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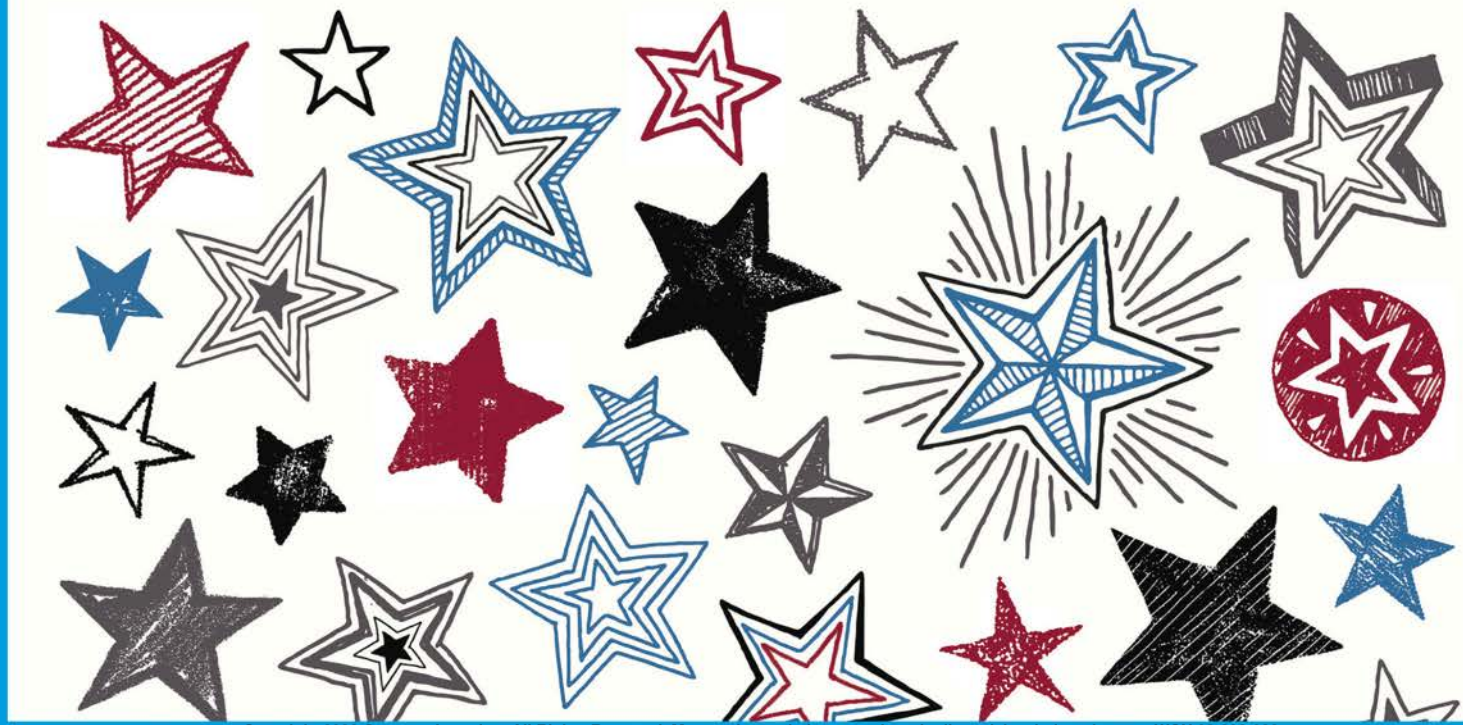
GOVT 11

Principles of American Government

Sidlow + Henschen



GOVT 11

Principles of American Government

Eleventh Edition

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CENGAGE

Australia • Brazil • Mexico • Singapore • United Kingdom • United States

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Skill Prep

A Study Skills Module

Welcome!

With this course and this textbook, you've begun what we hope will be a fun, stimulating, and thought-provoking journey into the world of American government and politics.

In this course, you will learn about the foundation of the American system, culture and diversity, interest groups, political parties, campaigns, elections, the media, our governing institutions, public policy, and foreign policy. Knowledge of these basics will help you think critically about political issues and become an active citizen.

We have developed this study skills module to help you gain the most from this course and this textbook. Whether you are a recent high school graduate or an adult returning to the classroom after a few years, you want **results** when you study. You want to be able to understand the issues and ideas presented in the textbook, talk about them intelligently during class discussions, and remember them as you prepare for exams and papers.

This module is designed to help you develop the skills and habits you'll need to succeed in this course. With tips on how to be more engaged when you study, how to get the most out of your textbook, how to prepare for exams, and how to write papers, this guide will help you become the best learner you can be!

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Study Prep

What does it take to be a successful student? You may think success depends on how naturally smart you are. However, the truth is that successful students aren't born, they're made. Even if you don't consider yourself "book smart," you can do well in this course by developing study skills that will help you understand, remember, and apply key concepts.

Reading for Learning

Your textbook is the foundation for information in a course. It contains key concepts and terms that are important to your understanding of the subject. For this reason, it is essential that you develop good reading skills. As you read your textbook with the goal of learning as much of the information as possible, work on establishing the following habits:

Focus

Make an effort to focus on the book and tune out other distractions so that you can understand and remember the information it presents.

Take Time

To learn the key concepts presented in each chapter, you need to read slowly, carefully, and with great attention.

Repeat

To read for learning, you have to read your textbook a number of times. Follow a preview-read-review process:

1. **Preview: Look over the chapter title, section headings, and highlighted or bold words. This will give you a good preview of important ideas in the chapter.** Notice that each major section heading in this textbook has one or more corresponding **Learning Objectives.** You can increase your understanding of the material by rephrasing the headings and subheadings in your textbook into questions, and then try to answer them. Note graphs, pictures, and other visual illustrations of important concepts.

   QUICK TIP! Log in to GOVT10 MindTap with your access code to find interactive figures and tables from the chapters and to quiz yourself on the important material in the book.

2. **Read: It is important to read with a few questions in mind:** What is the main point of this paragraph or section? What does the author want me to learn from this? How does this relate to what I read before? Keeping these questions in mind will help you be an attentive reader who is actively focusing on the main ideas of the passage.

Also during this phase, it is helpful to take notes while reading in detail. You can mark your text or write an outline, as explained later in this module. Taking notes will help you read actively, identify important concepts, and remember them. When it comes time to review for the exam, the notes you've made should make your studying more efficient.

3. **Review: When reviewing each section of the text and the notes you've made, ask yourself this question: What was this section about?** You'll want to answer the question in some detail, readily identifying the important points. Use the Learning Objectives in the text to help focus your review.

QUICK TIP! Tear out the Chapter Review cards in the back of the textbook for on-the-go review!

A reading group is a great way to review the chapter. After completing the reading individually, group members should meet and take turns sharing what they learned. Explaining the material to others will reinforce and clarify what you already know. Getting a different perspective on a passage will increase your knowledge, because different people will find different things important during a reading.

Take Notes

Being *engaged* means listening to discover (and remember) something. One way to make sure that you are listening attentively is to take notes. Doing so will help you focus on the professor's words and will help you identify the most important parts of the lecture.

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The physical act of writing makes you a more efficient learner. In addition, your notes provide a guide to what your instructor thinks is important. That means you will have a better idea of what to study before the next exam if you have a set of notes that you took during class.

Make an Outline

As you read through each chapter of your textbook, you might want to make an outline—a simple method for organizing information. You can create an outline as part of your reading or at the end of your reading. Or you can make an outline when you reread a section before moving on to the next one. The act of physically writing an outline for a chapter will help you retain the material in this text and master it.

To make an effective outline, you have to be selective. Your objectives in outlining are, first, to identify the main concepts and, second, to add the details that support those main concepts.

Your outline should consist of several levels written in a standard format. The most important concepts are assigned Roman numerals; the second-most important, capital letters; and the third-most important, numbers. Here is a quick example.

I. What Are Politics and Government?
  A. Defining Politics and Government
    1. Politics and Conflict
    2. Government and Authority
  B. Resolving Conflicts
  C. Providing Public Services
    1. Services for All and Services for Some
    2. Managing the Economy
  D. Defending the Nation and Its Culture
II. Different Systems of Government
  A. Undemocratic Systems
    1. Monarchy
    2. Dictatorship
  B. Democratic Systems
    1. The Athenian Model of Direct Democracy
    2. Direct Democracy Today
    3. Representative Democracy
    4. Types of Representative Democracy
  C. Other Forms of Government

Mark Your Text

If you own your own textbook for this course and plan to keep it, you can improve your learning by marking your text. By doing so, you will identify the most important concepts of each chapter, and at the same time, you'll be making a handy study guide for reviewing material at a later time. Marking allows you to become an active participant in the mastery of the material. Researchers have shown that the physical act of marking, just like the physical acts of note-taking during class and outlining, increases concentration and helps you better retain the material.

> **Researchers have shown that the physical act of marking, just like the physical act of note-taking during class increases concentration and helps you better retain the material.**

Ways of Marking

The most common form of marking is to underline important points. The second-most commonly used method is to use a felt-tipped highlighter or marker, in yellow or some other transparent color. You can put a check mark next to material that you do not understand. Work on better comprehension of the checkmarked material after you've finished the chapter. Marking also includes circling, numbering, using arrows, jotting brief notes, or any other method that allows you to remember things when you go back to skim the pages in your textbook prior to an exam.

Two Points to Remember When Marking

- **Read one section at a time before you do any extensive marking.** You can't mark a section until you know what is important, and you can't know what is important until you read the whole section.
- **Don't overmark.** Don't fool yourself into thinking that you have done a good job just because each page is filled with arrows, circles, and underlines. Be selective in your marking, so that each page allows you to see the most important points at a glance. You can follow up your marking by writing out more in your subject outline.

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Try These Tips

Here are a few more hints that will help you develop effective study skills.

- **Do schoolwork as soon as possible after class.** The longer you wait, the more likely you will be distracted by television, the Internet, video games, or friends.
- Set aside time and a quiet, comfortable space where you can focus on reading. Your school library is often the best place to work. Set aside several hours a week of "library time" to study in peace and quiet. A neat, organized study space is also important. The only work items that should be on your desk are those that you are working on that day.
- **Reward yourself for studying!** Rest your eyes and your mind by taking a short break every twenty to thirty minutes. From time to time, allow yourself a break to do something else that you enjoy. These interludes will refresh your mind, give you more energy required for concentration, and enable you to study longer and more efficiently.
- **To memorize terms or facts, create flash (or note) cards.** On one side of the card, write the question or term. On the other side, write the answer or definition. Then use the cards to test yourself or have a friend quiz you on the material.

QUICK TIP! In GOVT10 MindTap, flash cards are available for all key terms (with definitions).

- **Mnemonic (pronounced ne-mon-ik) devices are tricks that increase our ability to memorize.** A well-known mnemonic device is the phrase ROY G BIV, which helps people remember the colors of the rainbow—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet. You can create your own mnemonic devices for whatever you need to memorize. The more fun you have coming up with them, the more useful they will be.
- **Take notes twice.** First, take notes in class. Writing down your instructor's key points will help you be a more active, engaged listener. Taking notes will also give you a record of what your instructor thinks is important. Later, when you have a chance, rewrite your notes. The rewrite will act as a study session for you to think about the material again.

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Test Prep

You have worked hard throughout the term, reading the book, paying close attention in class, and taking good notes. Now it's test time, and you want to show mastery of the material you have studied. To be well prepared, you should know which reading materials and lectures will be covered. You should also know whether the exam will contain essays, objective questions, or both. Finally, you should know how much time you will have to take the exam. The following steps can help to reduce any anxiety you may feel, allowing you to approach the test with confidence.

Follow Directions

Students are often in a hurry to start an exam, so they take little time to read the instructions. The instructions can be critical, however. In a multiple-choice exam, for example, if there is no indication that there is a penalty for guessing, then you should never leave a question unanswered. Even if only a few minutes are left at the end of an exam, you should guess on the questions that you remain uncertain about.

Additionally, you need to know the weight given to each section of an exam. In a typical multiple-choice exam, all questions have equal weight. In other types of exams, particularly those with essay questions, different parts of the exam carry different weights. You should use these weights to apportion your time. If the essay portion of an exam accounts for 20 percent of the total points on the exam, you should not spend 60 percent of your time on the essays.

Finally, you need to make sure you are marking the answers correctly. Some exams require a No. 2 pencil to fill in the dots on a machine-graded answer sheet. Other exams require underlining or circling. In short, you have to read and follow the instructions carefully.

Objective Exams

An objective exam consists of multiple-choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, or matching questions that have only one correct answer. Students usually commit one of two errors when they read objective exam questions: (1) they read things into the questions that do not exist, or (2) they skip over words or phrases. Most test questions include key words such as:

> ALL > NEVER
> ALWAYS > ONLY

If you miss any of these key words, you may answer the question incorrectly even if you know the information being tested.

Whenever the answer to an objective question is not obvious, start with the process of elimination. Throw out the answers that are clearly incorrect. Typically, the easiest way to eliminate incorrect answers is to look for those that are meaningless, illogical, or inconsistent. Often, test authors put in some answers that make perfect sense and are indeed true, but do not answer the question under study. Here are a few more tips that will help you become an efficient, results-oriented student.

- **Review your notes thoroughly** as part of your exam preparation. Instructors usually lecture on subjects they think are important, so those same subjects are also likely to be on the exam.

- **Create a study schedule** to reduce stress and give yourself the best chance for success. At times, you will find yourself studying for several exams at once. When this happens, make a list of each study topic and the amount of time needed to review that topic.
- **Form a small group for a study session.** Discussing a topic out loud can improve your understanding of that topic and will help you remember the key points that often come up on exams.
- **Study from old exams.** Some professors make old exams available, either by posting them online or by putting them on file in the library. Old tests can give you an idea of the kinds of questions the professor likes to ask.
- **Avoid cramming just before an exam.** Cramming tires the brain unnecessarily and adds to stress, which can severely hamper your testing performance. If you've studied wisely, have confidence that you will be able to recall the information when you need it.
- **Be sure to eat** before taking a test so you will have the energy you need to concentrate.
- **Be prepared.** Make sure you have everything you will need for the exam, such as a pen or pencil. Arrive at the exam early to avoid having to rush, which will only add to your stress. Good preparation helps you focus on the task at hand.
- **When you first receive your exam, make sure that you have all the pages.** If you are uncertain, ask your professor or exam proctor. This initial scan may uncover other problems as well, such as illegible print or unclear instructions.
- **With essay questions, look for key words** such as "compare," "contrast," and "explain." These will guide your answer. Most important, get to the point without wasting your time (or your professor's) with statements such as "There are many possible reasons for . . . ."
- **Review your answers** when you finish a test early. You may find a mistake or an area where some extra writing will improve your grade.
- **Keep exams in perspective.** Worrying too much about a single exam can have a negative effect on your performance. If you do poorly on one test, it's not the end of the world. Rather, it should motivate you to do better on the next one.

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Write Prep

A key part of succeeding as a student is learning how to write well. Whether writing papers, presentations, essays, or even e-mails to your instructor, you have to be able to put your thoughts into words and do so with force, clarity, and precision. In this section, we outline a three-phase process that you can use to write almost anything.

Phase 1: Getting Ready to Write

First, make a list. Divide the ultimate goal—a finished paper—into smaller steps that you can tackle right away. Estimate how long it will take to complete each step. Start with the date your paper is due and work backward to the present: For example, if the due date is December 1, and you have about three months to write the paper, give yourself a cushion and schedule November 20 as your targeted completion date. Then list what you need to get done by October 1 and November 1.

Pick a Topic

To generate ideas for a topic, any of the following approaches work well:

- **Brainstorm with a group.** There is no need to create in isolation. You can harness the energy and the natural creative power of a group to assist you.

- **Speak it.** To get ideas flowing, start talking. Admit your confusion or lack of clear ideas. Then just speak. By putting your thoughts into words, you'll start thinking more clearly.
- **Use free writing.** Free writing, a technique championed by writing teacher Peter Elbow, is also very effective when trying to come up with a topic. There's only one rule in free writing: Write without stopping. Set a time limit—say, ten minutes—and keep your fingers dancing across the keyboard the whole time. Ignore the urge to stop and rewrite. There is no need to worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar during this process.

There is no need to create in isolation. Brainstorm ideas for a topic with a group. Ask for feedback from your instructor or a friend as you prepare an outline and revise your first draft.

Refine Your Idea

After you've come up with some initial ideas, it's time to refine them:

- **Select a topic and working title.** Using your instructor's guidelines for the paper, write down a list of topics that interest you. Write down all of the ideas you think of in two minutes. Then choose one topic. The most common pitfall is selecting a topic that is too broad. "Political Campaigns" is probably not a useful topic for your paper. Instead, consider "The Financing of Modern Political Campaigns."
- **Write a thesis statement.** Clarify what you want to say by summarizing it in one concise sentence. This sentence, called a *thesis statement,* refines your working title. A thesis is the main point of the paper—it is a declaration of some sort. You might write a thesis statement such as "Recent decisions by the Supreme Court have dramatically changed the way that political campaigns are funded."

Set Goals

Effective writing flows from a purpose. Think about how you'd like your reader or listener to respond after considering your ideas.

- If you want to persuade someone, make your writing clear and logical. Support your assertions with evidence.
- If your purpose is to move the reader into action, explain exactly what steps to take, and offer solid benefits for doing so.

To clarify your purpose, state it in one sentence—for example, "The purpose of this paper is to discuss and analyze the role of women and minorities in law enforcement."

Begin Research

At the initial stage, the objective of your research is not to uncover specific facts about your topic. That comes later. First, you want to gain an overview of the subject. Say you want to advocate for indeterminate sentencing. You must first learn enough about determinate and indeterminate sentencing to describe the pros and cons of each one.

Make an Outline

An outline is a kind of map. When you follow a map, you avoid getting lost. Likewise, an outline keeps you from wandering off topic. To create your outline, follow these steps:

1. **Review your thesis statement** and identify the three to five main points you need to address in your paper to support or prove your thesis.

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2. **Next, focus on the three to five major points** that support your argument and think about what minor points or subtopics you want to cover in your paper. Your major points are your big ideas. Your minor points are the details you need to fill in under each of those ideas.
3. **Ask for feedback.** Have your instructor or a classmate review your outline and offer suggestions for improvement. Did you choose the right points to support your thesis? Do you need more detail anywhere? Does the flow from idea to idea make sense?

If you get stuck, ask for help. Most schools have writing resource centers where you can go for assistance and guidance.

Do In-Depth Research

Dig in and start reading. Keep a notebook, tablet, or laptop handy and make notes as you read. It can help to organize your research into three main categories:

1. **Sources** (bibliographical information for a source),
2. **Information** (nuggets of information from a correctly quoted source)
3. **Ideas** (thoughts and observations that occur to you as you research, written in your own words)

You might want to use these categories to create three separate documents as you work. This will make it easy to find what you need when you write your first draft.

When taking research notes, be sure to:

- Copy all of the information correctly.
- Include the source and page number while gathering information. With Internet searches, you must also record the date a site was accessed.
- Stay organized; refer to your outline as you work.

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Phase 2: Writing a First Draft

To create your draft, gather your notes and your outline (which often undergoes revision during the research process). Then write about the ideas in your notes. It's that simple. Just start writing. Write in paragraphs, with one idea per paragraph. As you complete this task, keep the following suggestions in mind:

- **Remember that the first draft is not for keeps.** You can worry about quality later. Your goal at this point is simply to generate words and ideas.
- **Write freely.** Many writers prefer to get their first draft down quickly and would advise you to keep writing, much as in free writing. You may pause to glance at your notes and outline, but avoid stopping to edit your work.
- **Be yourself.** Let go of the urge to sound "scholarly" and avoid using unnecessary big words or phrases. Instead, write in a natural voice.
- **Avoid procrastination.** If you are having trouble getting started, skip over your introduction and just begin writing about some of your findings. You can go back later and organize your paragraphs.
- **Get physical.** While working on the first draft, take breaks. Go for a walk. From time to time, practice relaxation techniques and breathe deeply.
- **Put the draft away for a day.** Schedule time for rewrites, and schedule at least one day between revisions so that you can let the material sit. After a break, problems with the paper or ideas for improvement will become more evident.

Phase 3: Revising Your Draft

During this phase, keep in mind the saying, "Write in haste; revise at leisure." When you are working on your first draft, the goal is to produce ideas and write them down. During

the revision phase, however, you need to slow down and take a close look at your work. One guideline is to allow 50 percent of writing time for planning, researching, and writing the first draft. Then use the remaining 50 percent for revising.

Here are some good ways to revise your paper:

1. **Read it out loud.** The combination of speaking and hearing forces us to pay attention to the details. Is the thesis statement clear and supported by enough evidence? Does the introduction tell your reader what's coming? Do you end with a strong conclusion that expands on your introduction rather than just restating it?

2. **Have a friend look over your paper.** This is never a substitute for your own review, but a friend can often see mistakes you miss. With a little practice, you will learn to welcome feedback, because it provides one of the fastest ways to approach the revision process.

3. **Cut.** Look for excess baggage. Also, look for places where two (or more) sentences could be rewritten as one. By cutting text you are actually gaining a clearer, more polished product. For efficiency, make the larger cuts first—sections, chapters, pages. Then go for the smaller cuts—paragraphs, sentences, phrases, words.

4. **Paste.** The next task is to rearrange what's left of your paper so that it flows logically. Look for consistency within paragraphs and for transitions from paragraph to paragraph and section to section.

5. **Fix.** Now it's time to look at individual words and phrases. Define any terms that the reader might not know. In general, focus on nouns and verbs. Too many words add unnecessary bulk to your writing. Write about the details, and be specific. Also, check your writing to ensure that you:

   - **Prefer the active voice.** Write *"The research team began the project"* rather than *"A project was initiated,"* which is a passive statement.
   - **Write concisely.** Instead of *"After making a timely arrival and observing the unfolding events, I emerged totally and gloriously victorious,"* be concise with *"I came, I saw, I conquered."*
   - **Communicate clearly.** Instead of *"The speaker made effective use of the television medium, asking in no uncertain terms that we change our belief systems,"* you can write specifically, *"The senatorial candidate stared straight into the television camera and said, 'Take a good look at what my opponent is doing! Do you really want six more years of this?'"*

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6. **Prepare.** Format your paper following accepted standards for margin widths, endnotes, title pages, and other details. Ask your instructor for specific instructions on how to cite the sources used in writing your paper. You can find useful guidelines in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.* If you are submitting a hard copy (rather than turning it in online), use quality paper for the final version. For an even more professional appearance, bind your paper with a plastic or paper cover.

7. **Proofread.** As you ease down the home stretch, read your revised paper one more time, and look for the following:

   - A clear thesis statement.
   - Sentences that introduce your topic, guide the reader through the major sections of your paper, and summarize your conclusions.
   - Details—such as quotations, examples, and statistics—that support your conclusions.
   - Lean sentences that have been purged of needless words.
   - Plenty of action verbs and concrete, specific nouns.
   - Spelling and grammar mistakes. Use contractions sparingly, if at all. Use spell-check by all means, but do not rely on it completely, as it will not catch everything.

Academic Integrity: Avoiding Plagiarism

Using another person's words, images, or other original creations without giving proper credit is called *plagiarism.* Plagiarism amounts to taking someone else's work and presenting it as your own—the equivalent of cheating on a test. The consequences of plagiarism can range from a failing grade to expulsion from school.

To avoid plagiarism, ask an instructor where you can find your school's written policy on this issue. Don't assume that you can resubmit a paper you wrote for another class for a current class. Almost all schools will regard this as plagiarism even though you wrote the paper. The basic guidelines for preventing plagiarism are to cite a source for each phrase, sequence of ideas, or visual image created by another person. While ideas cannot be copyrighted, the specific way that an idea is *expressed* can be. You also need to list a source for any idea that is closely identified with a particular person. The goal is to clearly distinguish your own work from the work of others. There are several ways to ensure that you do this consistently:

- **Identify direct quotes.** If you use a direct quote from another source, put those words in quotation marks. If you do research online, you might copy text from a website and paste it directly into your notes. This is a direct quote. You must use quotation marks or if the quote is long, an indented paragraph.
- **Paraphrase carefully.** Paraphrasing means restating the original passage in your own words, usually making it shorter and simpler. Students who copy a passage word for word and then just rearrange or delete a few phrases are running a serious risk of plagiarism. Remember to cite a source for paraphrases, just as you do for direct quotes. When you use the same sequence of ideas as one of your sources—even if you have not paraphrased or directly quoted—cite that source.
- **Note details about each source.** For books, include the author, title, publisher, publication date, location of publisher, and page number. For articles from print sources, record the author, date, article title, and the name of the magazine or journal as well. If you found the article in an academic or technical journal, also include the volume and number of the publication. A librarian can help identify these details.
- **Cite online sources correctly.** If your source is a website, record as many identifying details as you can find—author, title, sponsoring organization, URL, publication date, and revision date. In addition, list the date that you accessed the page. Be careful when using Internet resources, as not all sites are considered legitimate sources. For example, many professors don't regard Wikipedia as an acceptable source.
- **Include your sources as endnotes or footnotes to your paper.** Ask your instructor for examples of the format to use. You do not need to credit wording that is wholly your own. Nor do you need to credit general ideas, such as the suggestion that people use a to-do list to plan their time. But if you borrow someone else's words or images to explain the idea, do give credit.
- **When in doubt, don't.** Sometimes you will find yourself working against a deadline for a paper, and in a panic, you might be tempted to take shortcuts. You'll find a source that expressed your idea perfectly, but you must cite it or completely rephrase the idea in your own words. Professors are experts at noticing a change in tone or vocabulary that signals plagiarism. Often, they can simply Google a phrase to find its source online. Do not let a moment's temptation cause you to fail the course or face an academic integrity hearing.

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Take Action

A Guide to Political Participation

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 World's Smallest Political Quiz:*** **theadvocates.org/quiz**.

- Which Founder Are You? The National Constitutional Center can help you with that. Go to **constitutioncenter.org/foundersquiz** to discover which Founding Father's personality 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:*** **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 the provisions in that document: **constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution**.

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Get Connected

- 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 **uscis.gov/**. What is involved in applying for citizenship? Take the *Naturalization Self-Test* at **https://my.uscis.gov/prep/test/civics**. How did you do?

Think about How Your Political Views Have Been Shaped

Consider how agents of political socialization—your family, your schools, and your peers, for example—have contributed to your political beliefs and attitudes. Then have conversations with people in your classes or where you live about the people, institutions, and experiences that influenced the way they view the political world. Try to understand how and why your views might differ.

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 monthly polls on politics and policy issues: **people-press.org**.
- Public Agenda reports poll data and material on major issues: **publicagenda.org**.
- The results of recent polls and an archive of past polls can be found at Gallup: **gallup.com**.
- The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research is a leading archive of data from surveys of public opinion: **ropercenter.cornell.edu**.

News

Keep up with news—print, broadcast, and online. 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 way to follow 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 such as the nonprofit cooperative Associated Press: **ap.org**.
- Installing a few key apps on your phone or tablet can help you stay informed. Try downloading the Associated Press (AP) app for timely updates about news around the world. There are tons of other great political apps—some are fairly polarizing, some are neutral, and still others are just plain silly.

Blogs

The blogosphere affords views of politics that tend to be slanted according to the political orientation of the blog sponsor. 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. Former President Barack Obama, Senator Elizabeth Warren, House Speaker Paul Ryan, and even the White House have Instagram accounts worth following. Most 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: **politifact.com**. Check out the Truth-O-Meter, and get it on your smartphone or tablet.
- A project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, **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.

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Keep Up during Election Season

- Project Vote Smart offers information on elections and candidates: **votesmart.org**.
- Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight features election analysis, in addition to covering sports and economics: **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**. RealClearPolitics is a good source for other political news and opinions as well.
  - Polls for U.S. federal elections, including state-by-state polls, can be found at **electoral-vote.com**.
  - HuffPost Pollster 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.
- If you have the opportunity, attend a speech by a candidate you're interested in.

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: **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.

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: **house.gov** and **senate.gov**. Look up the names and contact information for the senators and the representative from your area. If you want your voice to be heard, simply phone or e-mail your senators or your representative. Members of Congress listen to their constituents and often act in response to their constituents' wishes. Indeed, next to voting, contacting those who represent you in Congress is probably the most effective way to influence government decision making.

Check GovTrack to find out where your representative and senators fall on the leadership and ideology charts, and learn about their most recently sponsored bills and votes on legislation: **govtrack.us**.

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Get Involved

Take an Interest in Your Community—Offer to Help

Every community—large and 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.

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 around the globe and investigates those who may not be doing as much good as you'd think. Tiny Spark also has a podcast.
- **Charitynavigator.org** is another tool for checking on charities. It evaluates and rates charities on financial health, accountability and transparency, and reporting of results.

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. Sign or start a petition.

Join a Group on Campus

You probably see flyers promoting groups and recruiting members posted all over campus. 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. The American Red Cross may be looking for help with campus blood drives. You'll find groups organized around race, culture, or political parties; groups that go on spring break trips to serve communities in need; service organizations of all kinds; and groups that focus on 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 establish a student organization.

Vote (but Don't Forget to Register First)

- You can learn about the laws governing voting in your state by going to the website of the National Conference of State Legislatures and its link to Voter Identification Requirements: **ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id**.

- Register: Enter "register to vote in [your state]" in a search engine. The office in your state that administers voting and elections will have a website that outlines the steps you will need to follow. You can also find out how to obtain an absentee ballot.
- If you want to view a sample ballot to familiarize yourself with what you'll see at 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: Familiarize yourself with the candidates and issues before you go to the polls. If you'd like to influence the way things are done in your community, state, or Washington, D.C., you can do so by helping to elect local, state, and federal officials whose views you endorse and who you think would do a good job of running the government. Make sure you know the location and hours for your polling place.

Support a Political Party

Getting involved in political parties is as simple as going to the polls and casting your vote for the candidate of one of the major parties—or of a third party. You can also consider becoming a delegate to a party convention. Depending on the state, parties may hold conventions by U.S. House district, by county, or by state legislative district. In many states, the lowest-level conventions (or, in some states, caucuses) are open to anyone who shows up. Voting rights at a convention, however, may be restricted to those who are elected as precinct delegates in a party primary.

In much of the country, precinct delegate slots go unfilled. If this is true in your area, you can become a precinct delegate with a simple write-in campaign, writing in your own name and persuading a handful of friends or neighbors to write you in as well. Whether you attend a convention as a voting delegate or as a guest, you'll have a firsthand look at how politics operates. You'll hear debates on resolutions. You might participate in electing delegates to higher-level conventions—perhaps even the national convention if it is a presidential election year.

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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 its website, and inquire about volunteer opportunities. Volunteers assemble mailings, answer the telephone, and make calls to encourage voters to support their candidate or cause. Even if you have little free time or are not comfortable talking to strangers, most campaigns can find a way for you to participate.


Joseph Sohm/Shutterstock.com

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 are your thing, get involved with your college radio station or go on air on campus TV.

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

- **Visit the government websites for your state and community and learn about your representatives.** Contact them with your thoughts on matters that are important to you. Attend a city council meeting. You can find the date, location, and agenda on your city's website. And if you're passionate about a local issue, you can even sign up to speak.
- **Check to see if internships or volunteer opportunities are available close to home.** Your U.S. representative has a district office, and your U.S. senators also have offices in various locations around the state. If you plan to be in Washington, D.C., and want to visit Capitol Hill, book a tour in advance through your senators' or representative's offices. That's also where you can obtain gallery passes to the House and Senate chambers.
- **Spend some time in Washington, D.C.** Many colleges and universities have internship programs with government agencies and institutions. Some have semester-long programs that will bring you into contact with policymakers, journalists, and a variety of other prominent newsmakers. Politics and government will 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 D.C., try to watch oral arguments. Go to the Court's website to access the link for oral arguments: **supremecourt.gov**. You'll find the argument calendar and a visitor's guide. (The secret is to get in line early.)
- **Become a virtual tourist.** If you can't make it to Washington, D.C., for a semester-long program or even a few days, take the U.S. Capitol Virtual Tour: **https://www.capitol.gov.**
- **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**. You can also listen to Supreme Court oral arguments wherever you are. Go to the Oyez site and check out ISCOTUSnow (blogs.kentlaw.iit.edu/iscotus/).
- **Check with the study-abroad office** at your college or university. Studying abroad is a great way to expand your horizons and get a feel for different cultures and the global nature of politics and the economy. There are programs that will take you almost anywhere in the world.
- **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 gain hands-on experience in diplomacy.

Get Informed.
Get Connected.
Get Involved.

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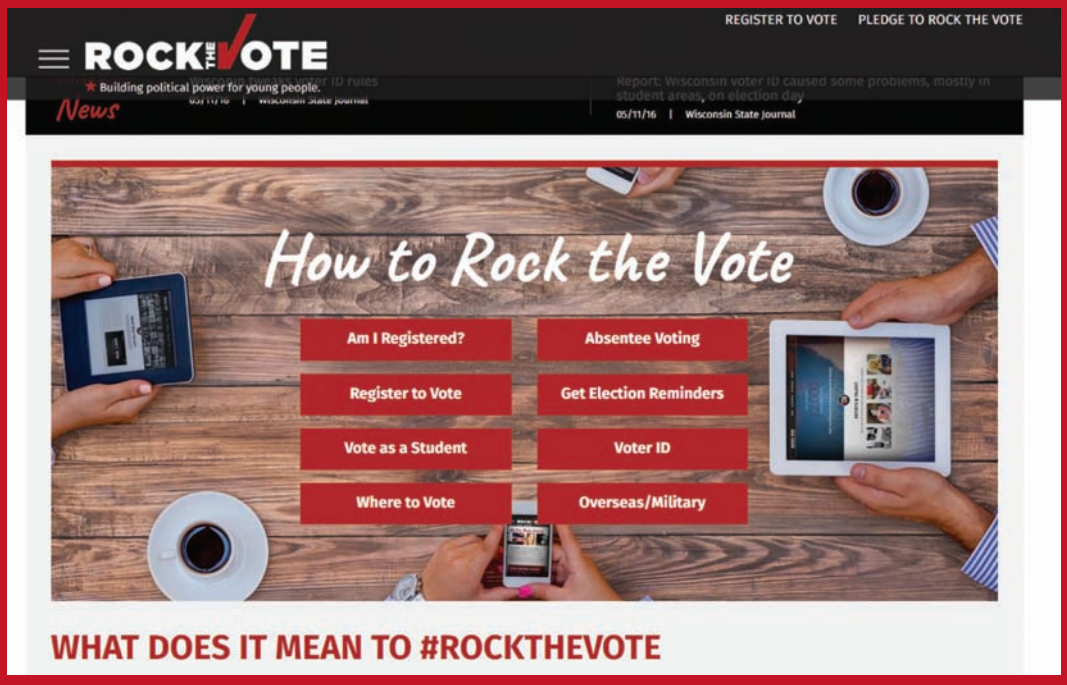
Every day in America, almost 12,000 people turn age 18 and become eligible to vote. Each vote makes a difference!

Rock the Vote! is the largest nonprofit and nonpartisan organization providing the tools college students need to get registered to vote. It also provides resources about becoming a more active citizen.

Go to the website below and get involved. Let your voice be heard!

Go to the Rock the Vote website below and ...



Source: Rock the Vote

1 America in the Twenty-First Century

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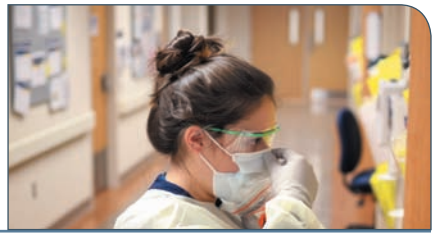
Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- **LO 1–1** Explain what is meant by the terms *politics* and *government*.
- **LO 1–2** Identify the various types of government systems.
- **LO 1–3** Summarize some of the basic principles of American democracy and basic American political values.
- **LO 1–4** Define common American ideological positions, such as "conservatism" and "liberalism."

America at Odds

How Much Liberty Must We Sacrifice During a Pandemic?



Win McNamee/Getty Images News/Getty Images

In the fourteenth century, the black death killed perhaps a third of all Europeans and many millions elsewhere. In 1918 and 1919, The Spanish flu may have killed as many as 50 million people around the world. The latest pandemic hit the world hard in 2020. The cause is commonly known as the coronavirus, and the disease that it causes is COVID-19. The virus is extremely contagious. Mortality rates are very high among the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease.

People around the world responded to COVID-19 by trying to isolate themselves. In March 2020, theaters, sporting events, and restaurants were forced to close due to government-required shutdowns. Millions began working from home if they could. Governments everywhere began issuing lockdown orders. These orders were unprecedented in their extent. The initial goal was to prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed by the sheer number of sick people. In Wuhan, China—where the virus first surfaced—in Italy, New York City, and elsewhere, hospitals were, in fact, overwhelmed, and many died without medical assistance.

The danger of a medical system collapse in the United States was largely over by May, however. State governors who had imposed lockdowns began scaling them back, despite warnings that the number of cases might spike. A vaccine was unlikely to be available before 2021. The quarantines had devastated the economy, with more than 40 million people out of work. An additional issue was the sheer loss of personal freedom resulting from the lockdowns. Americans were at odds as to how to balance the threat of the disease against economic disaster and the loss of civil liberties.

Do We Really Want More People to Die So We Can Go Pub-Crawling?

To be sure, there is a huge cost associated with lockdowns during a pandemic. Also, under normal conditions, we should all have full liberty of movement. But consider: People who have contracted the disease can be contagious to others for a week before they show symptoms. Most people who pass the disease on do so without knowing what they are doing.

It is unfortunate that some are seeing "social distancing" as a cultural issue and not a matter of public health. It is not helpful to claim that face masks are a sign of fear. The masks are primarily to protect others, not yourself. The economic consequences of the pandemic are vast, but ending lockdown orders cannot automatically restore the economy. You can't force people to attend events, shop, and dine out when they do not believe such activities are safe. Ultimately, we need a vaccine.

Enough is Enough—You Can't Keep People Home Forever

We now know that COVID-19 is not easily transmitted when people are outdoors and not close together. There is no reason to prevent people from walking, jogging, or hiking, as long as they stay six feet away from others. Yet some governments (mostly outside the United States) banned such activities.

Closing down whole economies has human costs, not just financial ones. When people are out of work, the results include increases in suicide, domestic and child abuse, alcoholism, and opioid addiction. Some have argued that severe lockdown measures could become a cure worse than the disease.

In the end, it is not possible to maintain strict lockdown policies for more than a few months. People will simply begin to ignore the restrictions. Americans place a very high value on personal freedom.

Where do you stand?

1. How effective were social distancing, face masks, and other measures in controlling COVID-19, in the absence of quarantines?
2. People often have a hard time visualizing the relative danger of various threats. Many people are more afraid of flying than driving, though driving is much riskier. Why might this be so?

Exploring this issue online:

- For a current report on COVID-19 case rates, use a search engine such as Google to look up "new york times covid cases."
- *The Atlantic* has many in-depth articles on the pandemic. Search for "the atlantic covid-19."

Introduction

Regardless of how Americans feel about government, one thing is certain: They can't live without it. James Madison (1751–1836) once said, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary." Today, his statement still holds true. People are not perfect. People need an organized form of government and a set of rules by which to live.

Government performs a wide range of extremely important functions. From the time we are born until the day we die, we constantly interact with various levels of government. Most (although not all) students attend government-run schools. All of us travel on government-owned streets and highways. Many of us serve in the military—a completely government-controlled environment. A few of us get into trouble and meet up with the government's law enforcement system. Every citizen reaching the age of sixty-five can expect the government to help with medical and living expenses. To fund all these functions, the government collects taxes.

> **"The ultimate rulers of our democracy are … *the voters of this country.*"**
>
> ~ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Thirty-Second President Of The United States, 1933–45

In a representative democracy, or republic, such as ours, it is politics that controls what the government decides to do. What combination of taxes and government services is best? When should our leaders use military force against foreign nations or rebellions in foreign countries? As discussed in this chapter's opening *America at Odds* feature, how does the government deal with acute crises? How the nation answers these and many other questions will have a major impact on your life—and participation in politics is the only way you can influence what happens.

What Are Politics and Government?

LO 1–1 Explain what is meant by the terms *politics* and *government*.

institution An ongoing organization that performs certain functions for society.

social conflict Disagreements among people in a society over what the society's priorities should be.

Even if—contrary to Madison's observation—people were perfect, they would still need to establish rules to guide their behavior. They would somehow have to agree on how to divide up a society's resources, such as its land, among themselves and how to balance individual needs and wants against those of society generally.

These perfect people would also have to decide *how* to make these decisions. They would need to create a process for making rules and a form of government to enforce those rules. It is thus not difficult to understand why government is one of humanity's oldest and most universal **institutions**.

As you will read in this chapter, a number of different systems of government exist in the world today. In the United States, we have a democratic republic in which decisions about pressing issues ultimately are made politically by the people's representatives in government.

Because people rarely have identical thoughts and feelings about issues, it is not surprising that in any democracy citizens are often at odds over many political and social problems. Throughout this book, you will read about contemporary controversies that have brought various groups of Americans into conflict with one another.

Differences in political opinion are essential parts of a representative democratic government. Ultimately, these differences are resolved, one way or another, through the American political process and our government institutions.

Defining Politics and Government

Politics means many things to many people. There are also many different notions about the meaning of government. How should we define these two central concepts?

Politics and Conflict To some, politics is an expensive and extravagant game played in Washington, D.C., in state capitols, and in city halls, particularly during election time. To others, politics involves all of the tactics and maneuvers carried out by the president and Congress. Most formal definitions of politics, however, begin with the assumption that **social conflict**—disagreements among people in a society over what the society's priorities should be—is inevitable. Conflicts will naturally arise over how the society should use its scarce resources and who should receive various benefits, such as health care and higher education. Resolving such conflicts is the

essence of **politics**. Political scientist Harold Lasswell perhaps said it best in his classic definition of politics as the process of determining "who gets what, when, and how" in a society.[1]

Government and Authority Disputes over how to distribute a society's resources inevitably arise because valued resources, such as property, are limited, while people's wants are unlimited. To resolve such disputes, people need ways to determine who wins and who loses, and how to get the losers to accept those decisions. Who has the legitimate power—the *authority*—to make such decisions? This is where governments step in.

From the perspective of political science, **government** can best be defined as the individuals and institutions that make society's rules and also possess the power and authority to enforce those rules. Generally, in any country, government uses its authority to serve at least three essential purposes:

- **resolving conflicts,**
- **providing public services, and**
- **defending the nation and its culture against attacks.**

Resolving Conflicts

Governments decide how conflicts will be resolved so that public order can be maintained. Governments have **power**—the ability to influence the behavior of others. Power is getting someone to do something that he or she would not otherwise do. Power may involve the use of force (often called coercion), persuasion, or rewards. Governments typically also have **authority**, which they can exercise only if their power is legitimate. As used here, the term *authority* means the ability to use power that is collectively recognized and accepted by society as legally and morally correct. Power and authority are central to a government's ability to resolve conflicts by making and enforcing laws, placing limits on what people can do, and developing court systems to make final decisions.

For example, the judicial branch of government—specifically, the United States Supreme Court—resolved the highly controversial question of whether the Second Amendment to the Constitution grants individuals the right to bear arms. In 2008 and 2010, the Court affirmed that such a right does exist.[2] Because of the Court's stature and authority as a government body, there was little resistance to its decision, even from gun control advocates.

Providing Public Services

Another important purpose of government is to provide **public services**—essential services that many individuals cannot provide for themselves. Governments undertake projects that individuals usually would not

Sean Rayford/Getty Images News/Getty Images

Image 1.1 **During the demonstrations after the death of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 2020, there were numerous confrontations between police personnel and protestors.** ***Is this the typical way that Americans resolve conflicts?***

politics The process of resolving conflicts over how society should use its scarce resources and who should receive various benefits, such as public health care and public higher education.

government The individuals and institutions that make society's rules and possess the power and authority to enforce those rules.

power The ability to influence the behavior of others, usually through the use of force, persuasion, or rewards.

authority The ability to legitimately exercise power, such as the power to make and enforce laws.

public services Essential services that individuals cannot provide for themselves, such as building and maintaining roads, establishing welfare programs, operating public schools, plus law enforcement, fire protection, and public health and safety programs.

or could not carry out on their own. These projects include building and maintaining roads, establishing welfare programs, operating public schools, and preserving national parks. Governments also provide such services as law enforcement, fire protection, and public health and safety programs (which were of special importance during the COVID-19 pandemic). As Abraham Lincoln once stated:

> The legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people, whatever they need to have done, but cannot do, *at all*, or cannot, *so well* do, for themselves—in their separate, individual capacities. In all that the people can individually do as well for themselves, government ought not to interfere.[3]

Services for All and Services for Some Some public services are provided equally to all citizens of the United States. For example, government services such as national defense and domestic law enforcement allow all citizens, at least in theory, to feel that their lives and property are safe. Laws governing clean air and safe drinking water benefit all Americans.

Other services are provided only to citizens who are in need at a particular time, even though they are paid for by all citizens through taxes. Such services can include health and welfare benefits. For example, a program such as Social Security Disability Insurance provides a source of income to people whose ability to work is limited by a notable disability. Americans contribute to the program through the Social Security payroll tax, regardless of whether they ever become disabled.

Managing the Economy

One of the most crucial public services that the government is expected to provide is protection from hardship caused by economic recessions or depressions. From 2008 on, this governmental objective became more important than almost any other, in part due to the severity of the Great Recession that began in December 2007.

One of the most damaging consequences of that recession was low rates of employment (or high rates of unemployment). This problem was not resolved for a decade, even though the recession officially ended in June 2009 when economic growth resumed. Employment rates did not return to 2007 levels until early 2020. Then, beginning in March 2020, much of the nation's economy shut down in an attempt to halt the spread of the coronavirus. The resulting economic crisis sent the nation's unemployment rate back up to a level not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s. As you will learn later in this chapter, when many Americans face economic hardships, they often have negative views about how well our government is "running the ship."

Defending the Nation and Its Culture

Historically, matters of national security and defense have been given high priority by governments and have demanded considerable time, effort, and expense. The U.S. government provides for the common defense and national security with its Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, and now the new Space Force. The departments of State, Defense, and Homeland Security, plus the Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, and other agencies, also contribute to this defense network.

As part of an ongoing policy of national security, many departments and agencies in the federal government are constantly dealing with other nations. The Constitution gives our national government exclusive power over relations with foreign nations. No individual state can negotiate a treaty with a foreign nation.

Getmilitaryphotos/Shutterstock.com

Image 1.2 **A U.S. Navy SEAL with diving gear and weapons. Participation by U.S. troops in Syria was limited to special operations forces such as the SEALs.** ***Why would the federal government be reluctant to introduce regular infantry soldiers into that conflict?***

Of course, in defending the nation against attacks by other nations, a government helps to preserve the nation's culture, as well as its integrity as an independent unit. Failure to defend successfully against foreign attacks may have significant consequences for a nation's culture. For example, consider what happened in Tibet in the 1950s. When that country was taken over by the People's Republic of China, the conquering Chinese set out on a systematic program, the effective result of which was large-scale cultural destruction. Does China also present a threat to the United States? We examine that question in this chapter's *Join the Debate* feature.

Attacks by foreign governments are not the only threat that nations must address. Since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001, defending the homeland against future terrorist attacks has become a priority of our government. Terrorists often operate independently of any foreign authority, even if they are inspired from abroad. Examples include the killings in San Bernardino, California, in December 2015 and the massacre at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, in 2016.

Critical Thinking

- **What levels of spending on public services are appropriate? Are there services that you believe are underfunded—or a waste of funds?**

Different Systems of Government

LO 1–2 Identify the various types of government systems.

Through the centuries, the functions of government just discussed have been performed by many different types of structures. A government's structure is influenced by a number of factors, such as a country's history, customs, values, geography, resources, and human experiences and needs. No two nations have exactly the same form of government. Over time, however, political analysts have developed ways to classify different systems of government. One of the most meaningful ways is according to *who* governs. Who has the power to make the rules and laws that all must obey?

Undemocratic Systems

Before the development of modern democratic systems, the power of the government was typically in the hands of an authoritarian individual or group. When such power is exercised by an individual, the system is called an **autocracy**. Autocrats can gain power by traditional or nontraditional means.

Monarchy One form of autocracy, known as a **monarchy**, is government by a king or queen, an emperor or empress—or a person with some other aristocratic title, such as emir, grand duke, or prince. In a monarchy, the monarch, who usually acquires power through inheritance, is the highest authority in the government.

Historically, many monarchies were *absolute monarchies*, in which the ruler, at least in principle, held complete and unlimited power. Until the eighteenth century, the theory of "divine right" was widely accepted in Europe. This **divine right theory**, variations of which had existed since ancient times, held that God gave those of royal birth the unlimited right to govern other men and women. In other words, those of royal birth had a "divine right" to rule, and only God could judge them. Thus, all citizens were bound to obey their monarchs, no matter how unfair or unjust they seemed to be. Challenging this power was regarded not only as treason against the government but also as a sin against God.

Most modern monarchies, however, are *constitutional monarchies* in which the monarch shares governmental power with elected lawmakers. Over time, the monarch's power has come to be limited, or checked, by other government leaders and perhaps by a constitution or a bill of rights. Most constitutional monarchs today serve merely as ceremonial leaders of their nations, as in Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (Britain).

Dictatorship Undemocratic systems that are not supported by tradition are called **dictatorships**. Often, a dictator is a single individual, although dictatorial power can be exercised by a group, such as the Communist Party of China. Dictators are not accountable to anyone else.

A dictatorship can be *totalitarian*, which means that a leader or group of leaders seeks to control almost all aspects of social

autocracy A form of government in which the power and authority of the government are in the hands of a single person.

monarchy A form of autocracy in which a king, queen, or other aristocrat is the highest authority in the government. Monarchs usually obtain their power through inheritance.

divine right theory The theory that a monarch's right to rule was derived directly from God rather than from the consent of the people.

dictatorship A form of government in which absolute power is exercised by an individual or group whose power is not supported by tradition.

Join the Debate

Should We Get Tougher on China?

China is on the rise. For more than forty years, its economy has grown explosively. China's military power has grown as well. China is no longer a poor country, as it once was. Soon, China will be the world's largest economy, with the United States second. (By some definitions, the Chinese economy is larger already.)

Many believe that China has cheated its way to the top. Donald Trump certainly believed that long before he became president. In response, the Trump administration put the world on notice that it will not let China continue to take advantage of the United States. A trade war ensued in which the United States placed tariffs—taxes—on many of China's exports to the United States. China responded in kind.

China's communist leaders aggressively pursue territorial claims in the South China Sea. They repeatedly threaten the island of Taiwan. They have cracked down on protestors in Hong Kong, who do not want to be dominated by the Chinese central government. In western China, over a million Uyghurs, a Muslim minority group, have been forced into relocation camps. And, of course, the Communist Party has developed the most sophisticated surveillance system for its own citizens in the history of civilization.

So, is it time for the United States to get tougher on China?

It Is Past Time to Act

It is a sign of how badly the Chinese have played their hand that in Washington, D.C., hostility toward the Chinese government is widespread in both major political parties. Certainly, we should not allow ourselves to become dependent on China for goods that are vital to our national security, such as antibiotics or personal protection equipment (PPE), which were in short supply worldwide when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. China did the world no favors by downplaying the pandemic until it was too late to stop it.

In the longer run, we must stop China's constant theft of U.S. intellectual property. China has promised to address that issue, but there is little evidence that they have kept that promise. For decades, the United States has shifted its manufacturing production offshore, especially to China. Now is the time to bring it back onshore. We need those jobs, but above all we need to be free from the danger of Chinese economic blackmail.

It is worthwhile to build a tough, bipartisan line against China. That means that the political parties should not compete as to who is the most hostile to that country. A unified national response is what we need.

China Is a Problem, but Trump's Response Doesn't Work

The Communist Party of China certainly consists of hard men (yes, men) who believe that China should be the world's number-one power. Because China is strong, we cannot effectively counter it all by ourselves. We need allies—Europe, Canada, Mexico, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and others. Together, we can write new rules for international behavior that China will not be able to ignore. This is something that Donald Trump refused to recognize. Instead of strengthening our alliances, he seemed bent on destroying them.

Restricting trade or imposing high tariffs on Chinese imports will not slow China down. All that does is raise prices for American consumers. We should focus instead on making American manufacturing competitive with that of China. Keeping Chinese students out of the United States—another Trump notion—has not been the right way to deal with Chinese espionage. Of course, Chinese nationals should not work in areas that involve military and economic secrets. But many foreign students prefer to remain here after they graduate, and their work has been of enormous economic benefit to all of us. Trying to seal ourselves off from China will never be a winning strategy.

▶ Critical Analysis

Why is it important to distinguish between China's communist leaders and the Chinese people?

and economic life. The leadership establishes the goals of society. Citizens must conform to the government's dictates in all fields of endeavor—in the economy, in literature and entertainment, and even in private conversation. Typically, these collective goals benefit only the leaders and are damaging to the nation as a whole.

Examples of the totalitarian form of government include Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime in Germany from 1933 to 1945 and Joseph Stalin's dictatorship in the Soviet Union (Russia) from 1929 to 1953. A more contemporary example of a totalitarian dictator is the leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un.

Democratic Systems

The most familiar form of government to Americans is **democracy**, in which the supreme political authority rests with the people. The word *democracy* comes from the Greek *demos*, meaning "the people," and *kratia*, meaning "rule." The main idea of democracy is that government exists only by the consent of the people and reflects the will of the majority. Figure 1.1 shows the extent of democracy in the world today—with "democratic" defined as "free."

The Athenian Model of Direct Democracy

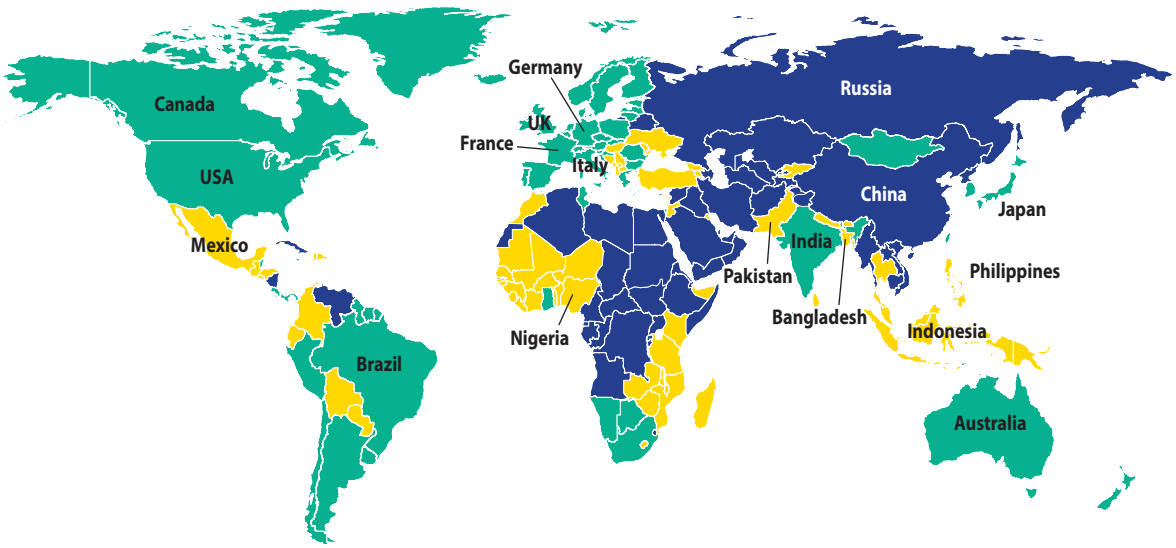
Democracy as a form of government began long ago. In its earliest form, democracy was simpler than the system we know today. What we now call **direct democracy** exists when the people participate directly in government decision making. In its purest form, direct democracy was practiced in Athens and several other ancient Greek city-states about 2,500 years ago. Every Athenian citizen participated in the governing assembly and voted on all major issues. Some consider the Athenian form of direct democracy ideal because it demanded a high degree of citizen participation. Others point out that most residents in the Athenian city-state (women, foreigners, and slaves) were not considered citizens. Thus, they were not allowed to participate in government.[4]

democracy A system of government in which the people have ultimate political authority. The word is derived from the Greek *demos* ("the people") and *kratia* ("rule").

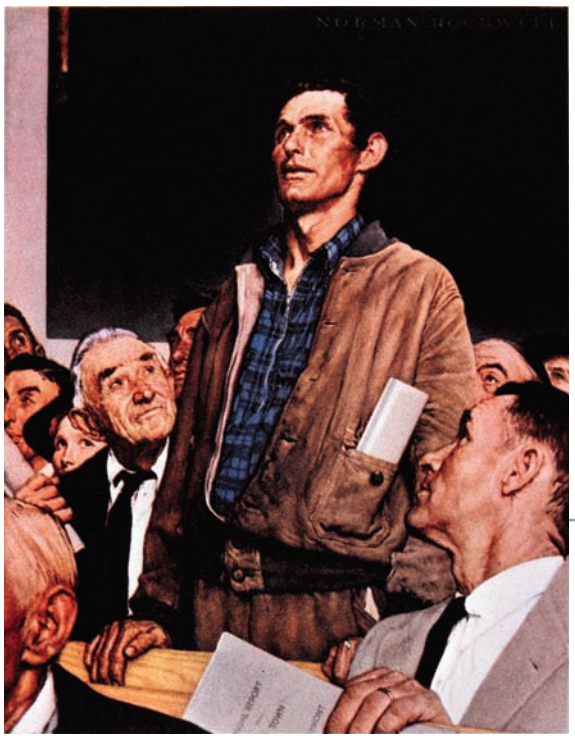
direct democracy A system of government in which political decisions are made by the people themselves rather than by elected representatives. This form of government was practiced in some parts of ancient Greece.

Figure 1.1 Free and Unfree Nations of the World, February 2020

In this classification of nations by Freedom House, green means free, yellow means partly free, and blue means unfree. Bear in mind that these are the assessments of a single organization. ***Why might another organization come up with a different system of classification?***



Sources: Sarah Repucci et al., *Freedom in the World 2020: A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy*, (Washington, D.C.: Freedom House, 2020). Outline map adapted from Wikimedia.



Universal History Archive/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

Image 1.3 **In this rather idealized painting by Norman Rockwell, a working man rises to speak at a New England town meeting. The 1943 work, titled "Freedom of Speech," was one of four. The others illustrated freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.** ***Why would Rockwell paint such images in the middle of World War II (1939–45)?***

Direct Democracy Today Clearly, direct democracy is possible only in small communities in which citizens can meet in a chosen place and decide key issues and policies. Nowhere in the world does pure direct democracy exist today. Some New England towns, though, and a few of the smaller political subunits, or cantons, of Switzerland still use a modified form of direct democracy.

Another modern institution with some of the characteristics of direct democracy is the ballot proposal, in which the voters themselves decide a specific question rather than letting their elected officials resolve the issue. Ballot proposals are used in many American states. In one type, the *referendum*, the legislature sends a ballot proposal to the voters. The *initiative* differs in that a question is placed on the ballot by gathering signatures, not by action of the legislature. A related process is *recall*, an initiative to remove an elected official immediately, before his or her term of office comes to an end.

representative democracy A form of democracy in which the will of the majority is expressed through groups of individuals elected by the people to act as their representatives.

republic Essentially, a representative system in which there is no king or queen and the people are sovereign.

parliament The national legislative body in countries governed by a parliamentary system, such as Britain and Canada.

Representative Democracy Although the founders of the United States were aware of the Athenian model and agreed that government should be based on the consent of the governed, they believed that direct democracy would deteriorate into mob rule. They thought that large groups of people meeting together would ignore the rights and opinions of people in the minority and would make decisions without careful thought. They believed that representative assemblies were superior because they would enable public decisions to be made in a calmer and more deliberate manner.

In a **representative democracy**, the will of the majority is expressed through smaller groups of individuals elected by the people to act as their representatives. These representatives are responsible to the people for their conduct and can be voted out of office.

Our founders preferred to use the term **republic**, which means essentially a representative system with one qualification. A democratic republic, by definition, has no king or queen. Rather, the people are sovereign. In contrast, a representative democracy may be headed by a monarch. For example, as Britain evolved into a representative democracy, it retained its monarch as the head of state (but with no real power).

Types of Representative Democracy In the modern world, there are basically two forms of representative democracy: presidential and parliamentary. In a *presidential democracy*, the lawmaking and law-enforcing branches of government are separate but equal. For example, in the United States, Congress is charged with the power to make laws, and the president is charged with the power to carry them out.

In a *parliamentary democracy*, the lawmaking and law-enforcing branches of government are united. In Britain, for example, the prime minister and the cabinet are members of the legislature, called Parliament, and are responsible to that body. A **parliament** thus both enacts the laws and carries them out.

Critical Thinking

- **Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong (1893–1976) once said, "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." Was Mao right? Why or why not?**

American Representative Democracy

LO 1–3 Summarize some of the basic principles of American democracy and basic American political values.

"This country, with all its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right to amend it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it."[5]

With these words, Abraham Lincoln underscored the most fundamental concept of American government: The people, not the government, are ultimately in control.

> **"The thing about democracy, beloveds, is that it is not neat, orderly or quiet. It requires a certain relish for confusion."**
>
> ~ Molly Ivins, American Journalist, 1944–2007

The British Legacy

In writing the U.S. Constitution, the framers incorporated two basic principles of government that had evolved in England: *limited government* and *representative government*. In a sense, then, the beginnings of our form of government are linked to events that occurred centuries earlier in England. They are also linked to the writings of European philosophers, particularly the English political philosopher John Locke (1632–1704). From these writings, the founders of our nation derived ideas to justify their rebellion against Britain and their establishment of a "government by the people."

Limited Government At one time, the English monarch claimed to have almost unrestricted powers. This changed in 1215, when King John was forced by his nobles to accept the Magna Carta, or the Great Charter. This monumental document provided for a trial by a jury of one's peers (equals). It prohibited the taking of a free man's life, liberty, or property except through due process of law. The Magna Carta also forced the king to obtain the nobles' approval of any taxes he imposed on them. Government thus became a contract between the king and his subjects.

The importance of the Magna Carta to England cannot be overemphasized, because it clearly established the principle of **limited government**—a government on which strict limits are placed, usually by a constitution. This form of government is characterized by institutional checks to ensure that it serves public rather than private interests. Hence, the Magna Carta signaled the end of the monarch's absolute power. Although many of the rights provided under the original Magna Carta applied only to the nobility, the document formed the basis of the future constitutional government for England and eventually the United States.

Representative Government In a representative government, the people, by whatever means, elect individuals to make governmental decisions for all of the citizens. Usually, these representatives of the people are elected to their offices for specific periods of time. In England, as mentioned earlier, this group of representatives is called a *parliament*. The English form of government provided a model for Americans to follow. Each of the American colonies established its own legislature.

In 1689, the English Parliament passed the English Bill of Rights, which further extended the concepts of limited and representative government. This document included several important ideas:

- **The king or queen could not interfere with parliamentary elections.**
- **The king or queen had to have Parliament's approval to levy (collect) taxes or to maintain an army.**
- **The king or queen had to rule with the consent of the people's representatives in Parliament.**

The English colonists in North America were also English citizens, and nearly all of the major concepts in the English Bill of Rights became part of the American system of government.

Political Philosophy: Social Contracts and Natural Rights Our democracy resulted from what can be viewed as a type of **social contract** among early Americans to create and abide by a set of governing rules. Social-contract theory was developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

limited government A form of government based on the principle that the powers of government should be clearly limited either through a written document or through wide public understanding.

social contract A voluntary agreement among individuals to create a government and to give that government adequate power to secure the mutual protection and welfare of all individuals.

by philosophers such as John Locke. According to this theory, individuals voluntarily agree with one another, in a "social contract," to give up some of their freedoms to obtain the benefits of orderly government. The government is given adequate power to secure the mutual protection and welfare of all individuals.

Locke also argued that people are born with **natural rights** to life, liberty, and property. He theorized that the purpose of government was to protect those rights. If it did not, it would lose its legitimacy and need not be obeyed. When the American colonists rebelled against British rule, such concepts as natural rights and a government based on a social contract became important theoretical tools in justifying the rebellion.

Principles of American Democracy

We can say that American democracy is based on at least five fundamental principles:

- ***Equality in voting*. Citizens must have equal opportunities to express their preferences about policies and leaders.**
- ***Individual freedom*. All individuals must have the greatest amount of freedom possible without interfering with the rights of others.**
- ***Equal protection of the law*. The law must entitle all persons to equal protection.**
- ***Majority rule and minority rights*. The majority should rule, while guaranteeing the rights of minorities.**
- ***Voluntary consent to be governed*. The people who make up a democracy must collectively (not individually) agree to be governed by the rules laid down by their representatives.**

Corbis Yellow/RF/Corbis

These principles frame many of the political issues that you will read about in this book. They also frequently lie at the heart of America's political conflicts. Does the principle of minority rights mean that minorities should receive preferential treatment in hiring and firing decisions to make up for past mistreatment? Does the principle of individual freedom mean that individuals can express whatever they want on the Internet, including hateful, racist comments? Above all, how much should the government *do*?

Such conflicts over individual rights and freedoms and over society's priorities are natural and inevitable. Resolving these conflicts is what politics is all about. The key point is that Americans are frequently able to reach acceptable compromises because of their common political heritage.

American Political Values

Historically, as the nations of the world emerged, the boundaries of each nation normally coincided at least roughly with the boundaries of a population that shared a common ethnic heritage, language, and culture. From its beginnings as a nation, however, America has been defined less by the culture shared by its diverse population than by the ideas that make up its political culture.

A **political culture** can be defined as a patterned set of ideas, values, and ways of thinking about government and politics. Our political culture is passed from one generation to another through families, schools, and the media. This culture is powerful enough to win over most new immigrants. Indeed, some immigrants come to America precisely because they are attracted by American values.

The ideals and standards that constitute American political culture are embodied in the Declaration of Independence, one of the founding documents of this nation, presented in its entirety in Appendix A. The political values outlined in the Declaration of Independence include natural rights (to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness), equality under the law, government by the consent of the governed, and limited government powers. In some ways, the Declaration of Independence defines Americans' sense of right and wrong. It presents a challenge to anyone who might wish to overthrow our democratic processes or deny our citizens their natural rights.

The rights to liberty, equality, and property are fundamental political values shared by most Americans. These values provide a basic framework for American political discourse and debate because they are shared, yet Americans often interpret their meanings quite differently. The result of these differences can be sharp conflict in the political arena.

natural rights Rights that are not bestowed by governments but are inherent within every man, woman, and child by virtue of the fact that they are human beings.

political culture The set of ideas, values, and attitudes about government and the political process held by a community or a nation.

Liberty The term *liberty* can be defined as a state of being free from external controls or restrictions. In the United States, the Constitution sets forth our *civil liberties*, including the freedom to practice whatever religion we choose and to be free from any state-imposed religion. Our liberties also include the freedom to speak freely on any topic and issue. Because people cannot govern themselves unless they are free to voice their opinions, freedom of speech is a basic requirement in a true democracy.

Clearly, though, if we are to live together with others, there have to be some restrictions on individual liberties. If people were allowed to do whatever they wished, without regard for the rights or liberties of others, chaos would result. Hence, a more accurate definition of **liberty** would be *the freedom of individuals to believe, act, and express themselves as they choose so long as doing so does not infringe on the rights of other individuals in the society*.

While almost all Americans believe strongly in liberty, differing ideas of what liberty should mean have led to some of our most heated political disputes. Should women be free to obtain abortions? Should employers be free to set the wages and working conditions of their employees? Should individuals be free to smoke marijuana? Over the years, Americans have been at odds over these and many other issues that concern liberty.

Equality The goal of **equality** has always been a central part of American political culture. The Declaration of Independence confirmed the importance of equality to early Americans by stating, "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal." Because of the goal of equality, the Constitution prohibited the government from granting titles of nobility. (The Constitution did not prohibit slavery, however.)

But what, exactly, does *equality* mean? Does it mean simply political equality—the right to vote and run for political office? Does it mean that individuals should have equal opportunities to develop their talents and skills? What about those who are poor, suffer from disabilities, or are otherwise at a competitive disadvantage? Should it be the government's responsibility to ensure that such individuals also have equal opportunities?

Although most Americans believe that all persons should have the opportunity to fulfill their potential, few contend that it is the government's responsibility to totally eliminate the economic and social differences that lead to unequal outcomes. Indeed, some contend that efforts to achieve equality, in the sense of equal treatment for all, are fundamentally incompatible with the value of liberty.

Property As noted earlier, the English philosopher John Locke asserted that people are born with natural rights and that among these rights are life, liberty, and *property*. The Declaration of Independence makes a similar assertion: People are born with certain "unalienable" rights, including the right to life, liberty, and the *pursuit of happiness*. For Americans, property and the pursuit of happiness are closely related. Americans place a great value on home ownership, on material

PhotoQuest/Getty Images

Image 1.4 **African Americans register to vote in Greensboro, Alabama, in 1965, soon after passage of the Voting Rights Act.** ***Why is equality of voting rights important?***

liberty The freedom of individuals to believe, act, and express themselves as they choose so long as doing so does not infringe on the rights of other individuals in the society.

equality A concept that holds, at a minimum, that all people are entitled to equal protection under the law.

possessions, and on their businesses. Property gives its owners political power and the liberty to do what they want—within limits.

Property and Capitalism. Private property in America is not limited to personal possessions such as automobiles and houses. Property also consists of assets that can be used to create and sell goods and services, such as factories, farms, and shops. Private ownership of wealth-producing property is at the heart of our capitalist economic system. **Capitalism** enjoys such widespread support in the United States that we can reasonably call it one of the nation's fundamental political values. In addition to the private ownership of productive property, capitalism is based on *free markets*—markets in which people can freely buy and sell goods, services, and financial investments without undue constraint by the government. Freedom to make binding contracts is another element of the capitalist system. The preeminent capitalist institution is the privately owned corporation.

Capitalism and Government. Although capitalism is supported by almost all Americans, there is no equivalent agreement on the relationship between capitalism and the government. Is it best for the government to leave businesses alone in almost all circumstances—or would this lead to excessive inequality and unethical business practices that injure consumers? As with the values of liberty and equality, Americans are divided over what the right to property should mean.

Political Values and a Divided Electorate

Differences among Americans in interpreting our collectively held values underlie the division between the Republican and Democratic parties. The political battles of the twenty-first century have been intense. Public opinion polls report that increasing numbers of Republicans and Democrats consider the other party to be not merely misguided, but a danger to the country.

Close Elections and Swinging Outcomes

Elections have often been close. In 2000, for example, Republican George W. Bush won the presidency in one of the closest presidential elections in U.S. history. In election years since 2000, support for the two major parties has swung back and forth, sometimes dramatically. The years 2006 and 2008 were very good for the Democrats, at first because of public dissatisfaction with the war in Iraq (2003-2011) and later because of the economic crisis that struck while Bush was still president.

capitalism An economic system based on the private ownership of wealth-producing property, free markets, and freedom of contract. The privately owned corporation is the preeminent capitalist institution.

The Republicans, in turn, enjoyed a banner year in 2010, based in part on the widespread belief that President Barack Obama and the Democrats were going too far in an attempt to carry out their liberal party platform.

The year 2012 was better for the Democrats. By that time, many moderate voters were apparently concerned that Republican threats to popular social programs outweighed Democratic fondness for "big government." Also, in a presidential election year such as 2012, more Democratic-leaning young people and minority group members could be expected to vote. (Often, such voters stay home in *midterm election* years such as 2010 and 2014, when presidential candidates are not on the ballot.) In the end, President Obama won reelection in 2012 by a comfortable margin.

In 2014, however, voter turnout was lower than it had been in any year since 1942, when the vote took place in the middle of World War II. One result was the largest number of Republicans in Congress since the 1920s.

The Rise of Trump Voter turnout was higher in the 2016 presidential election year than in 2012, not to mention the midterm years 2010 and 2014. The Democrats posted a net gain of two senators and eight members of the House, although this result did not come close to threatening Republican control of either chamber. In addition, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton won the national popular vote by a margin of 2.1 percent.

In the United States, however, presidential elections are not decided by the popular vote but by votes in the *electoral college*. The members of the college—*electors*—are chosen by the individual states, plus the District of Columbia. Republican presidential candidate Donald J. Trump carried the electoral college easily. Trump's victory was decided in the so-called heartland, the industrial Midwest plus Pennsylvania. His margins in states such as Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin were quite narrow, however. Clinton ran up unprecedented margins in states such as California, but that state was going to vote Democratic anyway. In effect, Clinton's extra votes in states such as California were wasted. For the first time since December 2010, one party was in full control of the national government.

Trump's Campaign. In an almost endless number of ways, Trump was an unprecedented presidential candidate. His background, campaign style, and positions on the issues were quite different from those of past Republican candidates. For years, a core Republican objective had been cuts in tax rates, especially for upper-income Americans. Republican leaders were willing to fund such reductions by cutting programs such as Social Security and Medicare. Many ordinary Republicans, however, saw these programs as a right earned by years of paying taxes. For many of these people, opposition to immigration was the number one issue. In contrast, business-oriented establishment Republicans often supported immigration and steps to improve the status of undocumented immigrants.

Trump, in contrast, promised to defend Social Security and Medicare. His hostility to immigration and to foreign imports was legendary. In Trump's view, foreign trade was responsible for a dramatic fall in the number of manufacturing jobs. He expressed his opinions on trade and immigration with some of the most inflammatory language ever employed by a major-party presidential candidate. He began his campaign in 2015 by denouncing Mexicans crossing our border as dangerous criminals.

Trump's Followers. Those Trump supporters who attended his rallies may have applauded such language, but for most of his voters economic issues were at least as important as concerns about the changing nature of American society. Trump did best in areas with two characteristics. One was an unusually large number of white voters with no more than a high school diploma. Such people are commonly identified as members of the white **working class** (although earlier in history that term was based on employment, not education). A second characteristic of districts that voted strongly for Trump was that people in these areas were more likely to suffer from poor health. Death rates in Trump counties were also well above the national average.

Trump clearly struck a nerve among voters in areas suffering from serious economic and social stress. Voter turnout was up substantially in districts with such problems. Trump's new voters were generally not the hardest-pressed members of the white working class, however. Rather, they were somewhat more prosperous individuals who believed that their communities were unraveling around them. When combined with regular Republican voters, who mostly rallied to Trump, this new group of voters was enough to elect Trump president.

The Reaction Against Trump. Most observers did not believe that Trump would win, and apparently that included Trump himself. Shock at Trump's victory was particularly strong among liberal women, given that several women had accused Trump of sexual misconduct. A month before the election, *The Washington Post* published a video in which Trump bragged that because he was a star, women might let him grab them by the privates. As it turned out, the tape had little effect on Trump's support among conservative women. On the day after Trump's inauguration, however, a series of women's marches attracted more than 3 million participants—the largest single-day protest in U.S. history.[6] Nevertheless, Trump, like most presidents, experienced a boost to his popularity immediately after taking office. His unpopularity rating soon rose above 50 percent, however.

Trump in Power. Despite Trump's populist campaign for the presidency, his initial actions in office were in line with Republican orthodoxy. In December 2017, the Republican Congress passed an enormous tax reform bill that benefited business interests. In 2018, Republicans narrowly failed in their attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA), popularly known as *Obamacare*. By 2018, the ACA had become popular, and repealing it would have damaged the finances of many of Trump's working-class supporters. The 2018 elections saw the highest midterm voter turnout in fifty years. Republican turnout was high, but Democratic turnout was higher still. Democrats took control of the House.

By 2019, Trump was able to leave his own mark on policy through a series of trade disputes, especially a trade war with China. Trade issues did not affect Trump's popularity ratings. The 2020 elections promised to test popular reaction to Trump's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. We discuss the results of the 2020 elections in this chapter's *Elections 2020* feature.

Political Values in a Changing Society

From the time of the earliest European settlers, America's population has always had widely differing origins. Early commentators, such as Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-59), wrote of the three races of North America—Europeans, Africans, and Indians. Many years were to pass, however, before

working class Today, persons with no more than a high school diploma. Formerly, families in which the head of household was employed in manual or unskilled labor.

Elections 2020

The Outcome of the Elections

The 2020 presidential elections were hard-fought. In the end, however, vice president Joseph Biden, the Democratic candidate, was elected president. Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) was chosen to be vice president. The daughter of immigrants from India and Jamaica, Harris was simultaneously the first woman, African American, and Asian American to appear on a winning presidential ticket. Still, the Democrats lost a number of seats in the U.S. House, though they kept control of the chamber. The Senate would have at least 50 Republicans and 48 Democrats. Two Georgia Senate seats were yet to be filled by special elections held on January 5, 2021. In October, in the run-up to Election Day, the Democrats had high hopes. If they could take the Senate by a wide margin, they might be able to pass much of their party platform. That did not happen. Still, if the Democrats could win both Georgia races, they would be able to organize the Senate because Vice President Harris, as president of the Senate, could break a 50–50 tie. In such circumstances, however, Democrats would be able to pass very little legislation, because most major measures in the Senate require 60 votes to pass. With only 50 senators, the Democrats probably could not change this rule. Furthermore, the Republicans were favored in both Georgia seats. If they won, new laws would be possible only in the rare instances where both parties were in agreement. Public opinion polls released before the elections supported Democratic optimism. As it turned out, however, the polls drastically underestimated turnout by Republican voters. Democratic turnout was also high, with the result that overall turnout in 2020 was greater than in any presidential election in more than a century. Republican leaders refused to accept Biden's victory for some time. Trump alleged that the vote was filled with fraud and that the elections had been stolen. Changing the outcome would require reversing the vote in at least three swing states, though, and so Trump had little realistic path to contesting the results.

African Americans and American Indians—and later, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans—were widely accepted as members of the national community. Immigrants from Europe found acceptance to be easier. Still, most Americans expected that white immigrants would abandon their cultural distinctions and assimilate the language and customs of earlier Americans.

One of the outgrowths of the civil rights movement of the 1960s was an emphasis on *multiculturalism*, the belief that the many cultures that make up American society should remain distinct and be protected—and even encouraged—by our laws. Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, however, revealed that some Americans continued to see multiculturalism as an unacceptable value.

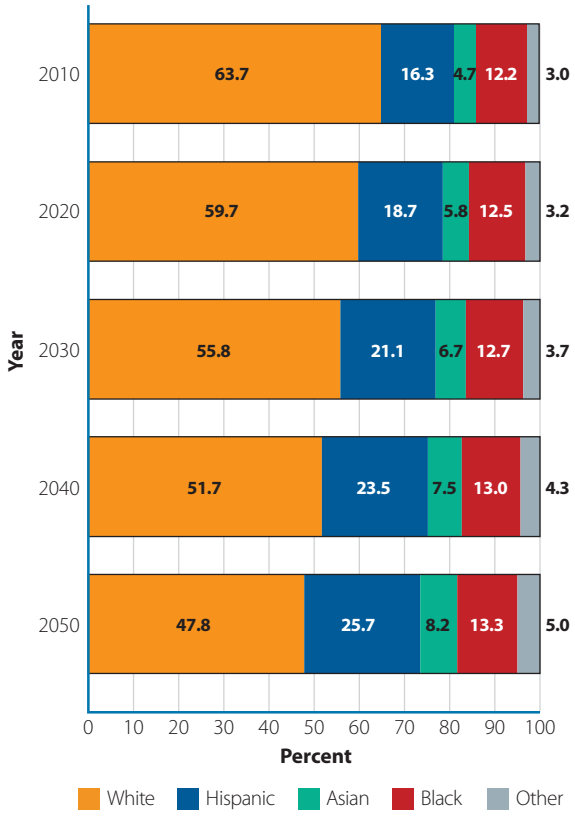
Despite their differing views about multiculturalism, Americans of all backgrounds remain committed to the values described in the last few sections of this text. The variety of ways that different groups interpret these values, however, add to our political divisions. African Americans, for example, given their collective history, often have a different sense of what equality should mean than do Americans whose ancestors came from Europe.

> **"People often say that, in a democracy, decisions are made by a majority of the people. Of course, that is not true. Decisions are made by a majority of … the people who vote—a very different thing."**
>
> ~ Walter H. Judd, U.S. Representative from Minnesota, 1943–63

Race and Ethnicity The racial and ethnic makeup of the United States has changed dramatically in the last two decades and will continue to change, as shown in Figure 1.2. Already, non-Hispanic whites are a minority in California. For the nation as a whole, non-Hispanic whites will be in the minority before 2050. Some Americans fear that rising numbers of immigrants will threaten traditional American political values and culture. Others are confident that newcomers will adopt American values.

Figure 1.2 Distribution of the U.S. Population by Race and Hispanic Origin, 2010 to 2050

By 2050, minorities will constitute a majority of the U.S. population. ***What consequences could follow from the changes shown below?***



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

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

Figures do not necessarily sum to 100% because of rounding. Hispanics 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," "Alaska Native," "Native Hawaiian," "Other Pacific Islander," and "Two or More Races."

Even as new Hispanic and Asian citizens assimilate into American culture, they remain more likely to vote for Democrats than Republicans. In other words, demographic change may provide a substantial future benefit to the Democratic Party. In recent elections, however, this benefit has been counteracted by another effect. A growing number of non-Hispanic whites—especially older ones—have been drawn to conservatism by their concern over the changing nature of American society. As we have observed, such concerns played a role in electing Donald Trump as president in 2016. We take a closer look at the immigration issue in this chapter's *Perception vs. Reality* feature.

An Older Society In 2020, Americans aged 65 or above made up about 15 percent of the total population. By 2040, however, that figure is expected to exceed 21 percent. The aging of America means that in future years there will be more retired people collecting Social Security, Medicare, and private pensions, compared with the number of working adults. Inevitably, the question of how to share the national income among the generations will become an ever-greater problem. In many foreign countries, however, the aging population poses a much greater threat than in the United States. Our population is expected to grow throughout the coming century. Nations such as Germany, Japan, Russia, and even China can expect to see their populations shrink, which will make it much harder for them to support their older citizens.

Socialization and Crime The people of the United States are not only older and more diverse, but they are also, on the whole, better behaved. Few people realize it, but crime rates fell dramatically in recent decades. For example, the murder rate per 100,000 persons peaked at 10.2 in 1980. By 2018, it was 5.0, almost an all-time low. Measurements of sexual violence, divorce, births to teenage mothers, and many others are headed in a positive direction.

From 2015 to 2017, the murder rate appears to have gone up slightly, but it remained far below what it was in the 1980s and 1990s. The uptick was partly due to a rate increase in a limited number of neighborhoods in cities such as Baltimore and Chicago, and it appears to be associated with a breakdown in trust between law enforcement and community members. By 2018, the rate was again headed down.

Digging into crime statistics reveals an unexpected fact: Crime rates overall are down among minority youth—and up among middle-age whites.

California has the most complete statistics. According to a recent report, in that state about as many minority youth were arrested for felonies in 2008 as middle-age whites. By 2014, more than twice as many middle-age whites were arrested as minority youth.[7] Death rates for rural whites are up—by 48 percent among white women ages 35 to 39. This is happening at a time when death rates for every other group are falling. These results may be due to an epidemic of drug and alcohol abuse among rural whites, another sign of a cultural and economic crisis that helped elect Donald Trump.

Critical Thinking

- **It's an old saying: "Your freedom to swing your arm ends where my nose begins." Can you think of other examples where one person's liberty interests conflict with those of another person?**

Perception vs.
Reality

Do Immigrants Take American Jobs?

America was founded by immigrants, and few restrictions on immigration existed until the twentieth century. Today, however, immigration is a major issue. A special concern is the large number of unauthorized immigrants; there are probably close to 11 million of these people currently in the country. The number of unauthorized immigrants has been stable since 2008 due to a collapse in rates of immigration from Mexico. (In fact, the annual number of Mexican immigrants—legal and illegal—returning home now exceeds the number of new arrivals.) Still, many people fear that immigrants, whether legal or illegal, take jobs away from American citizens.

The Perception

Many believe that increased immigration leads to more competition for jobs. Low-skilled immigrants drive down the wages of low-skilled citizens. Even highly skilled immigrants can take jobs away from engineers and other educated individuals born in the United States.

The Reality

Immigrants fill jobs, but they also create them. Economic growth can increase the amount of employment that is available. And economic studies show that highly skilled immigrants promote economic growth, increasing employment even among high-tech workers.

The number of well-educated immigrants from China, India, and other Asian countries is growing rapidly. The annual number of immigrants from Asia now exceeds the number from Latin America. A quarter of the engineering and technology companies started in the United States from 1995 to 2005 had at least one founder who was foreign-born. Some of the world's brightest brains and most cutting-edge innovators come to the United States to study—and often to stay. Foreign students earn more than half of U.S. science and engineering doctorates. Yet many of these students are forced to leave the country after graduation because there are not enough visas available for professionals.

Even low-skilled immigrants benefit the overall economy. The United States has jobs available at the bottom as well as the top. With unemployment at 10 percent in 2009 and 2010, farmers on the West Coast still could not find U.S. citizens willing to pick fruits and vegetables.

Studies suggest that while low-skilled—and especially illegal—immigrants may have an impact on low-end wages, those most likely to not be hired are other low-skilled immigrants. These immigrants often speak English poorly, if at all. That gives native-born citizens an employment advantage in most parts of the country. They can compete successfully for jobs that require English competency, such as store-clerk positions. More immigration under normal circumstances means more economic growth, and more of all kinds of jobs, including jobs that require English-speaking applicants.

Blog On

***Enter "immigration and american jobs" into an Internet search engine such as Google. Several informative articles will appear, including ones from the* New York Times *and the* Atlantic.**

American Political Ideology

LO 1–4 Define common American ideological positions, such as "conservatism" and "liberalism."

In a general sense, **ideology** refers to a system of political ideas. These ideas typically are rooted in religious or philosophical beliefs about human nature, society, and government.

When it comes to ideology, Americans are often placed in two broad political camps: conservatives and liberals. The term *conservative* originally referred to persons who wished to conserve—keep—traditional social and political habits and institutions. The term *liberal* referred to those who wanted to be free from tradition and to establish new policies and practices. In today's American political arena, however, these simple definitions of *liberalism* and *conservatism* are incomplete. Both terms mean much more.

Conservatism

Modern American **conservatism** does indeed value traditions—specifically, American ones. For much of U.S. history, business enterprise was largely free from government control or regulation. That freedom began to break down during the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933–45). Roosevelt's New Deal programs, launched in an attempt to counter the effects of the Great Depression, involved the government in the American economy to an extent previously unknown. Roosevelt gave conservatives a common cause: opposition to the New Deal and to big government. One tradition that conservatives sought to maintain, therefore, was a version of capitalism that was free of government regulation or control. Another tradition has been that groups that held a preeminent position in American society in the past—such as business and religious leaders—should continue to receive respect.

lev radin/Shutterstock.com

Image 1.5 President Donald Trump.
How was Trump different from past Republican leaders?

The Conservative Movement The emergence of the **conservative movement** in the 1950s and 1960s was essential to the development of modern conservatism. Previously, economic conservatives were often seen as individuals who feared that government activity might personally cost them wealth or power. The conservative movement, in contrast, was clearly ideological. It provided a complete way of viewing the world, and it attracted millions of followers who were not necessarily motivated by narrow economic self-interest.

The conservative movement emerged as a major force in 1964, when Arizona senator Barry Goldwater won the Republican presidential nomination on a relatively radical platform. Goldwater was soundly defeated by Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson (1963–69). In 1980, however, Republican Ronald Reagan became the first "movement conservative" to win the White House. While the beliefs of President Trump and his most ardent supporters differ from those of movement conservatism, they are clearly within the broader conservative tradition.

Conservatism Today A key element in conservative thinking is the belief that the distribution of social and economic benefits that would exist if the government took little or no action is usually optimum. Conservatives believe that individuals and families should take responsibility for their own economic circumstances, and if that means that some people have less, so be it. Conservatives also place a high value on the principle of order, on traditional family values, and on patriotism. Conservatism has always included those who want society and the government to reflect traditional religious values, and Christian conservatives remain an important part of the conservative coalition today.

ideology Generally, a system of political ideas that are rooted in religious or philosophical beliefs concerning human nature, society, and government.

conservatism A set of political beliefs that include a limited role for the national government in helping individuals and in the economic affairs of the nation, as well as support for traditional values and lifestyles.

conservative movement An ideological movement that arose in the 1950s and 1960s and continues to shape conservative beliefs.

Liberalism

While modern American **liberalism** can trace its roots to the New Deal programs of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the ideology did not take its fully modern form until the 1960s, during the Lyndon Johnson administration. Johnson went well beyond the programs of Roosevelt with new economic initiatives, such as Medicare and Medicaid. These programs—and more recent health care reforms—reflect the strong liberal belief that the social and economic outcomes that exist in the absence of government action are frequently unfair. Conservatives commonly accuse liberals of valuing "big government" for its own sake. Liberals reject that characterization and argue that big government is simply a necessary tool for promoting the common welfare.

The Civil Rights Revolution In the 1960s, liberals in the Democratic Party were able to commit their party firmly to the cause of African American equality, permanently overriding those Democratic conservatives who still supported legal segregation of the races. In a matching development, conservatives in the Republican Party began to appeal to traditionalist whites who were upset by the African American civil rights movement. As the party of Lincoln, the Republicans had once been the natural political home of African Americans. This was no longer true.

liberalism A set of political beliefs that include the advocacy of active government, including government intervention to improve the common welfare and to protect civil rights.

progressivism Today, an alternative, more popular term for the set of political beliefs also known as liberalism.

Support for minority rights of all kinds became an integral part of liberal ideology, while conservatism came to include skepticism toward minority claims. As one example, consider the Black Lives Matter movement that arose in 2015 following claims that many police officers were too willing to use deadly force against African Americans. Democratic presidential candidates expressed sympathy for the movement, but most Republican candidates accused it of being antipolice.

Other Liberal Values The Vietnam War (1965–75) also influenced liberal thinking. Although American participation in the conflict was initiated by President Johnson, liberals swung against the war more strongly than other Americans. Liberalism therefore came to include a relatively negative view of American military initiatives abroad. (That distrust has declined in recent years, however.)

Liberals strongly favor the separation of church and state. They generally think that the government should avoid laws that endorse or impose traditional religious values. Examples include laws that limit the rights of LGBTQ individuals. These beliefs sharply contrast with those of religious conservatives. In this area, at least, liberals do not stand for big government, but rather the reverse.

Liberals and Progressives Not all political labels are equally popular, and the term *liberal* has taken a particular beating in the political wars of the last several decades. One result is that most politicians who might have called themselves liberals in the past have labeled their philosophy **progressivism** instead. The term *progressive* dates back to the first years of the twentieth century, when it referred to a reform movement that was active in both major political parties. Later, the progressive label fell into disuse, until it was resurrected in recent years.

Geopix/Alamy Stock Photo

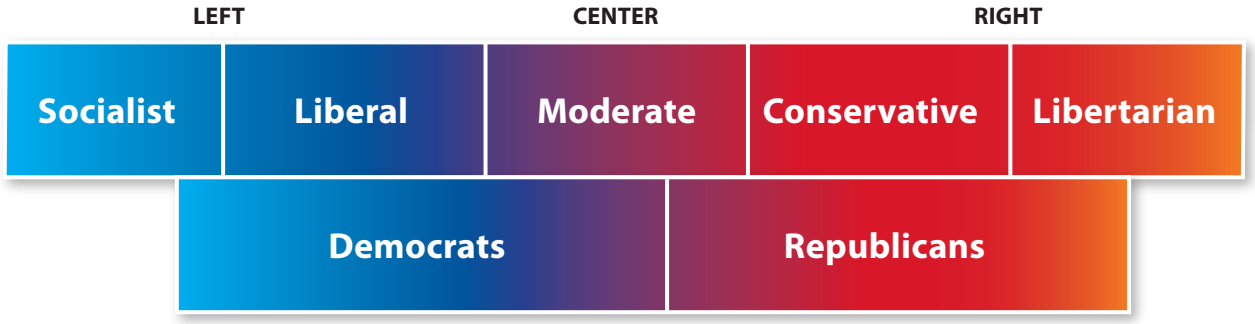
Image 1.6 **Presidential candidate for the Democratic Party Joe Biden speaks with local families in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, about the Affordable Care Act during the summer of 2020.** ***What were his basic themes during the campaign season prior to the elections in November?***

The Traditional Political Spectrum

Traditionally, liberalism and conservatism have been regarded as falling within a political spectrum that ranges from the left to the right. As illustrated in Figure 1.3, modern conservatives typically identify themselves politically as Republicans. Similarly, liberals—or progressives—identify with the Democratic Party. The identification of the parties

Figure 1.3 The Traditional Political Spectrum

This spectrum is based primarily on economic policies. ***What issues do not fit under "economic policy"?***



with specific ideologies is clear today but was not always so noticeable in the past. Conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans were once common, but they are now rare.

People whose views fall in the middle of the traditional political spectrum are generally called **moderates**. By definition, moderates do not classify themselves as either liberal or conservative. Moderates may vote for either Republicans or Democrats, although in public opinion polls Democrats are about twice as likely as Republicans to identify themselves as moderates. Still, a large number of moderates do not support either major political party and often describe themselves as *independent*.

Beyond Conservatism and Liberalism

Many Americans do not adhere firmly to a particular political ideology. Some are not interested in political issues. Others may have opinions that do not neatly fit under the liberal or conservative label. For example, conservatives typically support restrictions on the availability of abortion. They also may favor banning the procedure altogether.

Liberals usually favor the right to have an abortion. Many liberals believe that the government ought to guarantee that everyone can find a job. Conservatives generally reject this idea. Millions of Americans, however, support restrictions on abortion while supporting government jobs programs. Many other citizens would oppose both of these positions. Conservatism and liberalism, in other words, are not the only ideological possibilities.

Socialism To the left of liberalism on the traditional ideological spectrum lies **socialism**. This ideology has relatively few adherents in the United States, although some Democrats and independents accept the label, including senator and presidential candidate Bernie Sanders (D-VT). In much of the world, however, the main left-of-center party descends from the socialist tradition. These *social democrats* have a stronger commitment to egalitarianism than do U.S. liberals and a greater tolerance for strong government. Indeed, in the first half of the twentieth century, most socialists advocated government ownership of major businesses. Few social democrats endorse such proposals today, however.

Social democrats strongly support democracy, but early in the twentieth century an ultra-left breakaway from the socialist movement—the Communists—established a series of brutal dictatorships, initially in Russia (the Soviet Union). Communists remain in power in China and a few other nations. Despite Communist rule, in recent years capitalist businesses have thrived in China.

Libertarianism Even as socialism is weak in America compared with the rest of the world, the right-of-center ideology of **libertarianism** is unusually strong. Libertarians oppose almost all government regulation of the economy and government redistribution of income.

Many ardent conservatives share these beliefs. What distinguishes true libertarians, however, is that libertarians also oppose government involvement in issues of private morality. In this belief, they often have more in common with liberals than they

moderates Persons whose views fall in the middle of the political spectrum.

socialism A political ideology, often critical of capitalism, that lies to the left of liberalism on the traditional political spectrum. Socialists are scarce in the United States but common in many other countries.

libertarianism The belief that government should do as little as possible, not only in the economic sphere, but also in regulating morality and personal behavior.

do with conservatives. For most people, however, economic issues remain the more important ones, and a majority of libertarians ally with conservatives politically and support the Republicans.

Economic Progressives, Social Conservatives Many other voters are liberal on economic issues even as they favor conservative positions on social matters. These people support government intervention to promote both economic "fairness" *and* moral values. Low-income people frequently are economic progressives and social conservatives. A large number of African Americans and Hispanics fall into this camp. While it is widespread within the electorate, this "anti-libertarian" point of view has no agreed-upon name.

In sum, millions of Americans do not fit neatly into the traditional liberal–conservative spectrum. We illustrate an alternative, two-dimensional political classification in Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4 A Two-Dimensional Political Classification

What beliefs do persons who are both socially conservative and economically progressive tend to hold?

Olga Popova/Shutterstock.com. Steven Petteway, Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States. www.warren.senate.gov. giulio napolitano/Shutterstock.com.

Critical Thinking

- **Suppose you are a representative in Congress who ran for office on a platform that clearly articulated your strong beliefs. Should you be willing to compromise with others in the hopes of obtaining at least some of what you favor—or is it better to stand on principle, even if you lose?**

America at Odds

America in the Twenty-First Century

As you learned in this chapter, Americans are united by a common political culture. At the same time, however, Americans are at odds over how much weight should be given to various fundamental principles. We can summarize these most basic disputes as follows:

- *How much of a problem does immigration pose for the United States? Does it create economic difficulties? If so, what are they? To what extent does it challenge the established character of our nation? Does it matter which countries immigrants come from? Why or why not? What changes to policy would be desirable, if any?*
- *How large should our government be? Should it offer a wide range of services, along with the resulting taxes—or should it provide relatively few services and collect less in taxes?*
- *Should businesses be strictly regulated to ensure the common good—or should regulation be minimized to promote economic freedom and growth?*
- *More generally, should we place a greater value on economic liberty and property rights—or on economic egalitarianism and improving the condition of those who are less well off?*
- *How active should the government be in promoting moral behavior? Should the government support traditional values—or place a high value on social liberty?*

Test Yourself

Fill-In

LO 1–1

1. _____ can best be defined as the individuals and institutions that make society's rules and also possess the power and authority to enforce those rules.
2. In any country, government generally serves at least three essential purposes: _____, _____, _____.

LO 1–2

3. In a/an _____, the power and authority of the government are in the hands of a single person.
4. In a/an _____, the will of the majority is expressed through groups of individuals elected by the people to act as their representatives.

LO 1–3

5. The philosopher John Locke argued that people are born with natural rights to _____, _____, _____.
6. American democracy is based on five fundamental principles: _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.

LO 1–4

7. When it comes to ideology, Americans are often placed in two broad political camps: _____, _____.
8. Arizona senator Barry Goldwater and President Ronald Reagan were well-known political _____.
9. People whose views fall in the middle of the traditional political spectrum are generally called _____.
10. _____ oppose almost all government regulation of the economy and government redistribution of income, while also opposing government involvement in issues of private morality.

Multiple Choice

LO 1–1

11. Political scientist Harold Lasswell defined _____ as the process of determining "who gets what, when, and how" in a society.
    a. government **b.** power **c.** politics
12. When the government's ability to exercise power is widely viewed as legitimate, we say that the government
    a. has authority. **c.** is limited.
    b. is representative.

LO 1–2

13. The system of government in the United States is best described as a _____ democracy.
    a. parliamentary **c.** direct
    b. presidential
14. The principal difference between an absolute monarchy and a dictatorship is that
    a. unlike a dictatorship, an absolute monarchy allows freedom of speech and religion.
    b. dictators may be women, but monarchs never are.
    c. an absolute monarchy is based on tradition, but a dictatorship is not.

LO 1–3

15. Which of the following best describes a social contract?
    a. The set of ideas, values, and attitudes about government and politics held by a community or a nation
    b. A voluntary agreement among individuals to create a government and to give that government adequate power to secure the mutual protection and welfare of all individuals
    c. An economic system based on the private ownership of wealth-producing property, free markets, and freedom of contract
16. Because of the political value of _____, Article I, Section 9, of the U.S. Constitution prohibits the government from granting titles of nobility.
    a. equality **c.** multiculturalism
    b. liberty

LO 1–4

17. Today's Republican Party differs from the party that existed a century ago in that it
    a. no longer has strong support from business interests.
    b. is less reliant on the support of religious conservatives.
    c. no longer enjoys the support of most African Americans.
18. American liberalism took its fully modern form in the _____.
    a. 1960s, during the administration of Lyndon Johnson
    b. 1990s, during the administration of Bill Clinton
    c. 2000s, during the administration of Barack Obama

2 The Constitution

GL Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- **LO 2–1** Point out some of the influences on the American political tradition in the colonial years.
- **LO 2–2** Explain why the American colonies rebelled against Britain.
- **LO 2–3** Describe the structure of government established by the Articles of Confederation and some of the strengths and weaknesses of the Articles.
- **LO 2–4** List the major compromises made by the delegates at the Constitutional Convention and discuss the Federalist and Anti-Federalist positions on ratifying the Constitution.
- **LO 2–5** Summarize the Constitution's major principles of government and describe how the Constitution can be amended.

America at Odds

Should We Elect the President by Popular Vote?

Krista Kennell/Shutterstock.com

When Americans cast their ballots for president, they do not vote directly for the candidates. Rather, they vote for electors—persons chosen in each state by the political parties to cast the state's electoral votes for the candidate who wins that state's popular vote. This system is known as the electoral college. Each state has as many electoral votes as it has members in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. (In addition, the District of Columbia has three.) There are currently 538 electoral votes. To win, a presidential candidate must get 270 of these votes.

Most states have a "winner-take-all" system, in which the candidate who receives more of the popular votes than any other candidate receives all of the electoral votes, even if the margin of victory is slight. A candidate who wins the popular vote nationally may yet lose in the electoral college. In 2016, Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by a margin of about 2,870,000 votes, roughly 2.1 percent. Yet she lost to Republican Donald Trump in the electoral college. This situation has happened before—in 2000, Democrat Al Gore won the popular vote but narrowly lost the electoral college to Republican George W. Bush. Many Americans believe that we should let the popular vote decide who becomes president. Others are not so sure.

The Electoral College Ensures Stability

Supporters of the electoral college argue that it helps to protect the small states from being overwhelmed by the large states. It also helps to maintain a relatively stable party system. If the president were elected by popular vote, we might have multiple parties vying for the nation's highest office. The current system helps to discourage single-issue or regional candidates—candidates who are not focused on the interests of the nation as a whole. To prevail in the electoral college, a candidate must build a national coalition.

Even in 2016, the college worked as intended. Trump's vote was more broadly distributed geographically than Clinton's. Her popular vote majority was based on a 4,270,000-vote margin in California. But why should that state get to pick the president?

Finally, with the electoral college, a disputed presidential election could force a recount in one or more close states. A close election in a popular vote system, however, might require recounts in every corner of the country.

Let the People Elect Our President

Opponents of the electoral college believe that it is simply unfair. Consider that one electoral vote in California corresponds to roughly 725,000 people, while an electoral vote in Wyoming represents only about 197,000. This inequality is contrary to the "one person, one vote" principle of our democracy. As to the California argument just advanced, you can change the outcome of any election if you disregard some of the votes. When California chose Clinton over Trump by a two-to-one margin, that should have meant something. It didn't.

It's true that getting rid of the electoral college would require a constitutional amendment, and the small states would never agree to that. There is an alternative. The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact would give the electoral votes of every participating state to the national popular vote winner. The compact is scheduled to go into effect if the participating states had 270 votes—enough to control the electoral college. Currently, the participating states (fifteen states and the District of Columbia) have 196 votes. Of course, the compact would have to survive major legal challenges before it could go into effect.

Where do you stand?

1. Do you believe that a candidate elected by popular vote would be more representative of the nation than a candidate elected by the electoral college? Why or why not?
2. Why might the electoral college issue threaten to become a partisan one?

Explore this issue online

- You can find the website of National Popular Vote Inc., a sponsor of the proposal, at www.nationalpopularvote.com.
- The conservative website The New American opposes the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. Find its arguments by searching for "popular vote threatens republic."

Introduction

The Constitution, which was written more than two hundred years ago, continues to be the supreme law of the land. Time and again, its provisions have been adapted to the changing needs and conditions of society. The challenge before today's citizens and political leaders is to find a way to apply those provisions to a society and an economy that could not possibly have been anticipated by the founders. Will the Constitution survive this challenge? Most Americans assume that it will—and with good reason: No other written constitution in the world today is as old as the U.S. Constitution. Americans tend to revere their Constitution despite its quirks, such as the one discussed in the chapter-opening *America at Odds* feature.

To understand the principles of government set forth in the Constitution, you have to go back to the beginnings of our nation's history.

The Beginnings of American Government

LO 2–1 Point out some of the influences on the American political tradition in the colonial years.

When the framers of the Constitution met in Philadelphia in 1787, they brought with them some valuable political assets. One asset was their English political heritage. Another was the hands-on political experience they had acquired during the colonial era. Their political knowledge and experience enabled them to establish a constitution that could meet not only the needs of their own time but also the needs of generations to come.

The American colonies had been settled by individuals from many nations, including France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden. The majority of the colonists, though, came from England and Scotland. The British colonies in North America were established by private individuals and private trading companies and were under the rule of the British Crown. The colonies, which were located along the Atlantic seaboard of today's United States, eventually numbered thirteen. (Note that at that time, some of the colonies had enslaved people who were part of the population that built the nation.)

Mayflower Compact
A document drawn up by Pilgrim leaders in 1620 on the ship *Mayflower*. The document set up a provisional government.

Although American politics owes much to the English political tradition, the colonists derived most of their understanding of social compacts, the rights of the people, limited government, and representative government from their own experiences. Years before Parliament adopted the English Bill of Rights or John Locke wrote his *Two Treatises of Government*, the American colonists were already putting the ideas expressed in those documents into practice.

The First English Settlements

The first permanent English settlement in North America was Jamestown, in what is now Virginia.[1] Jamestown was established in 1607 as a trading post of the Virginia Company of London.[2]

Plymouth Colony The first New England colony was founded by the Plymouth Company in 1620 at Plymouth in what is today Massachusetts. Most of the settlers at Plymouth were Pilgrims, a group of English Protestants who came to the New World on the ship *Mayflower*. Even before the Pilgrims went ashore, they drew up the **Mayflower Compact**, in which they set up a government and promised to obey its laws.

The reason for the compact was that the group was outside the territory assigned to the Virginia Company, which had arranged for them to settle in what is now New York, not Massachusetts. Fearing that some of the passengers might decide that they were no longer subject to any rules of civil order, the leaders on board the *Mayflower* agreed that some form of governmental authority was necessary.

The Mayflower Compact was essentially a social contract. It has historical significance because it was the first of a series of similar contracts among the colonists to establish fundamental rules of government.[3] The Compact reflected the fact that Plymouth was essentially a religious colony, and early colonial attitudes toward religion were different from those of the revolutionary era. We address that point in this chapter's *Join the Debate* feature.

More Colonies, More Constitutions The Massachusetts Bay Colony was established as another trading outpost in New England in 1628. In 1636, following disputes in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, settlers from Massachusetts organized the Connecticut Colony at Hartford. In 1639, they adopted America's first written constitution, which was called

Join the Debate

Was the United States Meant to Be a Christian Nation?

The Pilgrims established a religious colony when they landed in New England. In early Virginia, failure to attend Church of England services was a serious crime. By the time the Constitution was written, several states still had established (state-supported) churches. Christian beliefs were strong among the population in that era. Most Americans considered themselves to be part of a Christian—indeed, a Protestant—people. (Anti-Catholicism was widespread.)

Yet the Declaration of Independence never refers to Christ. The Constitution does not contain the word *God*. It refers to religion twice. Article VI states, "… no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." The world-famous First Amendment begins, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof …."

Considering these facts, was the United States meant to be a Christian nation—or not? The answer to that question depends in part on what we mean by "Christian nation."

Yes, America Is a Christian Nation

By *nation*, do we mean a country's government or its people? If we say "people," it is hard to deny that the United States has been a Christian nation. According to the Pew Research Center, 70.6 percent of Americans today consider themselves to be Christian. Some conservatives, however, have argued that "Christian nation" should mean more than that. Most of the founders, even those whose private commitment to Christianity was questionable, agreed that religion was essential to a just and harmonious society. The founders would have been astonished to learn that public school teachers today may not lead their students in prayer.

According to Christian conservatives, constitutional principles are inseparable from Christianity, and the First Amendment means only that the government must not pick and choose among Christian churches. Limits on "anti-Western" religions, such as bans on Islamic mosques, are appropriate.

The "Christian Nation" Idea Would Violate Our Rights

It is hard to imagine how the founders could have sought to establish a Christian nation when many of them were not Christians at all, in the modern sense. George Washington never took communion or referred to Christ. John Adams was a Unitarian—that is, he did not believe that Jesus was divine. Thomas Jefferson thought likewise. It is impossible to say what James Madison and James Monroe believed, because they avoided issues of doctrine even in their private correspondence. Not until Andrew Jackson (1829–37) did we have a president who openly endorsed Christianity in the way we now expect of political candidates.

Opponents of the "Christian nation" concept argue that the First Amendment should be interpreted strictly. It is essential to tolerate the adherents of all religions—including Muslims and, for that matter, atheists. This is an issue about which the founders were quite explicit.

Critical Analysis

Christian conservatives argue that discrimination against Christians is widespread in modern America. Is anti-Christian discrimination a problem? Why or why not?

the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut. This document called for the laws to be made by an assembly of elected representatives from each town. The document also provided for the popular election of a governor and judges.

Other colonies, in turn, established fundamental governing rules. The Massachusetts Body of Liberties of 1641 protected individual rights. The Pennsylvania Frame of Government, passed in 1682, and the Pennsylvania Charter of Privileges of 1701