constitutional arrangement facilitates state innovation in policy and it allows states to move beyond the limits of national policy. However, federalism also limits state discretion upon the measures within their borders to ensure public services, and it may discourage some state-protectionist measures.

Understanding Federalism

3.5 Assess the impact of federalism on economic government and the scope of government. On the positive side, federalism provides for effective representation of local interests, reduces conflict at the national level, encourages citizenship by being elected, and increases the opportunities for citizens to participate in government and set their policy preferences. On the negative side, federalism increases the opportunities for local interests to threaten national policy, can result in the election of a president not favored by a majority of the public, and complicates efforts to solve government problems. The national government has grown in response to the demands of Americans for public services to not be possible, but it has not in any way supplanted the states.

Learn the Terms Study and Review the Flashcards

Federalism, p. 75
unitary governments, p. 75
intergovernmental relations, p. 76
Tenth Amendment, p. 79

McCulloch v. Maryland, p. 80
enumerated powers, p. 81
implied powers, p. 81
civil claims, p. 81
Collins v. O'Neil, p. 82

full faith and credit, p. 83
categorical, p. 83
policy and accompanying, p. 83
block grants, p. 83
competitive federalism, p. 85

Themes and Features

Government in America follows two central themes. The great question central to governing, a question every nation must answer, is, *How should we govern?* In the United States, our answer is “by democracy.” Yet democracy is an evolving and somewhat ambiguous concept. The first theme, then, is the nature of our democracy. In Chapter 1, we define democracy as a means of selecting policymakers and of organizing government so that policy represents and responds to citizens’ preferences. As with previous editions, we incorporate theoretical issues in our discussions of different models of American democracy. We try to encourage students to think analytically about the theories and to develop independent assessments of how well the American system lives up to citizens’ expectations of democratic government. To help them do this, in every chapter we raise questions about democracy. For example, does Congress give the American people the policies they want? Is a strong presidency good for democracy? Does our mass media make us more democratic? Are powerful courts that make policy decisions compatible with democracy?

The second theme, the scope of government, focuses on another great question of governing: *What should government do?* Here we discuss alternative views concerning the proper role and size for American government and how the workings of institutions and politics influence this scope. The government’s scope is the core question around which politics revolves in contemporary America, pervading many crucial issues: To what degree should Washington impose national standards for health care or speed limits on state policies? How high should taxes be? Do elections encourage politicians to promise more governmental services? Questions about the scope of government are policy questions and thus obviously directly related to our policy approach. Since the scope of government is the pervasive question in American politics today, students will have little problem finding it relevant to their lives and interests.

Each chapter begins with a preview of the relevancy of our two themes to the chapter’s subject matter, refers to the themes at points within the chapter, and ends with an “Understanding” section that discusses how the themes illuminate that subject matter.

Our coverage of American government and politics is comprehensive. First, we present an introductory chapter that lays out the dimensions of our policymaking system and introduces our themes of democracy and the scope of government. Next, we provide four chapters on the constitutional foundations of American government, including the Constitution, federalism, civil liberties, and civil rights. We then offer five chapters focusing on influences on government, including public opinion, the media, interest groups, political parties, and elections and voting behavior.

Our next five chapters focus on the workings of the national government. These chapters include Congress, the president, budgeting (at the core of many issues before policymakers), the federal courts, and the federal bureaucracy. Finally, we present three chapters on the decisions policymakers take and the issues they face. First are economic and social welfare policies, then come health care, environmental protection, and energy policies, and finally, we focus on national security policy.

Our features support our fundamental idea that politics matters and engage students in important political and policy issues.

You Are the Policymaker

Should Political Parties Choose Their Nominees in Open or Closed Primaries?

Some states restrict who can participate in party nomination contests for more than others. In **closed primaries**, only people who have registered in advance with a party can vote in the primary. In contrast, **open primaries** allow voters to decide an Election Day whether they want to participate in the Democratic or Republican contests. Each state legislature is faced with making the choice between an open or closed primary, and the pros and cons of these two basic systems are often hotly debated.

Closed primaries are generally favored by the party organizations themselves because they encourage voters to affirmatively declare a partisan preference when they register to vote. By requiring voters to sign up in advance to either participate in the primary, a party can be reasonably assured that most people who participate in that nomination contest will be reasonably committed to the party. In other words, closed primaries tend to bring ideological purity and help to keep the party divisions between Democrats and Republicans clear. A further advantage for the party organizations is that a closed primary system requires the voters election authority to maintain a record of the party registration of each voter. In a state, a second voter can vote for both parties if you put down on your voter registration form in public opinion. Hence, a closed primary provides each party with invaluable information identifying voters who consider themselves to be party members, engage in a business and having the government collect information for you regarding who have your product. It's no wonder that if the decision were left up to the leaders of the party organizations most would choose a closed primary.

Despite these advantages, the trend among the states in recent years has been toward more open primaries. The main advantage of open primaries is that they allow for more voters to participate in party nomination decisions. Because independents can vote in either party's primary and parties can readily recruit voters, the two major parties are faced with the task of competing for voter support in the primary round as well as the general election. In particular, young voters, whose independent interest has been shown on the sidelines in closed primaries, can be brought into the parties' fold in an open primary. For many politicians, the chance to make their participation in a vote on party as an open primary outweighs the advantage of bringing participation to their party members in a closed primary. However, some advantages of open primaries acknowledge that these states may have the potential. There is a possibility that the partners of one side will "vote" the other party's primary in order to gain access to its most viable candidates. This would be akin to letting UCLA students participate in the state of the basketball for USC's football team. Though voting is always a theoretical possibility, voters have found ways when voters are a liability in the other party's primary. It is usually for candidates where they generally support.

What do you think? Would you choose an open or closed primary?

- The classic **You Are the Policymaker** asks students to read arguments on both sides of a current issue—such as whether we should prohibit PACs—and then to make a policy decision. In Chapters 4 and 5 (Civil Liberties and Civil Rights), this feature is titled **You Are the Judge** and presents the student with an actual court case.

America in Perspective

Interest Group Participation

Members are very occasionally contacted to help with the work of the organization. For working with others—“Over the past 12 months, have you participated in the activities of one of the following associations or groups?”

For working with others—“Over the past 12 months, have you participated in the activities of one of the following associations or groups?”

Question: For civic associations—“In the last 12 months, have you participated in the activities of one of the following associations or groups?”

Legend:
 ■ Participated in a civic association group
 ■ Worked together with people to improve public issues

Source: Public opinion survey of the 2007 International Social Survey Program survey for nine countries and the European Union of Electoral Systems.

- The **America in Perspective** feature examines how the United States compares to other countries on topics such as tax rates, voter turnout, and the delivery of public services. By reading these boxes and comparing the United States to other nations, students can obtain a better perspective on the size of our government and the nature of democracy. Instructors report that this feature provides them with especially useful teaching points.

Why It Matters to You

The Voting Rights Act

In passing the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Congress enacted an extraordinarily strong law to protect the rights of minorities to vote. There is little question that officials pay more attention to minorities when they can vote. And many more members of minority groups are now elected to high public office.

- Several times in each chapter, **Why It Matters to You** insets encourage students to think critically about an aspect of government, politics, or policy and to consider the repercussions—including for themselves—if things worked differently. Each **Why It Matters to You** feature extends the book's policy emphasis to situate it directly within the context of students' daily lives.

Young People & Politics

Freedom Riders

Most political activity is quite safe. There have been occasions, however, when young adults have chosen highly risky and even deadly to fight for their beliefs. Years after Robert F. Kennedy's assassination, organized segregationists used all the law in some parts of the Deep South to change this system. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) organized freedom riders in 1961. Young black and white volunteers in their teens and early twenties traveled on buses through the Deep South. In Anniston, Alabama, segregationists destroyed one bus, and then armed with clubs, bricks, and gas, and knives attacked riders on another. In Birmingham, the participants were greeted by members of the Ku Klux Klan with further acts of violence. At Montgomery, the buses stopped, a white mob beat the riders with clubs and as hard as they could.

The Ku Klux Klan hoped that this violent treatment would stop other young people from taking part in freedom rides. It did not. Over the next six months, more than a thousand people took part in freedom rides. A young white man from Madisonville, Tennessee, James Zwerg, was badly injured by a mob and left in the road for over an hour. When medical attention refused to take him to the hospital. In an interview afterward, he reflected the grim determination of the freedom riders. "Segregation must be stopped. It must be broken down. There's all of us on the Freedom Ride and we're not. No matter what happens we are dedicated to this. We will take the beatings. We are willing to accept death."

As with the Montgomery bus boycott and the conflict at Little Rock, the freedom riders gave worldwide publicity to the racial discrimination suffered by African Americans, and in doing so they helped to bring about change. Attorney General Robert Kennedy petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to draft regulations to end racial segregation in bus terminals. The ICC was reluctant, but in September 1961 it issued the necessary orders.

The freedom riders did not limit themselves to desegregiating buses. During the summer of 1961, they also sat together in segregated restaurants, lunch counters, and hotels. In some cases, they were refused service, and they were often threatened and sometimes attacked. The sit-in tactic was especially effective when it focused on large companies that served tourists in the North and that began to desegregiate their businesses.

In the end, the courage of young people committed to social equality prevailed. They helped to change the face of America.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. What are young adults doing to fight racism today?
2. Does civil disobedience have a role in contemporary America?

- The popular **Young People and Politics** feature illustrates how policies specifically impact young adults, how their political behavior patterns are unique and important, and how public officials are meeting or ignoring their particular policy desires.
- Every chapter includes a **marginal glossary** to support students' understanding of new and important concepts at their first encounter. For easy reference, key terms from the marginal glossary are repeated at the end of each chapter and in the end-of-book glossary. Unique to *Government in America*, we also include a key term glossary in Spanish.

We hope that students—long after reading *Government in America*—will employ these perennial questions about the nature of our democracy and the scope of our government when they examine political events. The specifics of policy issues will change, but questions about whether the government is responsive to the people or whether it should expand or contract its scope will always be with us.

winner-take-all system

1. An electoral system in which legislative seats are awarded only to the candidate who comes in first in their constituencies.

proportional representation

2. An electoral system used throughout most of Europe that awards legislative seats to political parties in proportion to the number of votes won in an election.

coalition government

3. When two or more parties join together to form a majority in a national legislature. This form of government is quite common in the multiparty systems of Europe.

4. In 1968 they had the chance to "send a message" for tougher law and order measures, which is the slogan of the TV newscaster in 1992 to en was marginalized in the campaign. And in 2000 forced more attention on environmental issues a by drawing away a small percentage of liberal v

5. Despite the regular appearance of third p entrenched in American politics. Would it ma party system), as so many European countries h

6. American had many parties, each would have to out from the crowd. It is not hard to imagine whi the United States. Quite possibly, African Ameri

7. pressing vigorously for racial equality. Environm voting to clean up the rivers, oppose nuclear p

8. could have religious parties, union-based parties

9. As in some European countries, there could be h

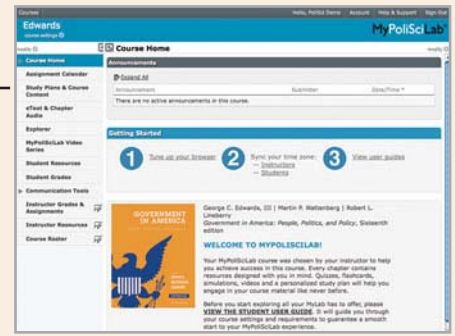
10. in Congress (see "America in Perspective: Multi

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MYPOLISCI LAB is an online homework, tutorial, and assessment product that improves results by helping students better master concepts and by providing educators a dynamic set of tools for gauging individual and class performance. Its immersive experiences truly engage students in learning, helping them to understand course material and improve their performance. And MyPoliSciLab comes from Pearson—your partner in providing the best digital learning experiences.

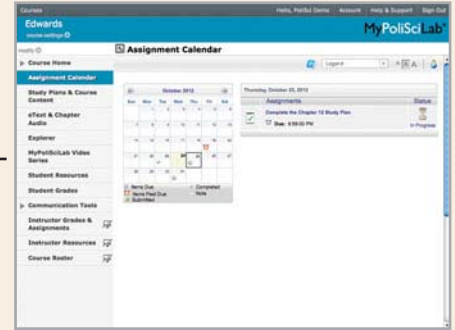
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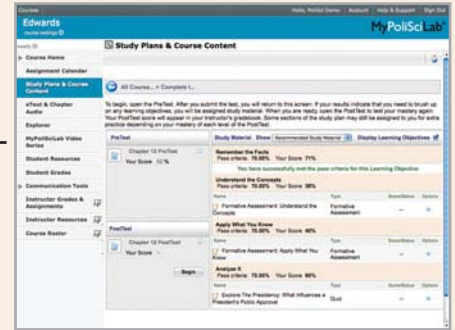


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- Students can study key terms and concepts with their own personal set of **flashcards**.



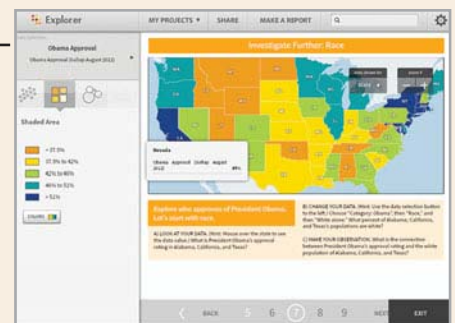
ENGAGE STUDENTS. Students—each one is different. Reach *all* of them with the new **MyPoliSciLab Video Series**, which features this book's authors and top scholars discussing the big ideas in each chapter and applying them to enduring political issues. Each chapter is supported by six videos that help students work through the material and retain its key lessons.



- **The Big Picture.** Understand how the topic fits into the American political system.
- **The Basics.** Review the topic's core learning objectives.
- **In Context.** Examine the historical background of the topic.
- **Thinking Like a Political Scientist.** Solve a political puzzle related to the topic.
- **In the Real World.** Consider different perspectives on a key issue in American politics.
- **So What?** Connect the topic to what is potentially at stake for American democracy.



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1

Introducing Government in America



POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT MATTER—that is the single most important message of this book. Consider, for example, the following list of ways that government and politics may have already impacted your life:

- Chances are pretty good that you or someone in your family has recently been the recipient of one of the 80 million payments made to individuals by the federal government every month. In 2010, nearly 20 percent of the money that went into Americans' wallets was from government payments like jobless benefits, food stamps, Social Security payments, veterans' benefits, and so on.
- Any public schools you attended were prohibited by the federal government from discriminating against females and minorities and from holding prayer sessions led by school officials. Municipal school boards regulated your education, and the state certified and paid your teachers.
- The ages at which you could get your driver's license, drink alcohol, and vote were all determined by state and federal governments.
- Before you could get a job, the federal government had to issue you a Social Security number, and you have been paying Social Security taxes every month that you have been employed. If you worked at a low-paying job, your starting wages were likely determined by state and federal minimum-wage laws.

1.1

Identify the key functions of government and explain why they matter, p. 9.

1.2

Define politics in the context of democratic government, p. 11.

1.3

Assess how citizens can have an impact on public policy and how policies can impact people, p. 12

1.4

Identify the key principles of democracy and outline theories regarding how it works in practice and the challenges democracy faces today, p. 15.

1.5

Outline the central arguments of the debate in America over the proper scope of government, p. 25.



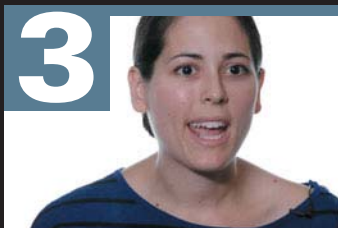
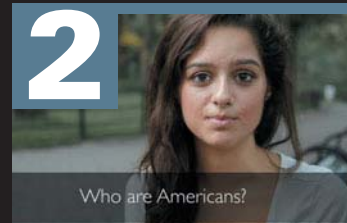
President Obama greets people who attended his 2012 speech at the University of Michigan, where he discussed his proposals for making college more affordable.



The Big Picture Why should politics matter to you? Author Martin P. Wattenberg explains why having an interest in the political system can help you decide which issues you care about the most, and then evaluate the way that the government is handling and prioritizing those issues.



The Basics What function does government serve? In this video, you will analyze this question and explore the core values that shape our political system and how the growing diversity of our population is changing—and reaffirming—the definition of what it means to be American.



In Context Discuss the importance of American exceptionalism in American political culture. In this video, University of Oklahoma political scientist Allyson Shortle examines the core values that make up American political culture. She also discusses how these values gave rise to the American dream.



Thinking Like a Political Scientist Find out how and why research on American politics has shifted. Boston University political scientist Neta C. Crawford discusses how scholars who once focused on voters and institutions are now looking at deliberation as the primary indicator of the health of a democratic system.



In the Real World What is the government's function in everyday life? Real people share their opinions on how involved the federal government should be in education by evaluating the effectiveness of the No Child Left Behind Act, which encourages standardized testing.



So What? What can happen if you don't vote? More than you would think. Author Martin P. Wattenberg argues that by not voting, students and other demographics are sending a message to politicians that their interests are not as important as those of the groups with higher voter turnout.



- As a college student, you may be drawing student loans financed by the government. The government even dictates certain school holidays.
- Even though gasoline prices have risen substantially in recent years, federal policy continues to make it possible for you to drive long distances relatively cheaply compared to citizens in most other countries. In many other advanced industrialized nations, such as England and Japan, gasoline is twice as expensive as in the United States because of the high taxes their governments impose on fuel.
- If you apply to rent an apartment, by federal law landlords cannot discriminate against you because of your race or religion.

This list could, of course, be greatly extended. And it helps explain the importance of politics and government. As Barack Obama said when he first ran for public office in 1993, “Politics does matter. It can make the difference in terms of a benefits check. It can make the difference in terms of school funding. Citizens can’t just remove themselves from that process. They actually have to engage themselves and not just leave it to the professionals.”¹

More than any other recent presidential campaign, Obama’s 2008 run for the White House was widely viewed as having turned many young Americans on to politics. *Time* magazine even labeled 2008 as the “Year of the Youth Vote,” noting that Obama was “tapping into a broad audience of energized young voters hungry for change.”² And young people did more than display enthusiasm at massive rallies for Obama. By supporting Obama by a two-to-one margin, they provided him with a key edge in the election. Many observers proclaimed that the stereotype of politically apathetic American youth should finally be put to rest.

Stereotypes can be outdated or even off the mark; unfortunately, the perception that young Americans are less engaged in politics than older people has been and continues to be supported by solid evidence. In past editions of this book we wrote:

: *Whether because they think they can’t make a difference, the political system is corrupt,*
 : *or they just don’t care, many young Americans are clearly apathetic about public affairs.*
 : *And while political apathy isn’t restricted to young people, a tremendous gap has opened*
 : *up between young adults and the elderly on measures of political interest, knowledge,*
 : *and participation.*

Although there were some positive developments for young people’s political involvement in 2008, it would be premature to declare an end to the era of youth political apathy—the gap between young and older Americans remains. Consider some data from the National Election Study, a nationally representative survey conducted each presidential election year.

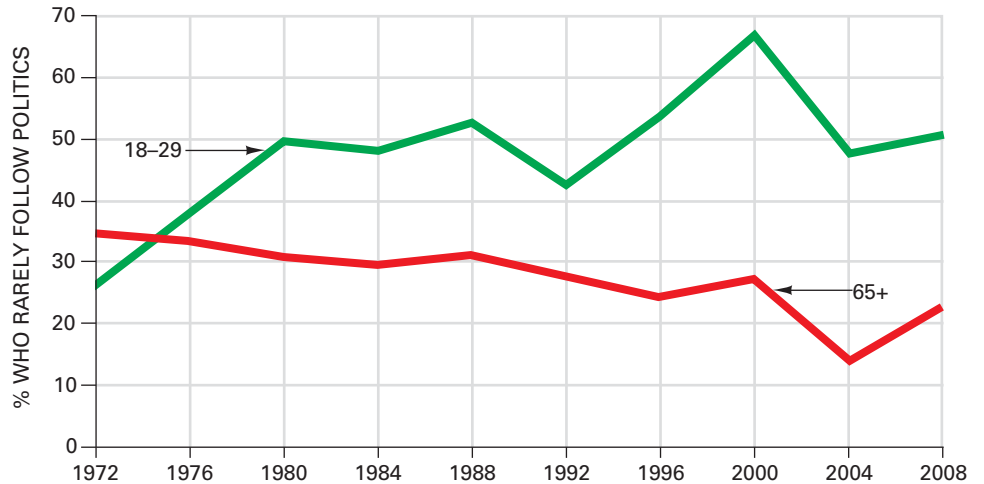
In 2008, when the National Election Study asked a nationwide sample of people about their general level of interest in politics, over half of Americans under the age of 30 said they rarely followed politics, compared to less than a quarter of those over the age of 65. Notice, in Figure 1.1, that in the early 1970s, when 18- to 20-year-olds became eligible to vote, there was no generation gap in political interest. Back then, young people actually reported following politics a bit more regularly than did senior citizens.

Lack of interest often leads to lack of information. The National Election Study always asks a substantial battery of political knowledge questions. As you can see in Figure 1.2, which shows the average percentage of correct answers for various age groups in 1972 and 2008, in 2008 young people were correct only 20 percent of the time, whereas people over 65 were correct more than twice as often.³ Whether the question concerned identifying partisan control of the House and Senate, or accurately estimating the unemployment rate, the result was the same: young people were clearly less knowledgeable than the elderly. This pattern of age differences in political knowledge has been found time and time again in surveys in recent years.⁴ By contrast, in 1972 there was virtually no pattern by age, with those under 30 actually scoring 4 percent higher than those over 65.

Thomas Jefferson once said that there has never been, nor ever will be, a people who are politically ignorant and free. If this is indeed the case, write Stephen Bennett and Eric Rademacher, then “we can legitimately wonder what the future holds” if young people “remain as uninformed as they are about government and public affairs.”⁵ While this may well be an overreaction, there definitely are important consequences when citizens lack political information. In *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*, Michael

FIGURE 1.1 POLITICAL APATHY AMONG YOUNG AND OLD AMERICANS, 1972–2008

In every presidential election from 1972 to 2008, the American National Election Studies has asked a cross-section of the public the following question: “Some people seem to follow what’s going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there’s an election going on or not. Others aren’t that interested. Would you say you follow what’s going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?” Below we have graphed the percentage who said they only followed politics “only now and then” or “hardly at all.” Lack of political interest among young people hit a record high during the 2000 campaign between Bush and Gore, when over two-thirds said they rarely followed public affairs. Since then, political interest among young people has recovered somewhat; however, compared to senior citizens, they are still twice as likely to report low political interest.

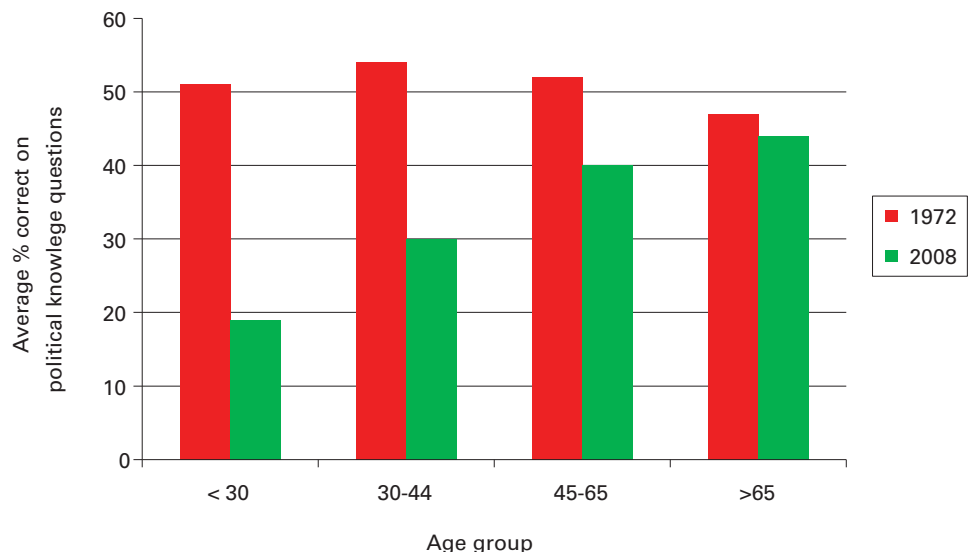


SOURCE: Authors’ analysis of 1972–2008 American National Election Studies data.

Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter make a strong case for the importance of staying informed about public affairs. Political knowledge, they argue, (1) fosters civic virtues, such as political tolerance; (2) helps citizens to identify what policies would truly benefit them and then incorporate this information in their voting behavior; and (3) promotes active participation in politics.⁶ If you’ve been reading about the debate on immigration reform, for example,

FIGURE 1.2 AGE AND POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE, 1972 AND 2008

This figure shows the percentage of correct answers to five questions in 1972 and three questions in 2008 by age group. In 1972, the relationship between age and political knowledge was basically flat: each age group displayed roughly the same level of information about basic political facts, such as which party currently had more seats in the House of Representatives. By 2008, the picture had changed quite dramatically, with young people being substantially less likely to know the answer to such questions than older people.



SOURCE: Authors’ analysis of 1972 and 2008 National Election Studies data.