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20th edition

American Government and Politics Today

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Bardes | Shelley | Schmidt

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and Politics Today

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A Letter to Instructors

The fundamental theme of *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials, 20th Edition*, continues to be the importance of participating in active citizenship, emphasizing critical thinking about political issues, and encouraging students to take action and become involved in the political process. Whether the topic is immigration, public health, police policy, or taxation, we constantly strive to involve students in the analysis. Our goal is to make sure that politics is not just an abstract process, but a very human enterprise. We emphasize how different outcomes can affect students' civil rights and liberties, employment opportunities, and economic welfare. To make sure students understand the link between themselves and the subject matter they are reading, **Why Should You Care about...?** features grab students' attention while they are reading the materials. We further encourage interaction with the political system by ending each chapter with a feature titled **How You Can Make a Difference**, which shows students how to become politically involved and why it is important that they do so. **Which Side Are You On?** features challenge students to find the connection between a current controversy and their personal positions. And to help students think critically about the world around them and spark discussion in your classroom, we pose questions for critical analysis with almost every boxed feature, table, chart, exhibit, and photo.

New to This Edition

We have made numerous changes to this volume for the 20th Edition. We have rewritten the text as necessary and updated the book to reflect the events of the past two years. For a detailed list of changes, please contact your Cengage learning consultant.

- Because we know that students respond to up-to-date information about political events, we incorporate compelling, thought-provoking current examples throughout. We also include the results of the November 2020 elections and analyze how the rise of Donald Trump has changed the way we look at American politics. In each **new Elections 2020** feature, we place the election results in the context of the chapter's subject matter.

- The 20th Edition includes a **separate Chapter 10 on The Media**. Because the new media have become so important, we felt it necessary to devote an entire chapter to this topic. We look at content providers and aggregators. We look at the importance of media in campaigns. Net neutrality is an important topic in this chapter. Finally, we examine the issue of media bias and talk radio.
- **More demographics material** is included throughout, particularly in Chapter 1, which presents material on positive and negative trends, such as unemployment and inequality, and falling crime and teen pregnancy rates, and rising mortality rates among members of the rural white working class.
- **Major updates to the content** have been made in the areas of public opinion, interest groups, political parties, social media in politics, key Supreme Court rulings, and the Trump administration. The chapters on Domestic and Economic Policy and Foreign Policy have been completely updated and modernized. The Congress chapter reports the increasing control of leaders in both parties over proposed legislation and the decline of the committee system. The text describes the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, racism in America and the role of the police, Supreme Court appointments, marijuana, voting rights, President Trump's executive orders, foreign policy coverage of Syria, the rise of China, trade relations, and more!

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 in current events videos and RSS feeds from national or local news sources.

Barbara A. Bardes, Mack C. Shelley II, Steffen W. Schmidt

A Letter to Students

The 2020 elections were among the most consequential ever. In effect, American voters passed judgment on Donald Trump, who they elected as president in 2016. Those elections featured Trump, the Republican, and Democrat Hillary Clinton. Clinton carried the popular vote—but our presidential elections are decided by the *electoral college*. There, Trump won. Trump backed the Republicans' attempts to repeal Obamacare and their successful effort to pass pro-business tax reforms. In 2018, however, Trump turned to his own issues, imposing tariffs (taxes) on imports from friend and foe alike. Throughout, he championed his "base"—culturally conservative whites—against minority groups, feminists, and liberals alike. In November 2018, the public made an initial assessment of this record by handing the U.S. House of Representatives to the Democrats—a net 41 seats switched from Republican to Democratic. The dramatic contest between Trump and Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden in 2020 completed this popular reassessment, even as America faced multiple crises including the coronavirus pandemic, the resulting economic collapse, and massive demonstrations against perceived police violence.

You'll learn about all of these developments and more in the 20th Edition of *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials*.

Our hope is that this book inspires you to join the exciting process of being an active, informed citizen. Your American Government course and the material you'll read here will give you the knowledge you'll need to understand our political system and develop well-informed opinions on the current issues and controversies you'll encounter in your daily life. We strive to highlight how American government and politics directly affect you in every chapter. We also suggest easy ways that you can take action in your community and become involved in the political process.

Special Features

- **Take Action: A Guide to Political Participation** is filled with resources and suggestions to help students stay informed and get involved in the political process.
- Thought-provoking **What If...?**, **Beyond Our Borders**, and **Consider the Source** features help you understand

key concepts and current events as well as develop a more informed and global perspective.

- **Why You Should Care about...?** marginal features demonstrate why the topic at hand directly affects you and matters in your life.
- **Which Side Are You On?** sections challenge you to take a stand on controversial issues.
- **How You Can Make a Difference** features conclude each chapter with ways in which you can become actively involved in American politics.
- **Elections 2020** features highlight the importance of the 2020 elections and include an analysis of the campaigns and election results.
- **Critical-thinking questions** now accompany almost all boxed features, figures, tables, and photo captions, helping you apply and analyze the information presented.
- **Learning Outcomes** appear in each chapter opener, correlate to each major section to help you target your reading, and are revisited in each Chapter Summary and end-of-chapter Quiz to help you assess your comprehension and master the book's key concepts. Every chapter also concludes with key terms and a list of additional print and media resources. And the book is now seamlessly integrated with MindTap, directing you to a variety of online interactive activities that will help you test yourself on the book's Learning Outcomes.

The Benefits of Using MindTap

For you as a student, the benefits of using **MindTap** with this book are endless. With automatically graded practice quizzes and activities, an easily navigated learning path, and an interactive eBook, you will be able to test yourself inside and outside of the classroom with ease. The accessibility of current events coupled with interactive media makes the content fun and engaging. On your computer, phone, or tablet, MindTap is there when you need it, giving you easy access to flashcards, quizzes, readings, and assignments.

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MindTap for *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials, Twentieth Edition*

MindTap for *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials, 20e* is an immersive, outcomes-driven online learning experience built upon Cengage content and correlated to a core set of learning outcomes. MindTap is the platform that gives you complete control of your course to craft unique learning experiences that challenge students, build confidence, and elevate performance.

MindTap introduces students to core concepts from the beginning of your course using a simplified learning path that progresses from understanding to application. Built upon proven learning research and theory, auto-graded assessments and content are paired in a visually captivating side-by-side format.

A variety of activity types enable students to flex their critical thinking muscles while soaking in key concepts. Learners are encouraged to read with close attention, write persuasively with logic, interpret data, consider and articulate their own positions on key topics, and much more. You can further engage students with polling questions that spark discussion and activate learning.

MindTap also provides ample opportunities for students to check themselves for where they need extra practice, as well as allowing faculty to measure and assess student progress. With the Cengage Mobile App, you also give your students the power to read, listen and complete activities on their mobile devices, so they're empowered to learn on their own terms.

As an instructor, MindTap is here to simplify your workload, organize and immediately grade your students' assignments, and allow you to customize your course with current events videos and news sources as you see fit. Through deep-seated integration with your learning management system (LMS), grades are easily exported, and analytics are pulled with the click of a button. MindTap can be used fully online with its interactive eBook for *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials* or in conjunction with the printed text.

Instructor Companion Website for *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials, Twentieth Edition*

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This Instructor Companion Website is an all-in-one resource for class preparation, presentation, and testing. Accessible through [Cengage.com/login](https://www.cengage.com/login) with your faculty account, you will find available for download: book-specific Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentations, a Test Bank compatible with multiple learning management systems (LMSs), an Instructor Manual, and more.

The Test Bank, offered in Blackboard, Moodle, Desire2Learn, and Canvas formats, contains learning objective-specific multiple-choice and essay questions for each chapter. Import the test bank into your LMS to edit and manage questions, and to create tests.

The Instructor's Manual includes information about all of the activities and assessments available for each chapter and their correlation to specific learning objectives, an outline, key terms with definitions, a chapter summary, and several ideas for engaging with students with discussion questions, ice breakers, case studies, and social learning activities that may be conducted in an on-ground, hybrid, or online modality.

The Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentations are closely tied to the Instructor Manual, providing ample opportunities for generating classroom discussion and interaction. They offer ready-to-use, visual outlines of each chapter, which may be easily customized for your lectures. A guide to teaching online presents technological and pedagogical considerations and suggestions for teaching the Introduction to American Government course when you can't be in the same room with students. Access the Instructor Companion Website for these resources and more at www.cengage.com/login.

Cognero for *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials, Twentieth Edition*

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Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero is a flexible, online system that allows you to author, edit, and manage test bank content from multiple Cengage Learning solutions, create multiple test versions in an instant, and deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want. The test bank for *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials* contains Learning Objective-specific multiple-choice and essay questions for each chapter.

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Reviewers

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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).

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Steffen W. Schmidt is professor of political science at Iowa State University. He grew up in Colombia, South America, and studied in Colombia, Switzerland, and France. He obtained his Ph.D. in public law and government from Columbia University in New York.

Schmidt has published 14 books and more than 130 journal articles. He is also the recipient of numerous prestigious teaching prizes, including the Amoco Award for Lifetime Career Achievement in Teaching and the Teacher of the Year award. He is a pioneer in the design, production, and delivery of Internet courses and a founding member of the American Political Science Association's section on Computers and Multimedia. He is known as "Dr. Politics" for his extensive commentary on U.S. politics in U.S. and international media. He is a weekly blogger for Gannett and comments on CNN en Español and Univision. He is the chief political and international correspondent of the Internet magazine InsiderIowa.com.

Schmidt likes to snow ski, ride hunter jumper horses, race sailboats, and scuba dive.

Career Opportunities:

Political Science

Introduction

It is no secret that college graduates are facing a very tough job market. Despite this challenge, those with a college degree have done much better than those without since the 2008 recession. One of the most important decisions a student has to make is the choice of a major. Many consider future job possibilities when making that call. A political science degree is useful for a successful career in many different fields, from lawyer to policy advocate, pollster to humanitarian worker. Employer surveys reveal that the skills that most employers value in successful employees—critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and clarity of verbal and written communication—are precisely the tools that political science courses should help you develop. This brief guide is intended to help spark ideas for what kinds of careers you might pursue with a political science degree and the types of activities you can engage in now to help you secure one of those positions after graduation.

Careers in Political Science

Law and Criminal Justice

Do you find that your favorite parts of your political science classes are those that deal with the Constitution, the legal system, and the courts? Then a career in law and criminal justice might be right for you. Traditional jobs in the field range from lawyer or judge to police or parole officer. Since 9/11, there has also been tremendous growth in the area of homeland security, which includes jobs in mission support, immigration, and travel security, as well as prevention and response.

Public Administration

The many offices of the federal government combined represent one of the largest employers in the United States. Flip to the executive branch chapter of this textbook and consider that each federal department, agency, and bureau you see looks to political science majors for future employees. A partial list of such agencies would include the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Federal Trade Commission. There are also thousands of staffers who work for members of Congress or the Congressional Budget Office, many of whom were

political science majors in college. This does not even begin to account for the multitude of similar jobs in state and local governments that you might consider as well.

Campaigns, Elections, and Polling

Are campaigns and elections the most exciting part of political science for you? Then you might consider a career in the growing industry based around political campaigns. From volunteering and interning to consulting, marketing, and fundraising, there are many opportunities for those who enjoy the competitive and high-stakes electoral arena. For those looking for careers that combine political knowledge with statistical skills, there are careers in public opinion polling. Pollsters work for independent national organizations such as Gallup and YouGov, or as part of news operations and campaigns. For those who are interested in survey methodology there are also a wide variety of non-political career opportunities in marketing and survey design.

Interest Groups, International and Nongovernmental Organizations

Is there a cause that you are especially passionate about? If so, there is a good chance that there are interest groups out there that are working hard on them. Many of the positions that one might find in for-profit companies also exist in their nonprofit interest group and nongovernmental organization counterparts, including lobbying and high-level strategizing. Do not forget that there are also quite a few major international organizations—such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the International Monetary Fund—where a degree in political science could be put to good use. While competition for those jobs tends to be fierce, your interest and knowledge about politics and policy will give you an advantage.

Foreign Service

Does a career in diplomacy and foreign affairs, complete with the opportunity to live and work abroad, sound exciting for you? Tens of thousands of people work for the State Department, both in Washington, D.C., and in consulates throughout the world. They represent the diplomatic interests of the United States abroad. Entrance into the Foreign Service follows a very specific process, starting with the Foreign Service Officers Test—an exam given three times a

year that includes sections on American government, history, economics, and world affairs. Being a political science major is a significant help in taking the FSOT.

Graduate School

While not a career, graduate school may be the appropriate next step for you after completing your undergraduate degree. A Ph.D. or Master's degree in political science could open additional doors to a career in academia, as well as many of the professions mentioned earlier. If a career as a researcher in political science interests you, you should speak with your advisors about continuing your education.

Preparing While Still on Campus

Internships

One of the most useful steps you can take while still on campus is to visit your college's career center to discuss an internship in your field of interest. Not only does it give you a chance to experience life in the political science realm, it can lead to job opportunities later down the road and add experience to your resume.

Skills

In addition to your political science classes, there are a few skills any number of which will prove useful as a complement to your degree:

Writing: Like anything else, writing improves with practice. Writing is one of those skills that is applicable regardless of where your career might take you. Virtually every occupation relies on an ability to write cleanly, concisely, and persuasively.

Public Speaking: An oft-quoted 1977 survey showed that public speaking was the most commonly cited fear among respondents. And yet oral communication is a

vital tool in the modern economy. You can practice this skill in a formal class setting or through extracurricular activities that get you in front of a group.

Quantitative Analysis: As the Internet aids in the collection of massive amounts of information, the nation is facing a drastic shortage of people with basic statistical skills to interpret and use this data. A political science degree can go hand-in-hand with courses in introductory statistics.

Foreign Language: One skill that often helps a student or future employee stand out in a crowded job market is the ability to communicate in a language other than English. Solidify or set the foundation for your verbal and written foreign language communication skills while in school.

Student Leadership

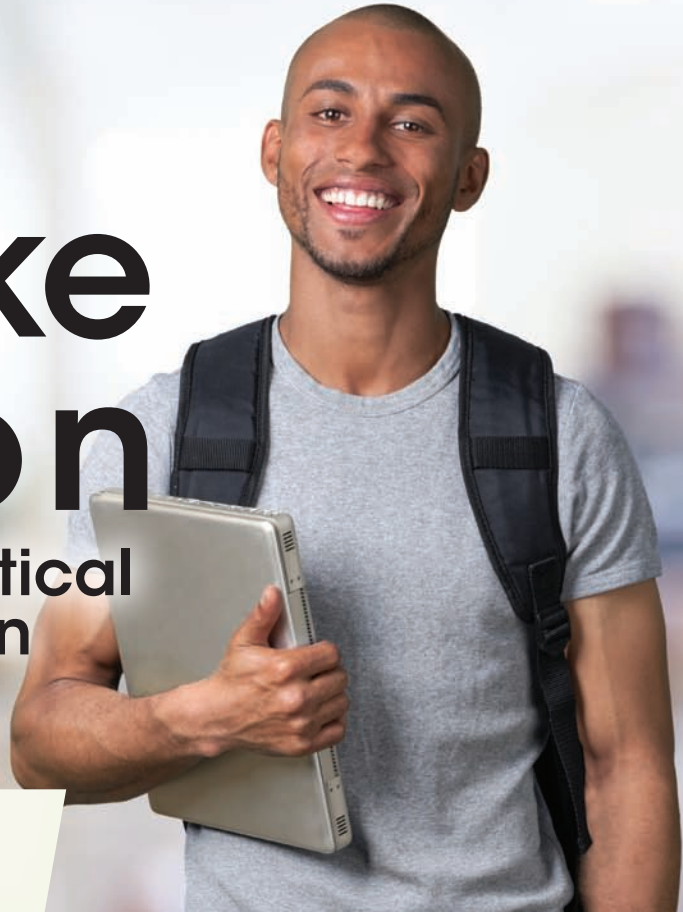
One attribute that many employers look for is "leadership potential," which can be quite tricky to indicate on a resume or cover letter. What can help is a demonstrated record of involvement in clubs and organizations, preferably in a leadership role. While many people think immediately of student government, most student clubs allow you the opportunity to demonstrate your leadership skills.

Conclusion

We hope that reading this has sparked some ideas on potential future careers. As a next step, visit your college's career placement office, which is a great place to further explore what you have read here. You might also visit your college's alumni office to connect with graduates who are working in your field of interest. Political science opens the door to a lot of exciting careers; have fun exploring the possibilities!

Take Action

A Guide to Political Participation



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It's easy to think of politics as a spectator sport—something that politicians do, pundits analyze, and citizens watch. But there are many ways to get engaged with politics, to interact with the political world and participate in it, and even to effect change.

Get Informed.

Find Out Where You Fit and What You Know

- You already have some opinions about a variety of political issues. Do you have a sense of where your views place you on the political map? Get a feel for your ideological leanings by taking the Pew Research Center's short Political Party Quiz at: www.people-press.org/quiz/political-party-quiz.
- Which of the founders are you most like? The National Constitutional Center can help you with that. Go to

constitutioncenter.org/foundersquiz to discover which of the founders' personalities most resembles your own.

- The U.S. Constitution is an important part of the context in which American politics takes place. Do you know what the Constitution says? Take the Constitution I.Q. Quiz: www.constitutionfacts.com. Was your score higher than the national average?

- At the National Constitution Center you can explore the interactive Constitution and learn more about provisions in that document: constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution.
- Find out what those who want to become U.S. citizens have to do—and what they have to know. Go to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Website at www.uscis.gov. What is involved in applying for citizenship? Take the Naturalization Self-Test at my.uscis.gov/prep/test/civics. How did you do?

Think about How Your Political Views Have Been Shaped

- Giving some thought to how agents of political socialization—your family, your schools, your peers, for example—have contributed to your political beliefs and attitudes may help you understand why others might not share your views on politics. Then have conversations with people in your classes or in your residence hall about the people, institutions, and experiences that influenced the way they view the political world.
- Explore how your views on political issues compare with those of a majority of Americans. There are a number of good polling sites that report public opinion on a range of topics.
 - The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press conducts regular polls on politics and policy issues: www.people-press.org.
 - Public Agenda seeks to find common ground among those with different opinions: publicagenda.org.
 - The results of recent polls and an archive of past polls can be found at Gallup: news.gallup.com.
 - The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research is a leading archive of data from surveys of public opinion: ropercenter.cornell.edu.
 - PollingReport organizes public opinion data from various sources by keyword: pollingreport.com.
- Keep up with news—print, broadcast, and online. Remember that different news organizations (or media brands) will report the same information in different



Get Connected.

ways. Don't avoid certain news sources because you think you might not agree with the way they report the news. It's just as important to know how people are talking about issues as it is to know about the issues themselves.

- One of the best ways to get to the source of the news is to get your information from the same place that journalists do. Often they take their cues or are alerted to news events by news agencies like the nonprofit cooperative, Associated Press: ap.org.
- Installing a few key apps on your phone or tablet can make all the difference in being informed. Try downloading the Associated Press (AP) app from Google Play for Android or Apple's App Store for the iPhone. There are tons of other great political apps, some of which are fairly polarized, others that are neutral, and still others that are just plain silly.

Blogs

The blogosphere affords views of politics that may be presented differently than the way the mainstream media does it. In the last several decades, blogs have surged in popularity as a source for political news and opinion.



Social Media

Staying connected can be as simple as following local, national, or international politics on social media. The president, each senator, the House speaker, and the majority House whip all have Instagram accounts. Numerous politicians and political outlets are also on Twitter and Facebook.

Check the Data

- It's not always easy to figure out whether a news report or public statement is accurate. PolitiFact, a project of the *Tampa Bay Times*, is a good place to go to get the facts: www.politifact.com. Check out the Truth-O-Meter, and get it on your smartphone or tablet.
- A project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, www.factcheck.org is a nonpartisan, nonprofit "consumer advocate" for voters that monitors the factual accuracy of what political players are saying in TV ads, speeches, and interviews.

Keep Up During Election Season

- Project Vote Smart offers information on elections and candidates: votesmart.org.
- Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight features election and polling analysis, in addition to covering sports and economics: www.fivethirtyeight.com.
- Stay connected to the horse-race aspect of electoral politics by tracking election polls. There are many good sources:
 - For a comprehensive collection of election polls, go to the RealClearPolitics Website: realclearpolitics.com/polls. While run by conservatives, RealClearPolitics offers articles and opinion pieces from many points of view.

- Polls for U.S. federal elections, including state-by-state polls, can be found at electoral-vote.com.
- HuffPost Pollster by the liberal Huffington Post publishes pre-election poll results combined into interactive charts: elections.huffingtonpost.com/pollster. During presidential elections, additional maps and electoral vote counts can be found at HuffPost Politics Election Dashboard.

Monitor Money and Influence in Politics

The Center for Responsive Politics Website is an excellent source for information about who's contributing what amounts to which candidates: www.opensecrets.org. You can also use the lobbying database to identify the top lobbying firms, the agencies most frequently lobbied, and the industries that spend the most on lobbying activities. Explore the site's information on the revolving door, which identifies the lobbying firms, agencies, and industries that have the highest numbers of people who have moved between government and interest group positions.

Connect with Congress

You can, of course, learn a lot about what's going on in Congress from the websites of the House of Representatives and the Senate: www.house.gov and www.senate.gov. But check out GovTrack to find out where your representative and senators fall on the leadership and ideology charts, as well as their most recently sponsored bills and votes on legislation: www.govtrack.us.





Get Involved.

Take an Interest in Your Community—Offer to Help

Every community—large or small—can use energetic people willing to help where there is a need. Local nonprofit agencies serving the homeless, battered women, or troubled teens often welcome volunteers who are willing to pitch in. You can learn a lot about the public policies that focus on social services while doing some good for others.

The Internet also has abundant resources about nonprofits and charities and how you can get involved:

- **Idealist.org** is a great place to find organizations and events that are looking for employees, interns, and volunteers. Filter by type and area of focus (women, disaster relief, animals, etc.) to find a cause that fits you.
- **Tinyspark.org** is a watchdog for nonprofits and charity organizations. It highlights individuals and groups that are doing good things in communities and around the globe and checks on those who may not be doing as much good as you'd think. Tinyspark also has a podcast.
- **Charitynavigator.org** is another tool for checking on charities. It reports on charities in terms of how much of their donations go to the cause, which charities are in the red, which are worth promoting, and so on—it's kind of like **opensecrets.org** for charities.

Design Your Own Ways to Take Action

- Start a network to match those who need assistance and those who want to help. For example, there may be

people on your campus who, because of a disability or recent injury, need someone to help carry belongings, open doors, or push wheelchairs.

- Do you want to raise awareness about an issue? Is there a cause that you think needs attention? Talk with friends. Find out if they share your concerns. Turn your discussions into a blog. Create videos of events you think are newsworthy and share them online.

Join a Group on Campus

You probably see fliers promoting groups and recruiting members posted all over campus—in the student center, in the residence halls, in classroom buildings. Chances are, there's a group organized around something you're interested in or care about. Maybe it's an organization that works to bring clean water to remote parts of the world. Perhaps it's an organization that works to foster tolerance on campus. The American Civil Liberties Union may have a chapter on your campus. The American Red Cross may be there, too. You'll find College Republicans, College Democrats, groups organized around race or culture, groups that go on alternative spring break trips to give direct service to communities in need, service organizations of all kinds, groups that serve to create community among culturally underrepresented students, and groups that care about the environment. The list goes on and on.

If you have an interest that isn't represented by the groups on your campus, start your own. Your college or university should have an office of campus life (or something similar) that can help you navigate the process for establishing a student organization.

Remember, too, that there are hundreds of political interest groups with national reach. Check out their Websites to see if you want to join.

Vote (But Don't Forget to Register First)

- Voting is one of the most widely shared acts of participation in American democracy. You can learn about the laws governing voting in your state—and all of the others—by going to the web pages of Ballotpedia, a digital encyclopedia of American politics and elections. For voter identification requirements, see ballotpedia.org/Voter_identification_laws_by_state.
- Register: Enter “register to vote in [your state]” in a search engine. The office in your state that administers voting and elections (in some states it’s the office of the Secretary of State, in others it might be the State Board of Elections) will have a website that outlines the steps you will need to follow. If you need to vote absentee, you’ll find out how to do that here, too.
- If you want to view a sample ballot to familiarize yourself with what you’ll be looking at when you go to the polls, you will probably be able to view one online. Just enter “sample ballot” in a search engine. Your local election board, the League of Women Voters, or your district library often post a sample ballot online.
- Vote: Make sure you know the location and hours for your polling place.

Work for a Campaign

Candidates welcome energetic volunteers. So do groups that are supporting (or opposing) ballot measures. While sometimes tiring and frustrating, working in campaign politics can also be exhilarating and very rewarding. Find the contact information for a campaign you’re interested in on their website and inquire about volunteer opportunities.

Be Part of Campus Media

Do you have a nose for news and do you write well? Try reporting for the university newspaper. Work your way up to an editor’s position. If broadcast media is your thing, get involved with your college radio station or go on air on campus TV.

Try Your Hand at Governing

Get involved with student government. Serve on committees. Run for office.

Engage with Political Institutions, Government Agencies, and Public Policymakers—at Home and Abroad

- Remember that your U.S. Representative has district offices—one may be in the town in which you live. Your U.S. Senators also have offices in various locations around the state. Check to see if internships are available or if there are opportunities for volunteering. If you plan to be in Washington, D.C. and want to visit Capitol Hill, you can book a tour in advance through your senators’ or representative’s offices. That’s where you get gallery passes, too.
- Spend some time in Washington. Many colleges and universities have established internship programs with government agencies and institutions. Some have semester-long programs that will bring you into contact with policymakers in Congress and in the bureaucracy, with journalists, and with a variety of other prominent newsmakers. Politics and government come alive, and the contacts you make while participating in such programs can often lead to jobs after graduation.
- If you’re interested in the Supreme Court and you’re planning a trip to Washington, try to watch oral argument. Go to the Court’s website to access the link for oral arguments: www.supremecourt.gov/oral_arguments. You’ll find the argument calendar and a visitor’s guide. (The secret is to get in line early.)





Get Informed.



Get Connected.



Get Involved.

- If you can't make it to Washington, D.C. for a semester-long program or even a few days, become a virtual tourist. Take the U.S. Capitol Virtual Tour: www.aoc.gov/virtual-tours/capitolbldg/tourfiles.
- You can take a virtual tour of the Supreme Court at the website of the Oyez Project at IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law: www.oyez.org/tour. For a vast collection of Supreme Court information, go to the Oyez site and check ISCOTUSnow: blogs.kentlaw.iit.edu/iscotus.
- Studying abroad, of course, is a great way to expand your horizons and to get a feel for different cultures and the global nature of politics and the economy. There are programs that will take you virtually anywhere in the world. Check with the Study Abroad Office at your college or university to find out more.
- You can gain some insight into dealing with global issues even if you stay stateside. Participate in the Model UN Club on your campus (or start a Model UN Club if there isn't one). By participating in Model UN, you will become aware of international issues and conflicts and recognize the role that the United Nations can play in forging collective responses to global concerns. Model UN conferences are simulations of a session of the United Nations; your work as part of a country's UN delegation will give you hands-on experience in diplomacy.



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1 The Democratic Republic

Fans pose with a U.S. flag as they wait the start of a Women's World Cup soccer match between France and the United States in Paris in 2019. What are some of the reasons to display our country's flag?

Anadolu Agency/Getty Images



These five **Learning Outcomes** below are designed to help improve your understanding of this chapter:

- 1-1:** Define the terms *politics, government, order, liberty, authority, and legitimacy*.
- 1-2:** Distinguish the major features of direct democracy and representative democracy, and describe majoritarianism, elite theory, and pluralism.
- 1-3:** Summarize the conflicts that can occur between the values of liberty and order, and between those of liberty and equality.
- 1-4:** Discuss conservatism, liberalism, and other popular American ideological positions.
- 1-5:** Explain how a changing American population and other social trends may affect the future of our nation.

What if... We Had No Bill of Rights?



Tom Carter/Alamy

Image 1.1 A protester holds up a copy of the Bill of Rights. *Which of the rights mentioned here might be especially popular with conservatives?*

Background

You know that you have the right to speak freely about the government without fear of being arrested for what you say. You have probably heard of the right to bear arms. These rights come from the Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Because of these amendments, the government may not pass laws that limit freedom of speech, religion, and many other freedoms.

The Bill of Rights is built into the founding document that guides our government. As a result, it commands a certain reverence. Merely by its existence, it can dissuade citizens and government leaders from impairing the civil liberties of fellow Americans.

What If We Had No Bill of Rights?

Because the Bill of Rights protects our fundamental liberties, some people jump to the conclusion that, without it, we would have no rights. Consider, though, that almost all state constitutions enumerate many of the same rights. It is true that if the rights of the people were not written into state and national constitutions, these rights would be entirely dependent on the political process—on elections and on laws passed by the U.S. Congress and state legislatures. Popular rights would still be safe. Unpopular ones would be in danger.

The Right to Bear Arms

Take as an example the Second Amendment, which guarantees to citizens the right to bear arms. If the Bill of Rights did not exist, would it mean that individuals would be unable to keep firearms in their homes? Probably not. Few localities in the United States have tried to ban handguns completely. Almost all states have gun laws that are far more permissive than they have to be under the Constitution. Indeed, it was not until 2008 and 2010 that the highest court in the land, the Supreme Court, even addressed this issue. The Court ruled that complete bans on possessing handguns are unconstitutional.

The Rights of Criminal Defendants

According to the Sixth Amendment, accused individuals have the right to a speedy and public trial. Also, according to the Fifth Amendment, no accused “shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” These rules protect people who are accused of crimes. Certainly, without the Bill of Rights, we could imagine many more restrictions on the rights of criminal defendants. Why? Because those accused of crimes are not a popular group of people. Many of the protections now given to criminal defendants would probably not exist if there were no Bill of Rights.

Free Speech

Without the Bill of Rights, we would probably see many more laws restricting political contributions and advertising. We could expect laws against violent video games and pornography on the Internet. In contrast, given current popular attitudes, it is unlikely that “subversive” speech would be greatly restricted. Most Americans and their elected representatives support the right to denounce the government.

For Critical Analysis

- ▶ **The Fifth Amendment guarantees that no one can lose her or his liberty or property without due process. Yet, during World War II, we imprisoned tens of thousands of Japanese American citizens, based solely upon their race. Could that happen today to some other group of citizens, such as Muslim Americans? Why or why not?**
- ▶ **Which of the rights mentioned in this feature do you think are the most important? Why?**

Politics, for many people, is the “great game”—better than soccer, better than chess. Scores may be tallied only every two years, at elections, but the play continues at all times. The game, furthermore, is played for high stakes. Politics can affect what you spend. It can determine what you can legally do in your spare time. (The *What If* . . . feature that opened this chapter examined some of the ways in which your freedoms might be restricted if the Bill of Rights did not exist.) In worst-case circumstances, politics can even threaten your life. How did the great game turn out in the elections held on November 3, 2020? We address that question in this chapter’s *Elections 2020* feature.

In our democratic republic, citizens play a key role by voting. Although voting is extremely important, it is only one of the ways that citizens can exercise their political influence. Americans can also join a political organization or interest group, stage a protest, or donate funds to a political campaign or cause. Informed participation begins with knowledge, however, and this text aims to provide you with a strong foundation in American government and politics.

Politics and Government

Learning Outcome 1-1:

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 “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 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** is 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.

Government Is Everywhere

The government is even more important than politics. Many people largely ignore politics, but it is impossible to ignore government. It is everywhere, like the water you drink and the air you breathe. Both air and water, by the way, are subject to government pollution standards. The food you eat comes from an agricultural industry that is heavily regulated and subsidized by the government. Step outside your residence, and almost immediately you will walk down a government-owned street or drive on a government-owned highway.

From Your Birth. The county government records your birth. Your toys, crib, and baby food must meet government safety standards. After a few years, you’ll start school, and 86 percent of all children attend public—which is to say, government—schools. Some children attend private schools or are home schooled, but their education must also meet

politics

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

institution

An ongoing organization that performs certain functions for society.

government

The institution that has the ultimate authority for making decisions that resolve conflicts and allocate benefits and privileges within a society.

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

government standards. Public school students spend many hours in an environment designed and managed by teachers and other government employees. If you get into trouble, you'll meet government employees you'd rather not see: the police, court employees, or even jail staff.

Throughout Your Life. Most young people eagerly look forward to receiving their government-issued driver's license. Many join the military on graduating from high school, and for those who do, every minute of the next several years will be 100 percent government issue. (That's why we call soldiers "GIs.") A majority of young adults attend college at some point, and if you are reading this textbook, you are probably one of them. Many private colleges and universities exist, but 73 percent of all college students attend public institutions. Even most private universities are heavily dependent on government support.

In nearly all states, you began paying sales taxes from the moment you had your own funds to spend. Those funds are denominated in dollars issued by the government. When you enter the workforce, you'll begin paying payroll and income taxes to the government. If, like most people, you are an employee, government regulations will set many of your working conditions. You might even work for the government itself—15 percent of employees do. If you are unfortunate enough to lose a job or fall into poverty, government programs may lend you a hand.

To the Very End. Later in life, you may have health problems. Government at all levels pays nearly half of the nation's health care bill. Much of that spending came, and continues to come, from the federal Medicare program, which funds health care for almost everyone over the age of sixty-five. At that point in your life, you'll probably receive Social Security, the national government's pension plan that covers most employees. Eventually,



Elections 2020

The Outcome of the Elections

The Democratic team won the 2020 presidential elections. Former vice president Joseph Biden became the president-elect. The vice president-elect was Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA). The results were decisive, but no landslide—with the nation as politically divided as it is today, the large victories that were common years ago may well be impossible. Voter turnout was unprecedented, perhaps the largest in percentage terms in more than a century. Both Republicans and Democrats voted in impressive numbers. Public opinion poll-takers appear to have factored in the Democratic turnout, but the Republican vote took them by surprise. As a result, the Democrats did not do nearly as well as predicted. They picked up a net gain of one U.S. Senate seat but lost several seats in

the U.S. House. The Senate outcome was 50 Republicans and 48 Democrats (including independents who caucus with the Democrats). Two Senate seats in Georgia were not filled until a run-off election on January 5, 2021. If the Democrats were to take both seats, they could control the Senate because Vice President Harris would cast a tie-breaking vote. Republicans were favored in both races, however. While the Democratic margin in the House was reduced, that party was still in firm control of the chamber. Overall, the Democrats continued to enjoy new-found strength in the nation's suburbs, but rural whites, especially those without a college degree, were at least as enthusiastic in their support for Republican president Donald Trump as they had been in 2016.

the county government will record your death, and a government judge will oversee the distribution of your assets to your heirs.

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, the government killed peaceful protesters, 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, 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 2020, when the government forces had regained control of most of the country, up to 570,000 people had been killed, and more than half of the country's people had been driven from their homes.

As the example of Syria shows, one of the original 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.

Limiting Government Power

A complete collapse of order and security, as seen in Syria, is actually an uncommon event. Much more common is the reverse—too much government control. In 2020, the human rights organization Freedom House judged that 51 of the world's countries were “not free.” These nations contain 37 percent of the world's population. Such countries may be controlled by individual kings or dictators. Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Saud and North Korea's dictator Kim Jong-un are obvious examples. Alternatively, a political party, such as the Communist Party of China, may monopolize all the levers 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.



Image 1.2 Syrians in a government-held district gather at the scene of a suicide bombing. Members of the group known as the Islamic State or ISIS blew themselves up during the morning rush hour. *How would we describe what is happening in Syria?*

order

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

liberty

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

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 serve as an example. The dictators who ruled Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia had been in power for decades. 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 lost their authority as well. In Libya, the downfall and death of the dictator Muammar Gaddafi came only after a seven-month civil war. (Egypt's shaky new democracy collapsed in 2013, however, when the army seized power.)

Democracy and Other Forms of Government

Learning Outcome 1-2:

Distinguish the major features of direct democracy and representative democracy, and describe majoritarianism, elite theory, and pluralism.

authority

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

legitimacy

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

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.

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

Types of Government

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—has ultimate control over 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 direct 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."

Anarchy is a term derived from a Greek word meaning the absence of government. Advocates of anarchy envision a world in which each individual makes his or her own rules for behavior. In reality, the absence of government typically results in rule by competing armed factions, many of which are indistinguishable from gangsters. This was the state of affairs in Syria, which we described earlier.

Finally, 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. (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. 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. 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. They considered democracy 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 of 1775–1783. At the time of the Revolution, however, ordinary people were still considered to be too uneducated to govern themselves. The masses were 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.

democracy

A system of government in which political authority is vested in the people. The term is derived from the Greek words *demos* (“the people”) and *kratos* (“authority”).

direct democracy

A system of government in which political decisions are made by the people directly, rather than by their elected representatives. It is probably attained most easily in small political communities.

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 state office before his or her term has expired.



Image 1.3 These Woodbury, Vermont, residents cast their ballots after a town meeting. They voted 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

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 elections, 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 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—soon frustrated—that such a body would prevent voters from ultimately making the choice.

Despite its 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

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 leaders elected by the people make and enforce laws and policies.

representative democracy

A form of government in which representatives elected by the people make and enforce laws and policies. It may, however, retain the monarchy in a ceremonial role.

universal suffrage

The right of all adults to vote for their government 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.

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 textbook.

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.

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 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.



Image 1.4 Sean “Diddy” Combs at a university rally in Miami aimed at encouraging college students to vote. Combs has founded several groups over the years, all dedicated to get young people to the polls. *Why is voting so important for democracy?*

What Kind of Democracy Do We Have?

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 government are often quite different from the ones endorsed by the public in opinion polls. For example, solid majorities advocate a greater role for religion in the public schools—including teachers leading students in prayer. Most officials, however, have tried to uphold the principle of the “separation of church and state.”

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

limited government

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

majoritarianism

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

elite theory

A perspective holding that society is ruled by a small number of people who hold the ultimate power to further their self-interest.

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 posit 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 believe in simple versions of elite theory.

Why should you care about **OUR DEMOCRACY?**

We assume that our leaders will protect our democratic institutions, but the experience of other nations shows that this does not always happen. In any democracy, citizens must remain vigilant. How do you stay vigilant? One way is to stay informed about what's going on in government. Staying informed is a lot easier today than it was, say, a hundred years ago. Newspapers and news magazines are everywhere. Perhaps more importantly, the Internet allows you to stay in constant touch with what your government is doing. There are websites galore of all political stripes that you can check out.

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 members of interest groups. At the same time, rich citizens are often overrepresented. As political scientist E. E. Schattschneider once observed, "The flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent."⁵ 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.

The arrival of the coronavirus in February 2020 raised new questions about the ability of the nation to pull together. While there were encouraging examples of the "we're all in this together" spirit, it also appeared that the pandemic resulting from the virus had the power to pull a divided nation even further apart. We take a look at the possible impact of the pandemic in this chapter's *Which side are you on?* feature.

pluralism

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

political culture

A patterned set of ideas, values, and ways of thinking about government and politics that characterize a people.

3. Alexander Hamilton, "Speech in the Constitutional Convention on a Plan of Government," in Joanne B. Freeman, ed., *Writings* (New York: Library of America, 2001).

4. Michael Parenti, *Democracy for the Few*, 9th ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing, 2010).

5. E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People* (1960; repr., Hinsdale, Ill.: The Dryden Press, 1975).



Which side are you on?

Will the Coronavirus Change Everything?

At first, it was “a cloud as small as a man’s hand.” Many called it the coronavirus, though “corona” refers to a family of viruses. The disease it caused was *covid-19*. It was very contagious. The number of cases could double every few days. That means *exponential growth*. In ten doublings, one case becomes more than a thousand. In twenty doublings, one case becomes more than a million. At first, the death rate seemed to be more than 1 percent of those infected. The disease spread through the country, starting in February 2020. In mid-March, the nation woke up. State governors from coast to coast issued stay-at-home orders to stop the spread. Millions of people had already taken action. Festivals, sporting events, and theaters closed well before the official shutdowns. Restaurants, stores, and churches followed. By mid-April, at least a fifth of the workforce was out of a job.

The nation’s medical system was overwhelmed in certain hot spots, such as New York City. The lockdown provided time to build up a response. Even as the country slowly reopened, facemasks were everywhere. “Social distancing” required people to stay six feet apart. Large gatherings seemed out of the question. What the world needed was a vaccine, but that seemed unlikely before the summer of 2021.

Nothing Can Ever Be the Same

Americans did not wait on the government. People everywhere did what they could. Yet only one institution existed with the power and wealth needed to truly defeat the pandemic. That institution was government. Many believed that the need for federal action to combat covid-19 would change the way Americans view their government. Only government could fund the vast medical effort necessary to defeat the enemy. Only government had the power to support those facing financial ruin. Even as the virus raged,

conservative lawyers were seeking to have the Affordable Care Act ruled unconstitutional—a result that could have deprived millions of health insurance. Such an attitude was unlikely to prevail. Health care, always a key issue, was now *the* issue. Supporters of an active government were confident that regardless of how the elections turned out, the popular demand for effective, larger government would be permanent.

In a Few Years We’ll Be Right Back Where We Started

Others were not so sure. The one past event that most resembled the covid-19 pandemic was the influenza pandemic of 1918. That virus infected about 500 million around the world and killed perhaps 50 million. Yet by 2020, how many people remembered it? World Wars I and II, the Great Depression, Nazism, communism—these shaped the twentieth century. Not the flu. Today’s coronavirus may have more to do with the debate over “big government,” because we can respond to it in ways our ancestors never could. But not everyone endorsed government action. Some responded out of the nation’s tradition of radical individualism. For them, the shutdown of Spring 2020 and the following restrictions were as bad as the disease itself. Many observers thought the politics of the pandemic would soon be invisible. Liberals would draw one set of conclusions from what happened. Conservatives would draw another.

For Critical Thinking

- **China, where the virus originated, gained control of it through radically authoritarian measures. How does the American system prevent such a response?**

Fundamental Values

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. Given that the vast majority of Americans are descendants

Learning Outcome 1-3:

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

of immigrants having diverse cultural and political backgrounds, how can we account for this consensus? 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 toward 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, which we described in the *What if . . .* feature at the beginning of this chapter.

Liberty, however, is not the only value widely held by Americans. A substantial portion of the American public 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 abortion⁶ or private homosexual behavior by consenting adults.⁷ More recently, the Court also held that the government cannot prohibit same-sex marriage.⁸ 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.

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 plunged the United States into World War II. Thousands of Japanese Americans were arrested and held in internment camps, based on the assumption that their loyalty to this country was in question. More recently, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon 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 (1861–1865) 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

political socialization

The process by which political beliefs and values are transmitted to new immigrants and to our children. The family and the educational system are the most important sources of the political socialization process.

civil liberties

Those personal freedoms, including freedom of religion and freedom of speech, that are protected for all individuals. Civil liberties restrain the government from taking certain actions against individuals.

Bill of Rights

The first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

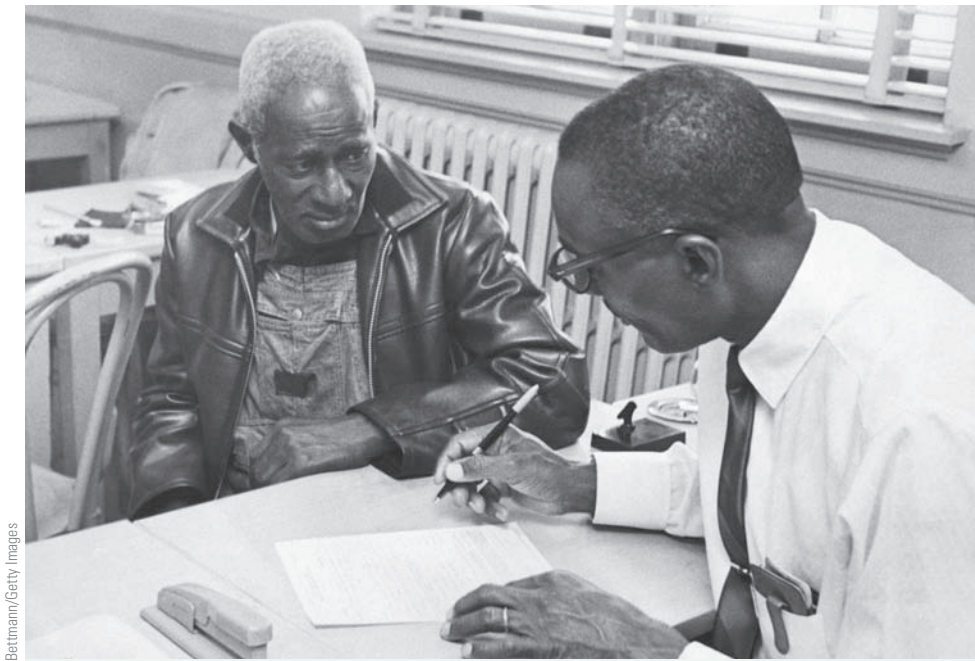
equality

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

6. *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973).

7. *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003).

8. *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. 644 (2015).



Bettmann/Getty Images

Image 1.5 A federal voting examiner in Birmingham, Alabama signs up a new African American voter in January 1966. The registrars were ordered to Birmingham by the U.S. Justice Department after three weeks of demonstrations against the refusal of local officials to register black voters. *How are elected officials likely to respond when faced with a large group of new voters?*

Americans. Other movements have sought equality for additional racial and ethnic groups, for women, for persons with disabilities, and for gay men and lesbians.

Although many people believe that we have a way yet to go in obtaining full equality for all of these groups, we clearly have come a long way already. No American in the nineteenth century could have imagined that the 2008 Democratic presidential primary elections would be closely fought contests between an African American man (Illinois senator Barack Obama) and a white woman (New York senator Hillary Rodham Clinton). The idea that same-sex marriage could even be open to debate would have been mind-boggling as well.

Promoting equality often requires limiting the right to treat people unequally. In this sense, equality and liberty can be conflicting values. Today, the right to deny equal treatment to members of a particular race has very few defenders. Yet as recently as sixty years ago, this right was a cultural norm. It can also be argued that liberty and equality are complementary. For example, people or groups cannot really enjoy liberty if they do not have equal rights under the law.

Economic Equality. Equal treatment regardless of race, religion, gender, or other characteristics is a popular value today. Equal opportunity for individuals to develop their talents and skills is also a value with substantial support. Equality of economic status, however, is a controversial value.

For much of history, the idea that the government could do anything about the division of society between rich and poor was not something about which people even thought. Most people assumed that such an effort was either impossible or undesirable. This assumption began to lose its force in the 1800s. As a result of the growing wealth of the Western world and a visible increase in the ability of government to take on large projects, some people began to advocate the value of universal equality, or egalitarianism. Some radicals dreamed of a revolutionary transformation of society that would establish an egalitarian



Image 1.6 A recently married couple join a gay pride parade. The United States Supreme Court ruled that gay marriage is a constitutional right in 2015. *What, if anything, does the Bill of Rights say about this topic?*

system—that is, a system in which wealth and power were redistributed more equally.

Many others rejected this vision but still came to endorse the values of eliminating poverty and at least reducing the degree of economic inequality in society. Antipoverty advocates believed then and believe now that such a program could prevent much suffering. In addition, they believed that reducing economic inequality would promote fairness and enhance the moral tone of society generally.

Property Rights and Capitalism. The value of reducing economic inequality is in conflict with the right to **property**. This is because reducing economic inequality typically involves the transfer of property (usually in the form of tax dollars) from some people to others. For many people, liberty and property are closely entwined. Our capitalist system is based on private property rights. Under **capitalism**, property consists not only of personal

possessions but also of wealth-creating assets such as farms and factories. The investor-owned corporation is in many ways the preeminent capitalist institution. The funds invested by the owners of a corporation are known as *capital*—hence, the very name of the system. Capitalism is also typically characterized by considerable freedom to make binding contracts and by relatively unconstrained markets for goods, services, and investments.

Property—especially wealth-creating property—can be seen as giving its owners political power and the liberty to do whatever they want. At the same time, the ownership of property immediately creates inequality in society. The desire to own property, however, is so widespread among all classes of Americans that radical egalitarian movements have had a difficult time securing a wide following in this country.

The Proper Role and Size of Government

Americans have substantial differences of opinion on the values just described—liberty, order, and equality. Americans also have a wide variety of needs and interests. From the very beginning of the republic, these opinions and interests have yielded different conceptions of what government ought to do and how large it should be. Traditionally, these varying conceptions have taken the form of arguments over the size of government.

Many Americans believe that “That government is best which governs least,” a motto popularized by Henry David Thoreau.⁹ The flaw in Thoreau’s slogan is that opposition to “big government,” taken by itself, is a somewhat empty idea. Almost invariably, those who oppose big government do so because there are things that they do not want the government to do. Thoreau, for example, was opposed to the Mexican-American War and to federal support for the institution of slavery.

The historical concept of *states’ rights* poses the same problem. By itself, “states’ rights” is a content-free abstraction. The question has always been: the rights of the states to do *what*? All too often, it was states’ rights to enslave or otherwise deny rights to African Americans.

property

Anything that is or may be subject to ownership.

capitalism

An economic system characterized by the private ownership of wealth-creating assets, free markets, and freedom of contract.

9. Thoreau, Henry David, “Resistance to Civil Government,” *Aesthetic Papers*, Elizabeth Peabody, ed. (Boston and New York: The Editor and G.P. Putnam, 1849) pp. 189–211. Later reprinted under the titles “Civil Disobedience” and “On the Duty of Civil Disobedience.”

Citizens often express contradictory opinions on the size of government and the role that it should play in their lives. Americans tend to oppose big government in principle even as they endorse its benefits. Those who complain about the amount of taxes that they pay each year may also worry about the lack of funds for teachers in the local schools. Such tensions have done much to shape American politics from the Revolutionary Era to the twenty-first century.

Big Government and the Great Recession. In September 2008, a financial meltdown threatened the world economy. The impact of the Great Recession was so strong that the share of Americans with jobs did not return to the 2008 level until 2019. (You can see employment statistics in Figure 1.5 later in this chapter.) The immediate result of this disaster in the November 2008 elections was to guarantee Democrat Barack Obama the presidency and grant the Democrats unusually large margins in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. The newly empowered Democrats passed major spending programs aimed at saving the economy. In 2010, Congress and President Obama also approved a major health care initiative that had no direct connection to fighting the recession.

Such actions persuaded millions that big government was out of control. In 2010, voters swung heavily to the Republicans, giving them a majority of the House. While Obama was reelected in 2012, Republicans took control of the Senate in 2014. The result was divided government and a near-absence of new legislation, an era that came to an end in 2016 when Republican Donald Trump won the presidency.

Who Benefits From Government? It soon became clear that neither Trump nor his most ardent followers were particularly enamored of the traditional small-government conservatism endorsed by most Republican officeholders. This attitude had also been common among supporters of the Tea Party, an earlier conservative movement.¹⁰ While the Tea Party built itself around rhetorical opposition to big government, most Tea Party supporters had no problem with programs such as Medicare and Social Security that benefited older voters, many of whom were white. They did oppose programs such as Obamacare that were seen as primarily benefiting poorer Americans and minority group members. The question, in other words, was not so much the size of government but who *benefits* from government.

Under Trump, this underlying theme became dominant. For example, after Hurricane Michael devastated the Florida Panhandle in 2018, many Floridians worried that the federal government's response was inadequate. As one Trump supporter put it, "He's not hurting the people he needs to be hurting."¹¹ It was not just that Trump was failing to help his supporters. This voter also appeared to believe that "hurting people" is one of the legitimate tasks of government.

Trump's Supporters. Trump won the presidency in part because loyal Republicans rallied to his campaign. Still, a new block of voters—many of whom had not voted in previous elections—put him over the top. Trump's strongest support came from white voters without a college education. This group is commonly called the white **working class**. By 2016, it was clear that many such persons were experiencing a social crisis marked by despair, falling life expectancies, and drug abuse. In fact, county by county, poor health was as much an indicator of Trump support as low levels of education.¹²

New support for Trump was not based in the most troubled parts of the white working class. Such people were likely not to vote at all. Trump voters, rather, were often better off,

10. See Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

11. Patricia Mazzei, "It's Just Too Much': A Florida Town Grapples With a Shutdown After a Hurricane," *New York Times*, January 7, 2019, p. 1.

12. "Illness as Indicator," *The Economist* (London), November 19, 2016, p. 25.

working class

Currently, those with no college education. Traditionally, individuals or families in which the head of household was employed in manual or unskilled labor.



Image 1.7 A supporter of President Donald Trump waits for Trump to speak at a Keep America Great rally in Des Moines, Iowa in January 2020. *What issues motivated Trump's most loyal supporters?*

Aspects and Angles/Shutterstock.com

but saw their communities unraveling around them. Stagnant incomes and closing factories were part of the story. A belief that immigrants and minority group members were “cutting in line” ahead of whites was clearly another.¹³ It was also no secret that as a result of population growth among minority groups, the United States was on its way to becoming a minority-majority nation by 2050, as you can see in Figure 1.4.

The Reaction Against Trump. Trump’s election came as a surprise to most observers—apparently including Trump himself. Trump lost the popular vote by more than 2.8 million votes, a margin of more than 2 percent. He won by carrying the *electoral college*, mentioned earlier. His victory was based on very narrow margins in three traditionally Democratic states—Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. At the same time, Democrat Hillary Clinton

was piling up huge margins in states such as California, Massachusetts, and New York. Those extra popular votes won Clinton no electoral college votes, however.

The day after Trump’s inauguration, a women’s march drew crowds of several million across the nation—the largest U.S. demonstrations seen in decades. Many were angry that Trump had won despite multiple accusations of sexual harassment. In 2017, Republicans in Congress passed a large tax bill that primarily benefited corporations and the wealthy. An attempt to repeal Obamacare failed in the Senate by one vote. Repeal would have cost millions their health care insurance.

In the mid-term elections of 2018, Democrats scored a net gain of 41 seats in the U.S. House and took control of the chamber. The Republicans, however, gained two seats in the Senate, despite losing the popular vote for that chamber by 17.5 million. Republican turnout was high, but Democratic turnout was higher. The outcome was determined in part by well-educated suburbanites, especially women. Some of the white working-class voters who broke for Trump in 2016 also returned to the Democrats. In addition to the Obamacare issue, many anti-Trump voters were motivated by the harsh treatment handed out to asylum seekers, many of them from Central America.

Learning Outcome 1-4:

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

ideology

A comprehensive set of beliefs about the nature of people and about the role of an institution or government.

Political Ideologies

A political **ideology** is a closely linked set of beliefs about politics. The concept of *ideology* is often misunderstood. Many people think that only individuals whose beliefs lie well out on one or the other end of the political spectrum have an ideology. Actually, almost everyone who has political opinions can be said to have an ideology. Indeed, many “non-ideological” people actually carry two or more ideologies in their heads, which is why they can hold some opinions that are conservative and others that are liberal.

13. Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York: The New Press, 2016).

Political ideologies offer people well-organized theories that propose goals for society and the means by which those goals can be achieved. At the core of every political ideology is a set of guiding values. The two ideologies most commonly referred to in discussions of American politics are *conservatism* and *liberalism*.

Conservatism

Those who favor the ideology of **conservatism** seek to conserve traditional practices and institutions. In that sense, conservatism is as old as politics itself. Compared with other political tendencies, conservatives place a high value on order, specifically loyalty to groups of which they are a part and respect for authority. This includes patriotism and support for a firm hand by the police. The conservative vision of the world includes a place for everyone, but also everyone in their place. Men and women have their appropriate roles. Many conservatives see members of the LGBTQ¹⁴ community as violating the natural order. The rich and the poor also have their natural place: success is attributed to hard work and other virtues, while poverty is the consequence of personal failings. It is appropriate for employers to exercise authority over employees.

These attitudes have major implications for economic policy. In the past, enterprises were largely free to act as they pleased in the marketplace and in managing their employees. Government regulation of business increased greatly in the 1930s, as Democratic president Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933–1945) initiated a series of massive interventions in the economy in an attempt to counter the effects of the Great Depression. Many conservatives consider the Roosevelt administration to be a time when America took a wrong turn.

The Conservative Movement. It was in the 1950s, however, that American conservatism took its modern shape. The **conservative movement** that arose in that decade provided the age-old conservative impulse with a fully worked-out ideology. The new movement first demonstrated its strength in 1964, when Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona was nominated as the Republican presidential candidate. Goldwater lost badly to Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson, but from that time forward *movement conservatives* have occupied a crucial position in the Republican Party.

Conservative Values. Modern conservatives strongly endorse liberty, but they generally define it as freedom from government imposition of nontraditional ideals such as gay rights or government interference in business. Conservatives believe that the private sector probably can outperform the government in almost any activity.

Conservatives place a relatively low value on equality. Believing that individuals and families are primarily responsible for their own well-being, they typically oppose high levels of antipoverty spending and government expenditures to stimulate the economy, favoring tax-rate cuts instead. Trump supporters, with their anti-immigrant, nationalist views, emphasized different aspects of the conservative tradition than those championed by the conservative movement. Still, Trump's followers were clearly conservative in a broad sense.

Why should you care about **OUR DEMOCRACY**?

To learn more about how government works, consider local legislative bodies. They can have a direct impact on your life. Consider that city councils typically oversee the police department, and the behavior of the police is a matter of interest, even if you live on campus. If you live off campus, local authorities are responsible for an even greater number of issues that affect you directly. For example, are there items that your local sanitation department refuses to pick up? You might be able to change its policies by talking with your councilperson.

conservatism

A set of beliefs that includes a limited role for the national government in helping individuals, support for traditional ideals and life choices, and a cautious response to change.

conservative movement

An American movement founded in the 1950s that provided a comprehensive ideological framework for conservative politics.

14. LGBTQ = Lesbian, gay male, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning



Image 1.8 Former Vice President Joe Biden campaigns for the Democratic presidential nomination in South Carolina in January 2020. Biden's victory in that state was key to his winning the nomination. *What is Biden's ideology?*

Liberalism

The term **liberalism** stems from the word *liberty* and originally meant “free from prejudice in favor of traditional opinions and established institutions.” Liberals have always been skeptical of the influence of religion in politics, but in the nineteenth century they were skeptical of government as well. From the time of Democratic presidents Woodrow Wilson (1913–1921) and Franklin D. Roosevelt, however, American liberals increasingly sought to use the power of government for nontraditional ends. Their goals included support for organized labor and for the poor. New programs instituted by the Roosevelt administration included Social Security and unemployment insurance.

Modern Liberalism. American liberalism took its modern form in the 1960s. Liberals rallied to the civil rights movement, which sought to obtain equal rights for African Americans. As the feminist movement grew in importance, liberals supported it as well.

Liberals won new federal health care programs such as Medicare and Medicaid, and the promotion of such programs became a key component of liberal politics. Finally, liberals reacted more negatively to U.S. participation in the Vietnam War (1965–1975) than did other Americans, and for years thereafter liberalism was associated with skepticism about the use of U.S. military forces abroad.

Liberal Values. Those who favor liberalism place a high value on social and economic equality. As we have seen, liberals champion the rights of minority group members and favor substantial antipoverty spending. In contrast to conservatives, liberals often support government intervention in the economy. They believe that capitalism works best when the government curbs capitalism's excesses through regulation. Like conservatives, liberals place a high value on liberty, but they tend to view it as the freedom to live one's life according to one's own values. Liberals, therefore, usually support gay rights, including the right to same-sex marriage. Liberals are an influential force within the Democratic Party.

The Traditional Political Spectrum

A traditional method of comparing political ideologies is to arrange them on a continuum from left to right, based primarily on how much power the government should exercise to promote economic equality. Table 1.1 shows how ideologies can be arrayed on a traditional political spectrum. In addition to liberalism and conservatism, this example includes the ideologies of socialism and libertarianism.

Socialism falls on the left side of the spectrum.¹⁵ Socialist parties and movements have been important in other countries around the world, but socialists have usually played a minor role in the American political arena. An obvious exception is senator and presidential

liberalism

A set of beliefs that includes the advocacy of positive government action to improve the welfare of individuals, support for civil rights, and tolerance for political and social change.

socialism

A political ideology based on strong support for economic and social equality. Socialists traditionally envisioned a society in which major businesses were taken over by the government or by employee cooperatives.

15. The terms *left* and *right* in the traditional political spectrum originated during the French Revolution, when revolutionary deputies to the Legislative Assembly sat to the left of the assembly president and conservative deputies sat to the right.

Table 1.1 The Traditional Political Spectrum

Which of these platforms are likely to be popular? Why?

	Socialism	Liberalism	Conservatism	Libertarianism
How much power should the government have over the economy?	Active government control of major economic sectors.	Positive government action in the economy.	Positive government action to support capitalism.	Almost no regulation over the economy.
What should the government promote?	Economic equality, community.	Economic security, equal opportunity, social liberty.	Economic liberty, morality, social order.	Maximal economic and social liberty.

candidate Bernie Sanders (D., Vt.), a self-proclaimed “democratic socialist.” Following the 2018 mid-term elections, Sanders was no longer alone—socialists had established a tiny but vocal presence on the left wing of the Democratic Party.

In the past, socialists typically advocated replacing investor ownership of major businesses with either government ownership or ownership by employee cooperatives. Socialists believed that such steps would break the power of the very rich and lead to an egalitarian society. In more recent times, socialists in western countries have advocated more limited programs that redistribute income and power.

On the right side of the spectrum is **libertarianism**, a philosophy of skepticism toward most government activities. Libertarians strongly support property rights and typically oppose regulation of the economy and redistribution of income. Libertarians support *laissez-faire* capitalism. (*Laissez faire* is French for “let it be.”)¹⁶ Libertarians also tend to oppose government attempts to regulate personal behavior and promote moral values. We might expect, therefore, that a consistent libertarian would support same-sex marriage. Many libertarians are also skeptical about U.S. military interventions abroad. In recent years, libertarian ideas have greatly influenced the Republican Party. President Trump’s “who benefits” approach largely rejects the libertarian vision, however.

Problems With the Traditional Political Spectrum

Many political scientists believe that the traditional left-to-right spectrum is not sufficient. Take the example of libertarians. In Table 1.1, libertarians are to the right of conservatives. If the question is how much power the government should have over the economy, this is where they belong. Libertarians, however, strongly advocate freedom in social matters. They oppose government action to promote traditional moral values, although such action is often favored by other groups on the political right. Their strong support for cultural freedoms seems to align them more closely with liberals than with conservatives.

Liberalism is often described as an ideology that supports “big government.” If the objective is to promote equality, the description has some validity. In the moral sphere, however, conservatives tend to support more government regulation of social values than do liberals. Thus, conservatives tend to oppose gay rights legislation and propose stronger curbs on pornography. Liberals usually show greater tolerance for alternative life choices and oppose government attempts to regulate personal behavior and morals.

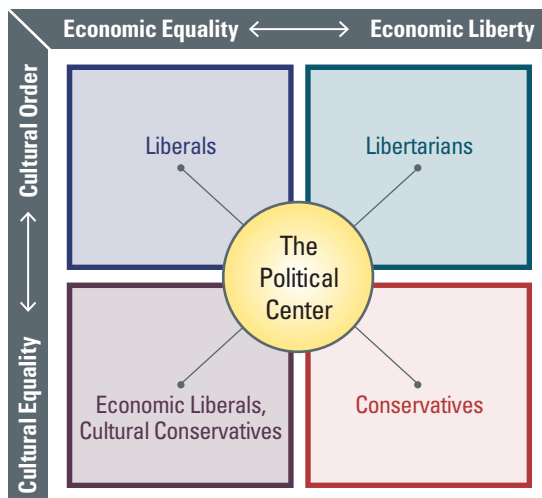
libertarianism

A political ideology based on skepticism or opposition toward most government activities.

16. For a classic and influential presentation of libertarian economics, see Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962; repr., University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Figure 1.1 A Four-Cornered Ideological Grid

In this grid, the colored squares represent four different political ideologies. The vertical choices range from cultural order to cultural liberty. The horizontal choices range from economic equality to economic liberty. *Why, in your opinion, have conservatives been so successful in making liberal an unpopular label?*



A Four-Cornered Ideological Grid

For a more sophisticated breakdown of recent American popular ideologies, many scholars use a four-cornered grid, as shown in Figure 1.1. The grid includes four possible ideologies. Each quadrant contains a substantial share of the American public. Individual voters may fall anywhere on the grid, depending on the strength of their beliefs about economic and cultural issues.

Economic Liberals, Cultural Conservatives. Note that there is no generally accepted term for persons in the lower-left position, which we have labeled “economic liberals, cultural conservatives.” Some scholars have used terms such as *populist* to describe this point of view, but these terms can be misleading. *Populism* more accurately refers to hostility toward political, economic, or cultural elites, and it can be combined with a variety of political positions, both left and right.

Individuals who are economic liberals and cultural conservatives tend to support government action both to promote the values of economic equality and fairness and to defend traditional values, such as the family and marriage. These individuals may describe themselves as conservative or moderate. They may vote for a Republican candidate, based on their conservative values. More often, they may be Democrats due to their support for economic liberalism. Many of these Democrats are African Americans or members of other minority groups.

Libertarians. The libertarian position on the four-cornered grid does not refer to the small Libertarian Party, which has only a minor role in the American political arena. Rather, libertarians more typically support the Republican Party. Economically successful individuals are more likely than members of other groups to hold libertarian opinions.

Liberal Versus Progressive. Even though all four ideologies are popular, the various labels we have used in the four-cornered grid are not equally favored. Voters are much more likely to describe themselves as conservative than as liberal. In the political battles of the last several decades, the conservative movement has consistently made *liberal* a term of derision, and it has succeeded in devaluing the term among much of the public. Indeed, few politicians today willingly describe themselves as liberal, and many liberals prefer to describe themselves as **progressive** instead. This term dates back to the years before World War I (1914–1918), when it referred to advocates of reform in both of the major political parties. Public opinion polls suggest that *progressive* is a relatively popular label.

One Nation, Divided

In the past, the ideology of conservatism did not dominate the Republican Party in the way that it does today. Likewise, liberalism was much less tightly linked to the Democrats. Forty years ago, the Republican Party contained a liberal faction that was especially numerous in the northeastern states. Thirty years ago, some of the most ardent conservatives in Congress were Democrats, many of them from the South. Much history lay behind these factions—they represented allegiances dating back to the U.S. Civil War.

In recent decades, however, liberal Republicans have all but vanished. A number of Americans continue to describe themselves as conservative Democrats, but almost none

progressive

A popular alternative to the term *liberal*.

of them serve in Washington, D.C. By 2008, the most conservative Democrats in Congress had voting records that were more liberal than the records of the most moderate Republicans. The major parties no longer exhibited any ideological overlap—progressives and conservatives had sorted themselves completely into opposing political parties.

Partisanship and Polarization. The result has been political polarization. In Congress, the two major political parties have never been more disciplined. Republicans and Democrats have become used to voting as monolithic blocks. Neither progressives nor conservatives trust the intentions of the other camp. In bookstores, among political bloggers on the Internet, and on radio and television, political rhetoric is more intense and furious than it has been in a long time. The other side is not just wrong. It is evil.

Political polarization has resulted in the almost complete inability of Republicans and Democrats in Congress to agree on legislation. Most of the major Democratic initiatives in 2009 and 2010 passed with no Republican votes at all. After the 2010 elections, when the Republicans took the House, the inability of the parties to agree meant political gridlock. From 2011 through 2016, Congress passed fewer bills per year than in any previous period, and most of this legislation was trivial. One result: a Gallup poll showing that only 7 percent of respondents had confidence in Congress.

What came as a surprise to many was that even after the Republicans took full control of Congress and the presidency in the 2016 elections, Republicans still had great difficulty in passing legislation. For example, the long-promised repeal of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) failed in the Senate by a single vote—repeal was enormously unpopular. In December 2017, however, the Republicans were able to pass a major tax bill that promised to reduce taxes by up to \$1.5 trillion. In March 2020, however, the two parties unanimously passed several enormous coronavirus relief packages. This bipartisanship revealed that members of both parties were shocked by the onset of the pandemic.

In the long run, Democrats hoped to benefit from growing numbers of Latino and Asian American voters. Younger white voters were also trending toward the Democrats. For the time being, however, such support was largely counterbalanced by growing support for Republicans among white voters living in rural areas or who lacked college degrees.



Image 1.9 President Donald Trump meets the press to discuss the ongoing fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. *How might the pandemic influence Trump's reelection campaign?*

The Changing Face of America

The face of America is changing as its citizens age and become more diverse. Like other economically advanced countries, the United States has in recent decades experienced falling birthrates and an increase in the number of older citizens. The “aging of America” is a modest phenomenon when compared with what is happening in many other countries, however. Today, about 15 percent of the U.S. population is age 65 or older. By 2040, this percentage is expected to rise to more than 21. In Europe, Japan, and China, the share of the elderly is expected to be much greater than that.

Learning Outcome 1-5:

Explain how a changing American population and other social trends may affect the future of our nation.

total fertility rate

A statistic that measures the average number of children that women in a given group are expected to have over the course of a lifetime.

The End of the Population Explosion

In recent decades, population growth rates have been falling throughout the world. The great population explosion of the late twentieth century is reaching its end—the world’s population, about 7.8 billion in 2020, may stabilize at perhaps 11 billion in the later part of the twenty-first century. Population growth rates remain high in many African and Muslim nations, but many economically advanced nations will have smaller populations in 2050 than they do today. The United States, however, will continue to grow during these years.

The number of babies born helps determine future population levels. We can measure this effect by looking at the **total fertility rate** of a population. The total fertility rate measures the average number of children that a group of women are expected to have over the course of a lifetime. In 2007, shortly before the onset of the Great Recession, the United States had a total fertility rate of about 2.1 children per woman. By 2018, the rate had fallen to 1.72. The Census Bureau expected that the rate would go back up again as economic conditions improved, but this has not happened.

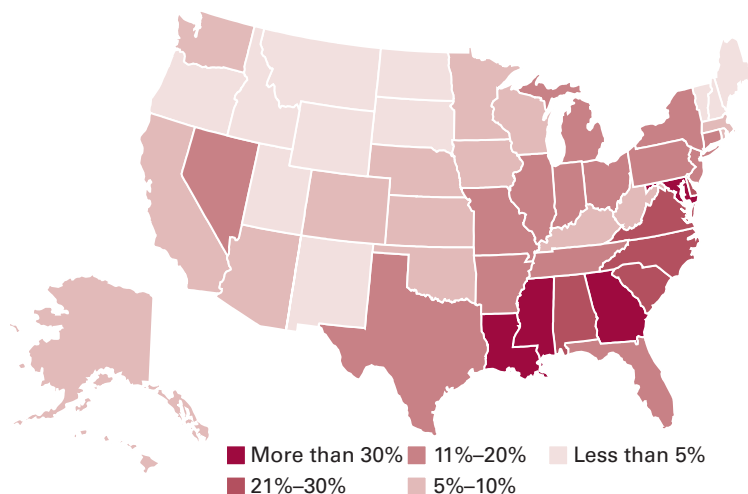
As it happens, a fertility rate of 2.1 is called the “long-term replacement rate.” In other words, if a nation maintains a fertility rate of 2.1 over a long period of time, the population of that nation will eventually stabilize—it will neither grow nor shrink. The total fertility rate of the world as a whole, currently about 2.5, is expected to be about 1.9 by 2100, suggesting a declining world population in the twenty-second century. The fact that the U.S. fertility rate is already below 2.1 does not mean that the population of the United States is likely to stabilize or decline any time soon, however. Immigration allows us to grow faster than the fertility rate would suggest. Also, because of past growth, our population is younger than it would otherwise be. This means that there are more potential mothers and fathers. Only after its residents age can the population of a country stabilize.

Ethnic Change in America

From the very beginning, America has been a country of many races and ethnic groups. For much of our history, the most important distinction was between Americans from Europe and Americans from Africa. How to deal with the institution of African slavery—abolished following the American Civil War—was perhaps the most important issue the nation has ever faced.

Figure 1.2 The African American Population in the United States

What effect might the share of African Americans in a state’s population have on the politics of its white citizens?



African Americans. Figure 1.2 shows the distribution of the African American population today. Beginning in the 1920s, many African Americans moved north to seek economic opportunity and better conditions. Even today, however, a majority of African Americans live in the southern states where slavery was once legal.

The Rise of the Latinos. In recent decades, the number of Latino—or Hispanic—Americans has grown substantially, to the point where they are now the largest minority group in the nation. Many new immigrants are Latino, and this also serves to increase the Latino population.

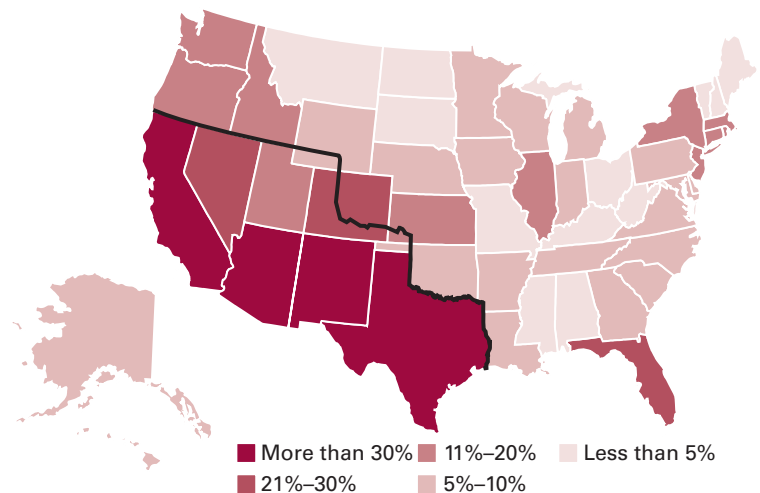
A word on terminology: the U.S. Bureau of the Census defines a **Hispanic** as someone who can claim a heritage from a Spanish-speaking country. Hispanics can be of any race. Because

the federal government uses *Hispanic*, we take note of it. An alternative term, **Latino** (*Latina* in the feminine), is widely used by social scientists. Public opinion polls, however, indicate that both words are about equally popular among Hispanics/Latinos. Therefore, we use both in this text.

Of the four largest groups of Latinos, Mexican Americans are the largest at 62 percent of all Latinos. Puerto Ricans, all of whom are U.S. citizens, are 10 percent of the total. Cubans make up 4 percent, and Salvadorans 4 percent as well. Coming from so many countries, Latino Americans are a highly diverse population. Most prefer a name that identifies their heritage specifically—Mexican Americans would often rather be called that than Latino or Hispanic. Figure 1.3 shows the current distribution of the Latino population. The black line on the map is the northern border of Mexico before 1836, when Texas declared its independence from Mexico. Latinos in eastern states such as New Jersey and Florida are often from Puerto Rico or Cuba.

Figure 1.3 The Latino Population in the United States

The black line shows the northern border of Mexico before 1836. Non-Hispanic whites are expected to be a minority in Texas years before they become a minority in the nation as a whole. *What might be the consequences if Texas therefore became more Democratic?*



The Demographic Impact. As a result of differences in fertility rates and immigration, the ethnic character of the United States is changing. In 2007, non-Hispanic white Americans had a fertility rate of 1.9. African Americans had a fertility rate of 2.1. Latinos had a rate of 2.8. By 2018, these rates had fallen—non-Hispanic white Americans were down to 1.64, African Americans were at 1.79, and Latinos were down to 1.96. Initial Census Bureau assumptions that the low rates following the Great Recession would be temporary have proven to be false. Figure 1.4 shows the projected changes in the U.S. ethnic distribution in future years based on current Census Bureau predictions.

While these types of statistics have been available for a long time, they have received much more publicity in the last few years. As you might expect, some non-Hispanic whites find the prospect of becoming one minority among many unnerving. When whites are primed with this demographic information, their answers to questions on public policy become, on average, more conservative.

It is worth pointing out, of course, that non-Hispanic whites will continue to be the largest ethnic bloc in the country for as far ahead as we can see. Separating Hispanics out as a separate group may also be misleading. A majority of Hispanics self-identify as white. If we add these people together with non-Hispanic whites, the white total for the 2050 U.S. population becomes about 70 percent, with no sign it will ever fall as low as 50.

The non-Hispanic white population contains many groups that were formerly seen as quite distinct from the majority—Italians, Jews, years ago even the Irish. In time, white Hispanics could be seen as similar to these earlier groups. That does not, however, mean that white Hispanics will necessarily become Republicans. If the Republican Party continues to be the party of Trump, even fairly conservative Hispanics may be reluctant to vote for it.

Are We Better Off?

Are we better off today than we were in the recent past? That question is not easy to answer. Certainly, the nation as a whole is richer today than it ever has been. Not everyone has benefited from this increased wealth, however. From 1979 to 2015, weekly

Hispanic

A term used by the federal government to describe someone who can claim a heritage from a Spanish-speaking country.

Latino

An alternate word for *Hispanic*. The feminine is *Latina*.

Figure 1.4 Projected Changes in U.S. Ethnic Distribution

If in the future Americans were to consider many Hispanics simply to be “white,” what political consequences might follow?



Data for 2010 are from the 2010 census. Data for 2020 through 2050 are Census Bureau projections. Percentages may not sum to 100.0 due to rounding.

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.

earnings, corrected for inflation, rose only 3 percent for the median worker. In contrast, a team of economists has estimated that between 1980 and 2014, the income of the top 1 percent of earners, corrected for inflation, rose by 204 percent.¹⁷ Levels of employment only recovered from the blow they took during the Great Recession in 2020, as shown in this chapter's *Consider the Source* feature. It will take time to assess the full extent of the damage resulting from the coronavirus pandemic that struck in March 2020. We do know that the impact on low-income persons—and on millions of small businesses—was tremendous.

Social Indicators. Statistics suggest that many trends have been moving in a positive direction—although some are not. First, the good news. The murder rate per 100,000 persons, which peaked at 10.2 in 1980, was down to 5.0 in 2018, almost an all-time low. Divorces peaked in 1981 at 5.3 per 1,000 people, but were down to 2.9 by 2017. Births to teen-aged mothers were 62 per thousand female teens in 1991, but 19 in 2017. Automobile accident deaths, use of tobacco, high school graduation rates—these and more are headed in a positive direction. Despite concerns about inequality, unemployment, and high levels of debt, it appears that American youth in particular are much better behaved than in earlier generations.

Other statistics, however, suggest that many Americans are in trouble. All over the world, death rates are falling. In the United States, death rates have fallen among African Americans and Latinos. Among

working-class white Americans, however, death rates are actually rising. The death rate for white women age 35 to 39 living in rural areas rose by 48 percent from 1990 to 2014.¹⁸ Researchers Anne Case and Angus Deaton have shown that death rates are rising for all groups of middle-aged whites—except whites with a college degree.¹⁹ The effect was great enough to reduce life expectancy for the entire nation beginning in 2015. The extra deaths are largely due to drugs, alcohol, and suicide. Addiction to prescription opioids and to heroin has become a massive national problem. This crisis suggests that an epidemic of cultural despair is afflicting the white working class. Despite massive publicity, the federal government has done little to respond to this issue. The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on U.S. death rates will also be substantial. Its effect on the epidemic of cultural despair and on the opioid fatality rate are not yet clear.

17. Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, and Gabriel Zucman, “Distributional National Accounts: Methods and Estimates for the United States,” <http://gabriel-zucman.eu/files/PSZ2017.pdf>, September 25, 2017.

18. Joel Achenbach and Dan Keating, “A New Divide in American Death,” *Washington Post*, April 10, 2016.

19. The most recent paper is Anne Case and Angus Deaton, “Mortality and Morbidity in the 21st Century,” *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, Spring 2017, pp. 397–476.



Consider the source

How Many Americans Have Jobs?

One of the most important ways in which people are integrated into society and gain a sense of self-worth is to have a job. Women have entered the labor force in ever-larger numbers in recent decades. As a result, the share of prime-age (age 25 to 55) Americans with jobs was greater in 2000 than ever before in our nation's history. Since then, the employment picture has not been so bright. Figure 1.5 shows employment trends in recent decades. By February 2020, overall employment was back to what it was before the Great Recession of 2008–2009, though men lagged somewhat and women advanced.

Beginning in mid-March 2020, major portions of the U.S. economy shut down completely in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Tens of millions of Americans were suddenly out of work. You can see the results at the far right of the chart, where all three lines suddenly head straight down, and then recover somewhat. If we are fortunate, it will not take a full decade to regain what we have lost. Still, the employment consequences of the pandemic are staggering.

The Source: Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED)

The *Federal Reserve*, often simply called the “Fed,” is the government agency that, among other things, is responsible for

the nation's money supply. Fed staff members also engage in economic research. As a service to researchers everywhere, the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Missouri, has created an economic database called FRED. You can find this service through an Internet search engine such as Google. Simply enter “fred,” and FRED should appear at the top of the resulting page. Click on FRED, and you'll discover that it lets you graph and download any of 385,000 U.S. and world data sets. These include information not only about employment, but also about the cost of living, the size of the economy, the government's debt, interest rates, and much more. FRED collected the data in Figure 1.5 from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

For Critical Analysis

Why do you think that the employment rate for males is always greater than that for females, as shown in Figure 1.5?

Figure 1.5 Employment Rate for Prime-Age Americans, 1990 to 2020

What might people do when they have been unemployed for a long time?



Shaded areas indicate U.S. recessions.

Source: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Employment Rate: Aged 25-54: All Persons, Males, and Females for the United States, retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LREM25TTUSQ156S>, [LREM25MAUSQ156S](https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LREM25MAUSQ156S), and [LREM25FEUSQ156S](https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LREM25FEUSQ156S)