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# American Government and Politics Today

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*Enhanced Eighteenth Edition*

# American Government and Politics Today



*Enhanced Eighteenth Edition*

# American Government and Politics Today

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# A Letter to Instructors

Dear American Politics Instructor:

Americans are often cynical about our national political system. College students in particular are at a loss to know what to do about the polarized politics and policy gridlock occurring within the modern political system, making American Politics a tough course to teach. This edition of *American Government and Politics Today* is designed to help you move your students from the sidelines of politics to full engagement by equipping them with the knowledge and analytical skills needed to shape political decisions at the local, state, and national levels. Based on review feedback, we include a strong emphasis on the power of modern social media and its ability to engage citizens with one another, as well as to connect citizens with political issues and ideas. The solid content on institutions and the processes of government included in previous editions remains. Features such as “Politics in Practice” and “What if...?” will help you bring politics to life in your classroom, while demonstrating to students why politics matters and how it surrounds them each day—at times without their even knowing it. Each chapter has the most up-to-date data and information and includes coverage of current issues and controversies that we believe will engage students and hold their interest.

We believe that part of America’s cynicism stems from the growing reality of “two Americas”: one with opportunity afforded by privilege and wealth and another whose opportunities, rights, and privileges seem stunted by a lack of wealth. Does the promise of America exist for both groups or only one? How was this theme reflected in the outcome of the 2016 presidential election and in the decision of the Trump administration? How do those who feel they have been left behind as others have prospered regain the promise of the American Dream? What role can political engagement play in doing so? Knowledge is power, and in this edition we try to strike a balance between the content and the skill building necessary for course success, while also presenting students with current controversies in politics and opportunities to engage with those issues. The new “Politics in Practice” feature found in each chapter highlights the ways people engage in politics to make changes. Each chapter begins with the popular feature “What if...?”, which presents students with an opportunity to think through a political scenario that for now is a hypothetical, but could actually happen.

These active learning opportunities bring alive the issues that students are confronted with on a daily basis and give students the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills.

## New to This Edition

- This edition has been substantially revised and updated to include the 2016 national elections and recent data, issues, and engaging examples of politics, politicians, and policies. Following the 2016 presidential election, the

text has been updated to include issues and examples from the new Trump administration.

- In response to our reviewers, we have substantially revised Chapter 10: “The Media and Politics.” This chapter puts a strong emphasis on the way social media connect us to one another and with ideas and political leaders. President Trump’s use of Twitter to communicate directly with his supporters and opponents is evaluated in this context.
- Chapter 9 combines material on “Campaigns, Voting, and Elections” in a format that will lead the student seamlessly through the electoral process. The impact of the 2018 midterm elections on the composition of Congress is included.
- In response to reviewers, the features in this edition have been streamlined and the number reduced to three. Each feature has been revised for this edition. “Politics in Practice” is new to this edition and focuses on making politics and people taking political action visible to students by highlighting examples from popular culture and current events. In Chapter 2, the feature highlights the impact of the Broadway musical *Hamilton*, and in Chapter 5 it shows the power of students to change the racial climate on their campus through protest. The feature is designed to enhance student interest by identifying a person or group of people who took on an issue and made a difference.
- A new feature, “Election 2016,” has been added to every chapter in the text. Within the context of each chapter’s focus, this feature guides students to think about the ways an election can change American politics or reinforce the status quo. Information from the new Trump administration has been added where appropriate.
- Greater attention has been paid to gender issues throughout the text as suggested by reviewers. New material is included on the historic candidacy of Hillary Rodham Clinton, the Equal Pay Act, and the Lilly Ledbetter Act, in addition to updated coverage of women’s rights and gender equality, gender and racial discrimination, and the pay gap. The unprecedented number of women running in the 2018 midterm elections is included.
- Care has been taken to reflect the growing political power of Latino/a voters and increasingly diverse communities in the examples used throughout the book.
- Tables and figures have been updated, and the results of the 2016 election are included.
- Recent court decisions on marriage equality and immigration, as well as foreign policy issues like the violence in Syria and the refugee crisis, are integrated into the appropriate chapters in order to ensure that the book addresses the most timely political events and topics.

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Seeing students actively engage with the topics addressed in this book and witnessing an eagerness to learn more about the issues currently facing our nation are some of the most exciting experiences given to any faculty member, particularly when many students will only take one undergraduate course in political science. It is our hope that the revisions to this text will help you reach many students and transform them into thoughtful and engaged citizens for the rest of their lives.

Sincerely,

Lynne E. Ford ([FordL@cofc.edu](mailto:FordL@cofc.edu))

Barbara A. Bardes ([BardesB@ucmail.uc.edu](mailto:BardesB@ucmail.uc.edu))

Steffen W. Schmidt

Mack C. Shelley, II

# A Letter to Students

Dear Student:

Whether you are a political science major, an international affairs major, or are simply taking this course to fulfill a general requirement, we hope that you will enjoy this book and all of its features. *American Government and Politics Today* is meant to be enjoyed as well as studied. To ensure that the most relevant topics are addressed, the book has been thoroughly revised to include the results of the 2016 national elections, global events and foreign policy, and Supreme Court decisions that affect your life. In every chapter, resources are included to help you go online or use social media to investigate the issues presented in the text that capture your interest. American politics is dynamic, and it is our goal to provide you with clear discussions of the institutions of national government and the political processes so that you can be informed and understand the issues as you participate in our political system.

As a student, the federal government may seem remote from your daily life, but that could not be further from the truth! The issues facing the nation today are serious and require your attention, whether it seems that way upon first glance or not. Decisions made in Washington, DC, and in your state capital can determine, for example, the rate of interest that you will pay on student loans, who must serve in the military, or the level of investment in higher education relative to sustaining pensions and Medicare. You may have heard people talking about the “1 percent” and the “99 percent”—this is a way of capturing the gap between the very rich and everyone else. In what ways does rising wealth inequality matter in America? Is it still possible for everyone to achieve the American Dream? Is political equality possible in the face of economic and social inequality? How did President Trump’s election as president reflect a sense that some Americans have been left behind? How will politics change as a result of new groups of political participants? These are just a few of the questions raised by this text. The promise of America is very much alive, but our future is far from certain. Understanding how politics works and knowing your rights as a citizen are critical to shaping the nation’s future. Political questions rarely have simple answers. Political issues invite multiple perspectives that can be shaped as much by gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation as by political party or ideology. Throughout this text, we will try to equip you with what you need to develop your own political identity and perspective so that you can fully engage in the national conversation about our shared future.

This edition’s interactive features are intended to help you succeed in your coursework as well as to understand the role of politics in the modern world.

- **Learning Objectives:** These objectives begin each chapter and serve as your “take-aways,” highlighting the most important content, concepts, and skills. This will make it easy to check your own learning as you work through each chapter.



- **Margin Definitions:** These make it easy to double-check your understanding of key terms within the chapters.
- **What If:** This chapter-opening feature is designed to get you thinking about why politics and government matter to you and your community.
- **Politics in Practice:** This new feature will help you see politics and popular culture in a new way. In each chapter you will find examples of people using politics to make a change. For example, in Chapter 2 the feature highlights the impact of the Broadway musical *Hamilton* on the public's interest in history, and in Chapter 5 it shows the power of students to change the racial climate on their campus through protest.
- **Election 2016:** This new feature, appearing in each chapter, will guide you to think about the ways an election can change American politics or reinforce the status quo. Examples from the new Trump administration have been added.
- **Social Media Margin Questions:** Most chapters include a social media screen capture that poses a critical-thinking question. This feature will challenge you to apply chapter content to the real world.
- **Chapter Summaries:** Revised for this edition, the end-of-chapter summaries link back to a Learning Objective to better test your understanding of the topics at hand.
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Information is power: when you are well informed, you can participate in discussion with your friends, family, and colleagues and debate ideas with confidence. You can influence events rather than watch as a passive bystander. The future of our republic depends on your full engagement. You are the next generation of leaders, and we wish you well.

Sincerely,

Lynne E. Ford ([FordL@cofc.edu](mailto:FordL@cofc.edu))

Barbara A. Bardes ([BardesB@ucmail.uc.edu](mailto:BardesB@ucmail.uc.edu))

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# Acknowledgments

In preparing this edition of *American Government and Politics Today*, we have received superb guidance and cooperation from a team of publishers and editors at Cengage. We have greatly appreciated the collaboration and encouragement given over the years by Carolyn Merrill, former product team manager. Margaret McAndrew Beasley, our developmental editor, deserves our thanks for keeping us moving toward deadlines and for her well-considered suggestions for improvement. We are also indebted to Megan Garvey, content development manager, and Corinna Dibble, content project manager, for their contributions.

Any errors remain our own. We welcome comments and suggestions from instructors and students alike who are using the book. Their suggestions have helped to strengthen the book and make it more helpful to students and faculty in the changing world of higher education.