CHRISTINE BARBOUR
GERALD C. WRIGHT

keeping the republic

POWER AND CITIZENSHIP IN AMERICAN POLITICS

tenth edition

keeping the republic

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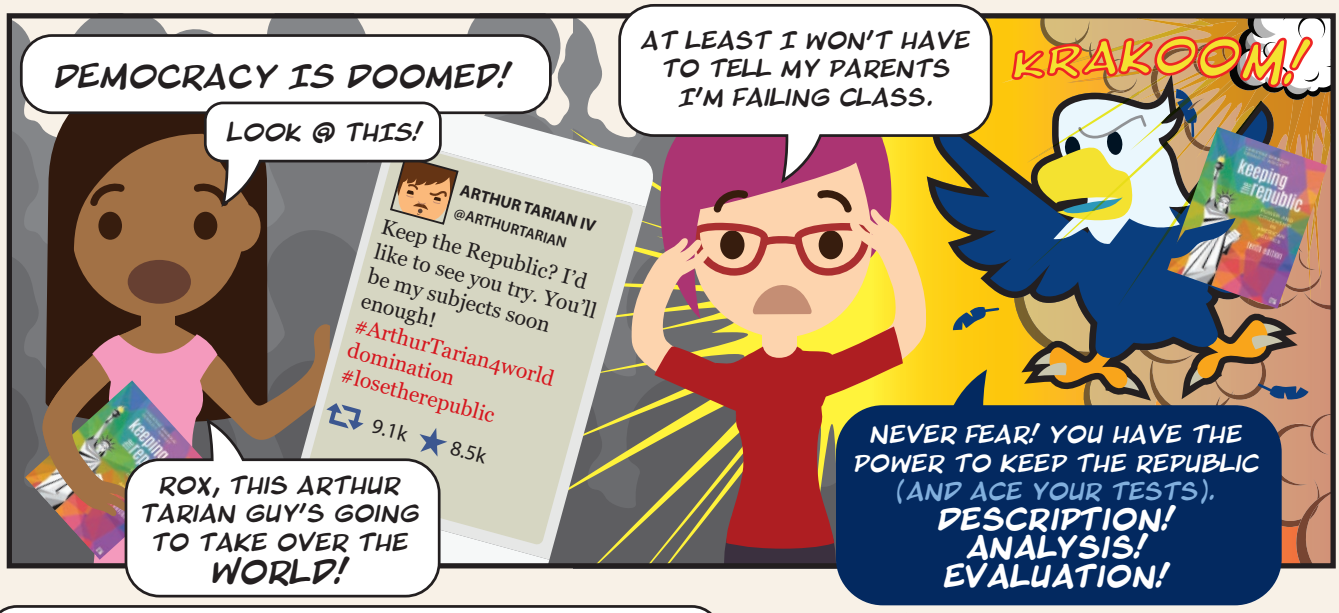
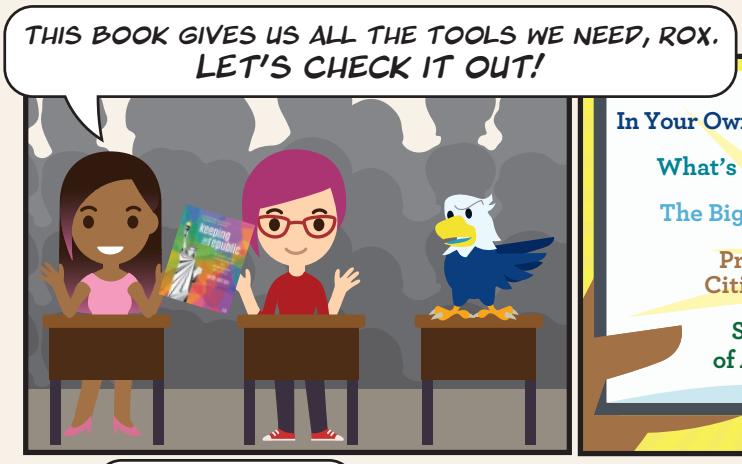
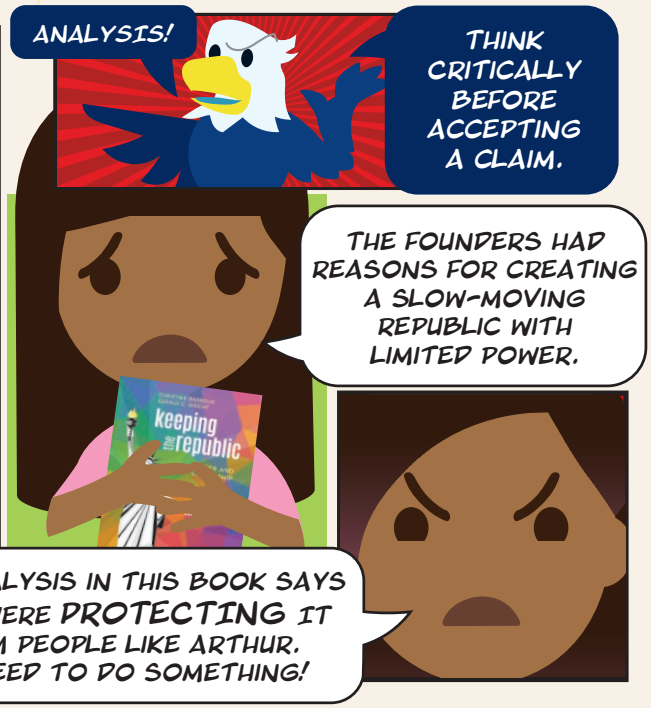
THE BIG PICTURE:
Goals and Themes of the Book








I'VE JUST POSTED ABOUT IT! CONSIDER THE SOURCE, ASK QUESTIONS - SPEAK UP!
CRAP, NOT AGAIN!
ARTHUR TARIAN IV
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My critics R lackeys of status quo. They'll live under my boot heel soon. Nothing stops my rise 2 power! #ArthurTarian4worlddomination #losetherepublic
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EVALUATION!
...IS THE FINAL KEY TO KEEPING THE REPUBLIC!
keeping the republic
WE'VE GOT THIS, ROX. WE'VE JUST GOT TO KEEP OUR SKILLS UP.
DESCRIPTION!
ANALYSIS!
EVALUATION!
BUMP!
THE POWER IS YOURS!
YAY!!!
KEEP THE REPUBLIC
DESCRIPTION
ANALYSIS
POWER!
EVALUATION
GET A CLUE

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keeping the republic

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CHRISTINE BARBOUR
Indiana University

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CHRISTINE BARBOUR

Christine Barbour teaches in the Political Science Department and the Hutton Honors College at Indiana University, where she has become increasingly interested in how teachers of large classes can maximize what their students learn. She is working with online course designers to create an online version of her Intro to American Politics class. At Indiana, Professor Barbour has been a Lilly Fellow, working on a project to increase student retention in large introductory courses, and a member of the Freshman Learning Project, a university-wide effort to improve the first-year undergraduate experience. She has served on the *New York Times* College Advisory Board, working with other educators to develop ways to integrate newspaper reading into the undergraduate curriculum. She has won several teaching honors, but the two awarded by her students mean the most to her: the Indiana University Student Alumni Association Award for Outstanding Faculty and the Indiana University Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists Brown Derby Award. When not teaching or writing textbooks, Professor Barbour enjoys playing with her dogs, traveling with her coauthor, and writing about food. She is the food editor for *Bloom Magazine* of Bloomington and is a coauthor of *Indiana Cooks!* (2005) and *Home Grown Indiana* (2008). She also makes jewelry from precious metals and rough gemstones. If she ever retires, she will open a jewelry shop in a renovated Airstream on the beach in Apalachicola, Florida, where she plans to write another cookbook and a book about the local politics, development, and fishing industry.

GERALD C. WRIGHT

Gerald C. Wright has taught political science at Indiana University since 1981, and he is currently the chair of the Political Science Department. An accomplished scholar of American politics, and the 2010 winner of the State Politics and Policy Association's Career Achievement Award, his books include *Statehouse Democracy: Public Opinion and Policy in the American States* (1993), coauthored with Robert S. Erikson and John P. McIver. He has published more than fifty articles on elections, public opinion, and state politics. Professor Wright has long studied the relationship among citizens, their preferences, and public policy.

He is currently conducting research funded by grants from the National Science Foundation and the Russell Sage Foundation on the factors that influence the equality of policy representation in the states and in Congress. He is also writing a book about representation in U.S. legislatures. He has been a consultant for Project Vote Smart in the past several elections. Professor Wright is a member of Indiana University's Freshman Learning Project, a university-wide effort to improve the first-year undergraduate experience by focusing on how today's college students learn and how teachers can adapt their pedagogical methods to best teach them. In his nonworking hours, Professor Wright also likes to spend time with his dogs, travel, eat good food, fish, and play golf.

BRIEF CONTENTS

DETAILED CONTENTS

PREFACE

WHEN one of us was a freshman journalism major in college, more years ago now than she cares to remember, she took an introduction to American politics course—mostly because the other courses she wanted were already full. But the class was a revelation. The teacher was terrific, the textbook provocative, and the final paper assignment an eye opener. "As Benjamin Franklin was leaving Independence Hall," the assignment read, "he was stopped by a woman who asked, 'What have you created?' Franklin replied, 'A Republic, Madam, if you can keep it'." Have we succeeded in keeping our republic? Had we been given a democracy in the first place? These questions sparked the imagination, the writing of an impassioned freshman essay about the limits and possibilities of American democracy, and a lifetime love affair with politics. If we have one goal in writing this textbook, it is to share the excitement of discovering humankind's capacity to find innovative solutions to those problems that arise from our efforts to live together on a planet too small, with resources too scarce, and with saintliness in too short a supply. In this book we honor the human capacity to manage our collective lives with peace and even, at times, dignity. And, in particular, we celebrate the American political system and the founders' extraordinary contribution to the possibilities of human governance.

WHERE WE ARE GOING

Between the two of us, we have been teaching American politics for way more than half a century. We have used a lot of textbooks in that time. Some of them have been too difficult for introductory students (although we have enjoyed them as political scientists!), and others have tried excessively to accommodate the beginning student and have ended up being too light in their coverage of basic information. We wanted our students to have the best and most complete treatment of the American political system we could find, presented in a way that would catch their imagination, be easy to understand, and engage them in the system about which they were learning.

This book is the result of that desire. It covers essential topics with clear explanations, but it is also a thematic book, intended to guide students through a wealth of material and to help them make sense of the content both academically and personally. To that end we develop two themes that run throughout every chapter: an analytic theme to assist students in organizing the details and connecting them to the larger ideas and concepts of American politics and an evaluative theme to help them find personal meaning in the American political system and develop standards for making judgments about how well the system works. Taken together, these themes provide students a framework on which to hang the myriad complexities of American politics.

The analytic theme we chose is a classic in political science: politics is a struggle over limited power and resources, as gripping as a sporting event in its final minutes, but much more vital. The rules guiding that struggle influence who will win and who will lose, so that often the struggles with the most at stake are over the rule making itself. In short, and in the words of a famous political scientist, *politics is about who gets what, and how they get it*. To illustrate this theme, we begin and end every chapter with a feature called ***What's at Stake . . . ?***—an in-depth look at a specific political situation or controversy that poses a question about what people want from politics, what they are struggling to get, and how the rules affect who gets it. Inside the chapters, at the end of every major chapter section, we ***Pause and Review*** to revisit Harold Laswell's definition in context and ask ***Who, What, How***. This periodic analytic summary helps solidify the conceptual work of the book and gives students a sturdy framework within which to organize the facts and other empirical information we want them to learn. For the evaluative theme, we focus on the "who" in the formulation of "who gets what, and how." Who are the country's citizens? What are the ways they engage in political life? To "keep" a republic, citizens must shoulder responsibilities as well as exercise their rights. We challenge students to view democratic participation among the diverse population as the price of maintaining liberty.

Working in concert with the Who, What, How summaries are the ***In Your Own Words*** goals listed at the beginning of the chapter to help students organize the material they are going to read. Who, What, How summaries provide the opportunity for students to pause and review each goal and gauge how well they're understanding and retaining the information.

Our citizenship theme has three dimensions. First, ***Profiles in Citizenship*** boxes in selected chapters introduce students to important figures in American politics, exploring why each one is involved in public service or some aspect of their political life. We believe unabashedly that a primary goal of teaching introductory politics is not only to create good scholars but also to create good citizens. These profiles—based on our own interviews—model republic-keeping behavior for students, helping them see what is expected of them as members of a democratic polity. A second dimension of citizenship is offered at the end of most chapters: ***The Citizens and . . .*** provides a critical view of what citizens can

or cannot do in American politics, evaluating how democratic various aspects of the American system actually are and what possibilities exist for change. Third, we premise this book on the belief that the skills that make good students and good academics are the same skills that make good citizens: the ability to think critically about and process new information and the ability to be actively engaged in one's subject. Accordingly, in our ***CLUES to Critical Thinking*** feature, we help students understand what critical thinking looks like by modeling it for them, and guiding them through the necessary steps as they examine current and classic readings about American politics. Similarly, the ***Don't Be Fooled by . . .*** feature assists students to critically examine the various kinds of political information they are bombarded with—from information in textbooks like this one, to information from social networks, to information from their congressional representative or political party. Occasional questions scattered throughout the chapters prompt students to take a step back and engage in some big-picture thinking about what they are learning.

The book's themes are further illustrated through two unique features that will enhance students' visual literacy and critical thinking skills. Each chapter includes a vivid, poster-worthy display called ***The Big Picture*** that focuses on a key element of the chapter, complementing the text with a visual that grabs students' attention and engages them in understanding *big processes* like how cases get to the Supreme Court, *big concepts* such as when the law can treat people differently, and *big data*, including who has immigrated to the United States and how they have assimilated. In addition, ***Snapshot of America*** describes through graphs, charts, and maps just who we Americans are and where we come from, what we believe, how educated we are, and how much money we make. This recurring feature aims at exploding stereotypes, and ***Behind the Numbers*** questions lead students to think critically about the political consequences of America's demographic profile. These two visual features are the result of a partnership with award-winning designer, educator, and artist Mike Wirth, who has lent his expert hand in information design and data visualization to craft these unique, informative, and memorable graphics.

Marginal definitions of the key terms as they occur and chapter review material—key terms and summaries—help to support the book's major themes and to reinforce the major concepts and details of American politics.

HOW WE GET THERE

In many ways this book follows the path of most American politics texts: there are chapters on all the subjects that instructors scramble to cover in a short amount of time. But in keeping with our goal of making the enormous amount of material here more accessible to our students, we have made some changes to the typical format. After our introductory chapter, we have included a chapter not found in every book: "American Citizens and Political Culture." Given our emphasis on citizens, this chapter is key. It covers the history and legal status of citizens and immigrants in America and the ideas and beliefs that unite us as Americans as well as the ideas that divide us politically.

Another chapter that breaks with tradition is Chapter 4, "Federalism and the U.S. Constitution," which provides an analytic and comparative study of the basic rules governing this country—highlighted up front because of our emphasis on the *how* of American politics. This chapter covers the essential elements of the Constitution: federalism, the three branches, separation of powers and checks and balances, and amendability. In each case we examine the rules the founders provided, look at the alternatives they might have chosen, and ask what difference the rules make to who wins and who loses in America. This chapter is explicitly comparative. For each rule change considered, we look at a country that does things differently. We drive home early the idea that understanding the rules is crucial to understanding how and to whose advantage the system works. Throughout the text we look carefully at alternatives to our system of government as manifested in other countries—and among the fifty states.

Because of the prominence we give to rules—and to institutions—this book covers Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the courts before looking at public opinion, parties, interest groups, voting, and the media—the inputs or processes of politics that are shaped by those rules. While this approach may seem counterintuitive to instructors who have logged many miles teaching it the other way around, we have found that it is not counterintuitive to students, who have an easier time grasping the notion that the rules make a difference when they are presented with those rules in the first half of the course. We have, however, taken care to write the chapters so that they will fit into any organizational framework.

We have long believed that teaching is a two-way street, and we welcome comments, criticisms, or just a pleasant chat about politics or pedagogy. You can email us directly at barbour@indiana.edu and wright1@indiana.edu.

WHAT'S NEW IN THE TENTH EDITION

These are strange days in American politics. We have tried to deal with that strangeness bluntly, objectively, and clearly. We are in a "moment." Whether that moment becomes the "new normal" or remains a historical blip, we have no way of knowing. Writing about it in real time, we take it as it comes. We are political scientists, not magicians, and thus we have a hard bias toward the scientific, the empirical, the observable. Distinguishing between truth and falsity is central to what we do. As always, in this edition we rely on and have integrated the most recent research, government statistics, and public opinion data to help us keep the narrative grounded in facts. We can make projections and predictions, but our crystal ball has been particularly hazy lately, and we make no pretense of knowing the future.

The 2016 election only exacerbated divisions that have been building for decades, the product of economic displacement, demographic change, and a widening gap between those with college educations and those without. Some days it really does feel like there are two Americas, and the challenge of writing a textbook for both of them has been heavy at times. We have worked hard to explain the nature of our ideological divisions as objectively as possible, and I suspect we have ruffled a few feathers, including our own. That's as it should be. No one likes to be described as a statistic or a faceless member of a demographic group or have opinions ascribed to them that they may not even knowingly hold, or may actively reject. It's a good thing if this book inspires debate, disagreement, and discovery.

Ideological polarization is not the only characteristic of American politics that has been a challenge to deal with in this edition. We have had a president who likes the limelight and, love him or hate him (it's hard to be indifferent), he delights in shattering the norms that underlie the rules of American politics. Indeed, that is his appeal to many Americans who would like to see the system turned upside down. That means we have had to be more careful about focusing on those norms and explaining the roles they play in supporting the Constitution, so that we can fully understand the consequences as we decide whether they matter.

As we say later in this book, if we have a bias, it is unquestionably toward diversity, toward the whole crazy salad of Americans. We can't write effectively for our students unless they can see themselves mirrored in the pages. This book has to belong to them, and so we have deplored the movement to return to an America where women, people of color, immigrants, members of the LGBTQ community, and other minority groups are marginalized. In the last four years, some Americans have felt freer to voice disparaging or degrading remarks about members of all those groups. We reject that view.

Writing the tenth edition also gave us an opportunity to revitalize the book's theme to reflect the influences of modern technology on power and citizenship, in particular the ways that citizenship is mediated by third parties. To do that, we looked at the ways that controlling the political narrative has translated into political power and how that power has shifted with the advent of new and social media. This coverage is integrated throughout each chapter and is especially notable in ***The Citizens and . . .*** sections and the ***Don't Be Fooled by . . .*** boxes' focus on digital media.

Students entering college today will have lived through one of most challenging periods of American life, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the extreme polarization of politics. New ***What's at Stake . . . ?*** vignettes and related content examine such topics as the activism of the Black Lives Matter movement, the continued rise of the alt right and the Make America Great Again movement, the impact of political outsiders on the nomination process and parties, what happens when the federal government lacks the will or the ability to address national problems like the pandemic, and the unusual presidency of Donald Trump.

Reviews for this edition helped guide some key changes that we hope will make the text even more useful to you and your students. We have sought to streamline both the main narrative and its features to provide a more focused reading experience.

DIGITAL RESOURCES

This text includes an array of instructor teaching materials designed to save you time and to help you keep students engaged. To learn more, visit sagepub.com or contact your SAGE representative at **sagepub.com/findmyrep**.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Africans say that it takes a village to raise a child—it is certainly true that it takes one to write a textbook! We could not have done it without a community of family, friends, colleagues, students, reviewers, and editors who supported us, nagged us, maddened us, and kept us on our toes. Not only is this a better book because of their help and support, but it would not have been a book at all without them.

On the home front, we thank our families and our friends. We are forever grateful for the unconditional love and support, not to mention occasional intellectual revelation (Hobbes was wrong: it is not a dog-eat-dog world after all!), offered up gladly by Ollie, Gracie, Giuseppe, Bay Cat and Mags. (Though we lost Max, Clio, Daphne, Gina, Zoë, Ginger, Bandon, Maggie, and Spook along the way, they were among our earliest and strongest supporters and we miss them still.)

Colleagues now or once in the Political Science Department at Indiana University have given us invaluable help on details beyond our ken: Yvette Alex Assensoh, Bill Bianco, Jack Bielasiak, Doris Burton, Ted Carmines, Dana Chabot, Mike Ensley, Chuck Epp, Judy Failer, Russ Hanson, Margie Hershey, Bobbi Herzberg, Virginia Hettinger, Fenton Martin, Burt Monroe, Rich Pacelle, Karen Rasler, Leroy Rieselbach, Jean Robinson, Steve Sanders, Pat Sellers, and the late Lin Ostrom and John Williams. IU colleagues from other schools and departments have been terrific: Trevor Brown, Dave Weaver, and Cleve Wilhoit from the Journalism School; Bill McGregor and Roger Parks from the School of Public and Environmental Affairs; John Patrick from the School of Education; and Julia Lamber and Pat Baude from the Law School have all helped out on substantive matters. Many IU folks have made an immeasurable contribution by raising to new levels our consciousness about teaching: Joan Middendorf and David Pace, as well as all the Freshman Learning Project people. James Russell and Bob Goelhert, and all the librarians in the Government Publications section of our library, have done yeoman service for us. We are also grateful to colleagues from other institutions: Joe Aistrup, Shaun Bowler, Bob Brown, Tom Carsey, Kisuk Cho, E. J. Dionne, Todd Donovan, Diana Dwyre, Bob Erikson, David Hobbs, Kathleen Knight,

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Thanks also to Mike Stull, for taking us seriously in the first place; and to Jean Woy, for the vision that helped shape the book. Part of the original team, Ann West in particular was a friend, a support, and a fabulous editor in the creation of this book. Ann Kirby-Payne is another development editor who loved the book as her own and made it better over the course of multiple editions. Thank heavens for our two Anns.

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Finally, it is our great privilege to acknowledge and thank all the people at CQ Press who believed in this book and made this edition possible. In this day and age of huge publishing conglomerates, it has been such a pleasure to work with a small, committed team dedicated to top-quality work. Brenda Carter, now at the American Psychological Association, more than anyone, saw the potential of this book and made it what it is today. Michele Sordi has been a great source of advice, inspiration, and good food. Charisse Kiino earned our instant gratitude for so thoroughly and immediately "getting" what this book is about. She has worked tirelessly with us and we have relied heavily on her good sense, her wisdom, her patience, and her friendship. We can't do without her. For putting this beautiful book together and drawing your attention to it, we thank the folks on the editorial, design, marketing, and production teams: Anna Villarruel, Gail Buschman, Sam Rosenberg, Lauren Younker, Erica DeLuca, Jennifer Jones, Eric Garner, and especially Tracy Buyan for her good production management, and to Amy Marks, for her always gentle and miraculous copyediting. Thanks to Linda Trygar and her team of field reps across the country who sometimes

seem to know the book better than we do ourselves. We appreciate their enthusiasm and commitment.

Very special mention goes to three people on this edition. The marvelous Scott Greenan inherited this project from the equally marvelous Monica Eckman and has not missed a beat. His good sense and killer instincts have gotten us over some rocky terrain and we value his steadfast (but very witty!) leadership and guidance. (Also his balloon art and sense of humor!) Anna Villarruel has come back for round two! She has been patient and supportive under almost impossible conditions. We are very grateful.

And finally, great thanks to the publishing gods who saw fit to bring us back together on this tenth edition with the development editor who worked with us on the very first. For more than twenty years Ann West has been at the very top of the list of people to whom *KTR* is most deeply indebted. She was with us in the critical early years—shaping the book, holding our hands, and otherwise teaching neophyte authors how to write a textbook. By the grace of good luck (and those publishing gods), she was available to join us again on this edition, when more handholding than ever was required. She has managed to get us over the finish line in fine shape once again. We will love her forever!

Christine Barbour
Gerald C. Wright

TO THE STUDENT

SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO READ THIS TEXTBOOK

1. If you open the book for the first time the night before the exam, you will not learn much from it and it won't help your grade. Start reading the chapters in conjunction with the lectures, and you'll get so much more out of class. Do it **early and often**.
2. Pay attention to the **chapter headings** and **In Your Own Words** goals. They tell you what we think is important, what our basic argument is, and how all the material fits together. Often, chapter subheadings list elements of an argument that may show up on a quiz. Be alert to these clues.
3. **Read actively**. Constantly ask yourself: Why is this important? How do these different facts fit together? What are the broad arguments here? How does this material relate to class lectures? How does it relate to the broad themes of the class? When you stop asking these questions, you are merely moving your eyes over the page, and that is a waste of time.
4. **Highlight or take notes**. Some people prefer highlighting because it's quicker than taking notes, but others think that writing down the most important points helps in recalling them later. Whichever method you choose (and you can do both), be sure you're doing it properly.
   - **Highlighting.** An entirely highlighted page will not give you any clues about what is important. Read each paragraph and ask yourself: What is the basic idea of this paragraph? Highlight that. Avoid highlighting all the examples and illustrations. You should be able to recall them on your own when you see the main idea. Beware of highlighting too little. If whole pages go by with no marking, you are probably not highlighting enough.
   - **Outlining.** Again, the key is to write down enough, but not too much. Go for key ideas, terms, and arguments.
5. **Note all key terms**, and be sure you understand the definition and significance.
6. Do not skip **tables and figures**. These things are there for a purpose, because they convey crucial information or illustrate a point in the text. After you read a chart or graph or ***Big Picture*** infographic, make a note in the margin about what it means.
7. **Do not skip the boxes**. They are not filler! The ***Don't Be Fooled by . . .*** boxes provide advice on becoming a critical consumer of the many varieties of political information that come your way. The ***Profiles in Citizenship*** boxes highlight the achievements and advice of some well-known political actors. They model citizen participation and can serve as a beacon for your own political power long after you've completed your American government course. The ***Snapshot of America*** boxes help you understand who Americans are and how they line up on all sorts of dimensions.

Spencer Platt/Getty Images

1

POLITICS: WHO GETS WHAT, AND HOW?

In Your Own Words

After you've read this chapter, you will be able to

1.1 Identify the broad concepts that relate to politics.

1.2 Describe the role that politics plays in determining how power and resources, including control of information, are distributed in a society.

1.3 Compare how power is distributed between citizens and government in different economic and political systems.

1.4 Explain the historical origins of American democracy and the ways that the available media controlled the political narrative.

1.5 Describe the enduring tension in the United States between self-interested human nature and public-spirited government and the way that has been shaped in a mediated world.

1.6 Apply the five steps of critical thinking to this book's themes of power and citizenship in American politics.

What's at Stake . . . in "Hashtag Activism"?

THE LAST THING THEY WANTED to do was become famous. Not this way, not now. But when seventeen of their classmates and teachers were murdered on February 14, 2018, by a disturbed former student, the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, decided to make some noise.

They had seen this movie before. There had been mass shootings. Ever since they were little they had practiced what to do if someone showed up with a gun in their classrooms. There was even an armed guard on their campus. And still, it happened again. So they knew the ritual that would follow.

Every time the United States experiences a mass shooting, a grimly familiar routine follows. First there is unrelenting press coverage—of the dead, of the bereaved, of the shooter. Then those who lost loved ones make impassioned calls for more gun control, and those who oppose gun control make equally

impassioned declarations that we should not politicize tragedy, that it is too soon to talk about it. There are funerals. The president (usually) makes a speech. Then the press moves on to the next big news item and only the grieving are left to testify before Congress, create foundations in the names of their loved ones, and implore people not to forget. Lather, rinse, repeat.

But the MSD students knew the drill and were media savvy enough to figure out how to hack it. They were ready. Some, in the drama club, comfortable on stage; some, school journalists, eloquent and at ease with words; others, bright, articulate, privileged to attend a school with an embarrassment of extracurricular activities that had prepared them for their futures. Smart enough to know that their moment in the spotlight would be brief, they were determined to make it count.

The shooting was on a Wednesday. Cameron Kasky was so angry he took to Facebook, first to announce that he and his brother were safe and then to vent. "I just want people to understand what happened and understand that doing nothing will lead to nothing. Why is that so hard to grasp?" His social media posts caught the eye of CNN, which asked him to write an op-ed piece on Thursday, which led to television appearances. It became apparent to Kasky that his words were helping to shape the story of what had happened and what it meant. "People are listening and people care," Kasky wrote. "They're reporting the right things."[1]

To capitalize on that fickle national attention before it turned away, Kasky and several of his friends met that night to plan a social media campaign. By midnight they had a hashtag, #NeverAgain, social media accounts, and a message for politicians: legislate better background checks on gun buyers, or we will vote you out.

Meanwhile, MSD student Jaclyn Corin took to her own social media accounts to express her grief and anger at the loss of her friends. She, a girl who had never been political, also began to strategize. With the help of Florida Democratic congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, she planned a bus trip for one hundred students to Tallahassee to lobby state lawmakers.

By Friday, Corin and Kasky had joined forces, and on Saturday they added David Hogg, a student journalist who had conducted interviews while they were under fire, Sarah Chadwick, already famous for her angry, grief-filled tweets, and Emma González, whose speech at a local rally went viral. On Sunday they hit the morning talk shows to proclaim that the Never Again movement was planning the first March for Our Lives in Washington, D.C., on March 24.

Two weeks later (forever in the typical media cycle), the kids were still making news. Boycotts were organized to put pressure on companies doing business with the National Rifle Association (NRA), which has repeatedly blocked background checks. A National School Walkout was planned for the one-month anniversary of the shooting. Thousands of students across the nation participated. Famous people donated large sums to help fund the March 24 March for Our Lives. As Dahlia Lithwick wrote in *Slate*, "These teens have—by most objective measures—used social media to change the conversation around guns and gun control in America."[2]

The March for Our Lives, when it happened, defied expectations. Huge crowds assembled not just in Washington but in eight hundred places around the world. The only adults who appeared on the D.C. stage were entertainers. The Parkland kids, knowing they had created a unique platform, had invited other kids whose lives had been touched by gun violence. Yolanda King, the nine-year-old granddaughter of Martin Luther King, confidently stood before tens of thousands to lead the crowd in a call and response:

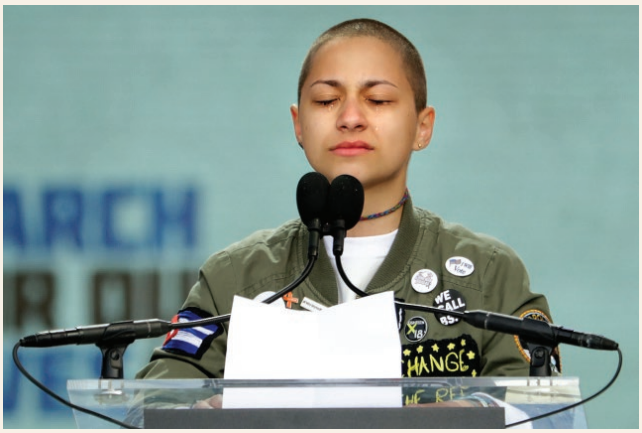
Spread the word.
Have you heard?
All across the nation.
We
Are going to be
A great generation.

The event highlight was not words, eloquent as many of them were, but silence—four minutes and twenty-six seconds of uneasy, suspenseful silence as Emma González stood like a sculpture, tears tracking down her face, so that the crowd would experience the duration of the shooting that ended seventeen of her friends' and teachers' lives.

Just like the 2017 and 2018 Women's Marches, which brought out millions of pink-hatted women marching for human rights around the world; like Black Lives Matter, founded in 2013 to protest the unwarranted deaths of black men at the hands of police; like Occupy Wall Street, a 2011 movement to protest the unequal distribution of wealth in the United States; and like the It Gets Better Project, which works to convince LGBTQ youths that life does get better after the high school years, #NeverAgain was fueled and spread by social media.

Many older people know their way around the Internet, but #NeverAgain was the first mass movement planned and executed by digital natives, people who have never *not* known the world of digital media, for whom navigating digital terrain is second nature. It's not clear what the generation will be called by history. Gen Z is so far the term of preference. Generational divides are blurry, and few social scientists agree where the dividing lines fall. But the post-millennial generation—those born since the mid-1990s or thereabouts—has an amazing political skill set to use if, like the Parkland students, they choose to do so. They have the ability, as Lithwick said, to "change the conversation," or to create a powerful political narrative that they can disseminate and that helps level the playing field with powerful opponents like the NRA.

No movement can create change or defeat an opponent if it is only hashtag activism. Eventually, you have to put your vote where your # is. What is especially remarkable about the Never Again movement is that it emphasizes not just marching but voting. March for Our Life rallies throughout the summer of



Marching for Their Lives

At the March for Our Lives in Washington, D.C., student Emma González riveted the nation with her powerful speech. After two minutes of introductory remarks, González stood silent, with tears rolling down her face, for four and a half minutes, to mark the roughly six minutes and twenty seconds it took for the gunman to do so much damage. Despite the churn of the news cycle, she and her classmates held the nation's attention for weeks, working to change the narrative on gun control.

Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

2018 gave movement leaders the chance to hone the narrative, register people to vote, and activate other students. Youth participation in the 2018 midterms soared.[3] And young people turned out in force for the 2020 general election, voting overwhelmingly for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. Some writers are calling for the vote to be extended to those who are sixteen years old. Political scientist Jonathan Bernstein says that is a good idea because voting is "the training wheels of political participation."[4] By the time they are eighteen, kids are distracted by the drama of their lives and they tend not to want to be bothered.

In fact, since the military draft ended in 1973, young people have been notoriously uninvolved in politics, often seeing it as irrelevant to their lives and the things they really care about. Knowing that young people pay little attention and tend not to vote in large numbers, politicians feel free to ignore their concerns, reinforcing their cynicism and apathy. Young people have turned out in larger numbers since the 2008 election of Barack Obama, however, and the Never Again movement promises to energize even more.

The American founders weren't crazy about the idea of mass movements, political demonstrations, or even political parties, but they did value political engagement and they knew that democracies needed care and attention in order to survive. In 1787, when Benjamin Franklin was asked by a woman what he and other founders of the Constitution had created, he replied, "A republic, madam, if you can keep it." Today, many commentators worry that we are not "keeping the republic" and that, as new generations who find politics a turn-off become disaffected adults, the system will start to unravel. As one writer says, "a nation that hates politics will not long thrive as a democracy."[5]

Yet protesters like Cameron Kasky, Emma González, David Hogg, and Yolanda King sound as committed to democracy as Benjamin Franklin could have wished, even though their efforts are not focused solely on voting or traditional methods of political engagement. Is a nation of these young activists a nation in trouble, or can movements begun via technology that Franklin could not have imagined help to keep the republic? What, exactly, is at stake in *hashtag activism*—what one writer called a "netroots outcry" to follow an online call to political action? We return to this question after we learn more about the meaning of politics and the difference it makes in our lives. «

INTRODUCTION

HAVE you got grand ambitions for your life? Do you want to found an Internet start-up and sell it for millions, be the investment banker that funds the project, achieve a powerful position in business, gain influence in high places, and spend money to make things happen? Perhaps you would like to make a difference in the world, heal the sick, fight for peace, feed the poor. Maybe you want a "normal" life when you can travel the world, learning languages and immersing yourself in new cultures and working abroad. Or maybe what you want from life is a good education; a well-paying job; a healthy family; a comfortable home; and a safe, prosperous, contented existence. Think politics has nothing to do with any of those things? Think again.

All the things that make those goals attainable—a strong national defense, good relations with other countries, student loans, economic prosperity, favorable mortgage rates, secure streets and neighborhoods, cheap and efficient public transportation, affordable health care, and family leave protections—are influenced by or are the products of politics.

Yet, if you pay attention to the news, politics may seem like one long and crazy reality show: eternal bickering and finger-pointing by public servants who seem more interested in gaining power over their ideological opponents than actually solving our collective problems. Even in the midst of a crisis as big as the COVID-19 pandemic, politicians fought to prioritize their own interests in legislation meant to save the public from the worst effects of the disease and ultimately failed to protect the American people in a timely way. Increasingly, it appears that political actors with the big bucks have more influence over the process than those of us with normal-sized bank accounts. Public service, which we would like to think of as a noble activity, can take on all the worst characteristics of the business world, where we expect people to be greedy and self-interested. Can this America really be

the heritage of Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln? Can this be the "world's greatest democracy" at work?

In this chapter, we get to the heart of what politics is, how it relates to other concepts such as power, government, rules, norms, economics, and citizenship, and how all of these things are mediated by the ever-present channels of information that define the way we live in the digital age. We propose that politics can best be understood as the struggle over who gets power and resources in society, and that a major resource is control of the narrative, or story, that defines each contestant. There is not enough of all that power and influence to go around, so inevitably politics produces winners and losers. Much of the reason it can look so ugly is that people fight desperately to be the former and to create and perpetuate narratives that celebrate their wins and put the best face possible on their losses. It can get pretty confusing for the average observer.

As we will see, it is the beauty of a democracy that *all* the people, including everyday people like us, get to fight for what they want. Not everyone can win, of course, and many never come close. There is no denying that some people bring resources to the process that give them an edge, and that the rules give advantages to some groups of people over others. But as the *What's at Stake . . . ?* shows, what makes living today so different from previous eras is that we all have some access to the multiple channels of information through which battles over political narratives take place. The people who pay attention, who learn the rules and how to use those communication channels effectively, can increase their chances of getting what they want, whether it is restrictions on ownership of assault weapons, a lower personal tax bill, greater pollution controls, a more aggressive foreign policy, safer streets, a better-educated population, or more public parks. If they become very skilled citizens, they can even begin to change the rules so that people like them have more control of the rules and narratives and a greater chance to end up winners in the high-stakes game we call politics.

The government our founders created for us gives us a remarkable playing field on which to engage in that game. Like any other politicians, the designers of the American system were caught up in the struggle to create a narrative that justified their claim to power and resources, and in the desire to write laws that would maximize the chances that they, and people like them, would be winners in the new system. Nonetheless, they crafted a government impressive for its ability to generate compromise and stability, and also for its potential to realize freedom and prosperity for its citizens.

In Your Own Words Identify the broad concepts that relate to politics.

WHAT IS POLITICS?

A peaceful means to determine who gets power and influence in society

Over two thousand years ago, the Greek philosopher Aristotle said that we are political animals, and political animals we seem destined to remain. The truth is that politics is a fundamental and complex human activity. In some ways it is our capacity to be political—to cooperate, bargain, and compromise—that helps distinguish us from all the other animals out there. Politics may have its baser moments, but it also allows us to reach more exalted heights than we could ever achieve alone, from dedicating a new public library or building a national highway system, to curing deadly diseases or exploring the stars.

Since this book is about politics, in all its glory as well as its disgrace, we need to begin with a clear understanding of the word. One of the most famous definitions, put forth by the well-known late political scientist Harold Lasswell, is still one of the best, and we use it to frame our discussion throughout this book. Lasswell defined **politics** as "who gets what when and how."[6] Politics is a way of determining, without recourse to violence, who gets power and resources in society, and how they get them. **Power** is the ability to get other people to do what you want them to do. The resources in question here might be government jobs, tax revenues, laws that help you get your way, or public policies that work to your advantage. A major political resource that helps people to gain and maintain power is the ability to control the **media**, not just the press and television but also the multiple channels created by companies like Google, Facebook, and Apple through which people get information about politics and that may actually affect the information we get. These days we live in a world of so many complex information networks that sorting out and keeping track of what is happening around us is a task in itself. Anyone who can influence the stories that are told has a big advantage.

Politics provides a process through which we can try to arrange our collective lives in some kind of **social order** so that we can live without crashing into each other at every turn, and to provide ourselves with goods and services we could not obtain alone. But politics is also about getting our own way. The way we choose may be a noble goal for society or pure self-interest, but the struggle we engage in is a political struggle. Because politics is about power and other scarce resources, there will always be winners and losers in politics. If we could always get our own way, politics would disappear. It is because we cannot always get what we want that politics exists.

Our capacity to be political gives us tools with which to settle disputes about the social order and to allocate scarce resources. The tools of politics are compromise and cooperation; discussion and debate; deal making, bargaining, storytelling; even,

politics who gets what, when, and how; a process of determining how power and resources are distributed in a society without recourse to violence

power the ability to get other people to do what you want

media the channels—including television, radio, newspapers, and the Internet—through which information is sent and received

social order the way we organize and live our collective lives

sometimes, bribery and deceit. We use those tools to agree on the principles that should guide our handling of power and other scarce resources and to live our collective lives according to those principles. Because there are many competing narratives about how to manage power—who should have it, how it should be used, how it should be transferred—agreement on those principles can break down.

The tools of politics do not include violence. When people drop bombs, blow themselves up, or fly airplanes into buildings, they have tried to impose their ideas about the social order through nonpolitical means. That may be because the channels of politics have failed, because they cannot agree on basic principles, because they don't share a common understanding of what counts as negotiation and so cannot craft compromises, because they are unwilling to compromise, or because they don't really care about deal making at all—they just want to impose their will or make a point. The threat of violence may be a political tool used as leverage to get a deal, but when violence is employed, politics has broken down. Indeed, the human history of warfare attests to the fragility of political life.

It is easy to imagine what a world without politics would be like. There would be no resolution or compromise between conflicting interests, because those are political activities. There would be no agreements struck, bargains made, or alliances formed. Unless there were enough of every valued resource to go around, or unless the world were big enough that we could live our lives without coming into contact with other human beings, life would be constant conflict—what the philosopher Thomas Hobbes called in the seventeenth century a "war of all against all." Individuals, unable to cooperate with one another (because cooperation is essentially political), would have no option but to resort to brute force to settle disputes and allocate resources. Politics is essential to our living a civilized life.

Water Under the Bridge

Political parties and their leaders frequently clash on issues and ideology—but when politics is out of the picture, the nature of the game can change. Here, President Barack Obama putts during a game of golf with Republican House Speaker John Boehner. Boehner called this "golf summit" with President Obama in June 2011, when the two had been locked up in budget negotiations.

MANDEL NGAN/AFP via Getty Images

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Although the words *politics* and *government* are sometimes used interchangeably, they refer to different things. Politics, we know, is a process or an activity through which power and resources are gained and lost. **Government**, by contrast, is a system or organization for exercising authority over a body of people.

American politics is what happens in the halls of Congress, on the campaign trail, at Washington cocktail parties, and in neighborhood association meetings. It is the making of promises, deals, and laws. American government is the Constitution and the institutions set up by the Constitution for the exercise of authority by the American people, over the American people.

government a system or organization for exercising authority over a body of people

authority power that is recognized as legitimate, or right

legitimate accepted as "right" or proper

Authority is power that citizens view as **legitimate**, or "right"—power to which we have given our implicit consent. Think of it this way: as children, we probably did as our parents told us, or submitted to their punishment if we didn't, because we recognized their authority over us. As we became adults, we started to claim that our parents had less authority over us, that we could do what we wanted. We no longer saw their power as wholly legitimate or appropriate. Governments exercise authority because people recognize them as legitimate even if they often do not like doing what they are told (paying taxes, for instance). When governments cease to be regarded as legitimate, the result may be revolution or civil war, unless the state is powerful enough to suppress all opposition.

RULES AND INSTITUTIONS

Government is shaped by the process of politics, but it in turn provides the rules and institutions that shape the way politics continues to operate. The rules and institutions of government have a profound effect on how power is distributed and who wins and who loses in the political arena. Life is different

for people in other countries not only because they speak different languages and eat different foods but also because their governments establish rules that cause life to be lived in different ways.

Rules can be thought of as the *how* in the definition "who gets what . . . and how." They are directives that determine how resources are allocated and how collective action takes place—that is, they determine how we try to get the things we want. The point of the rules is to provide some framework for us to solve without violence the problems that our collective lives generate.

Because the rules we choose can influence which people will get what they want most often, understanding the rules is crucial to understanding politics. Consider for a moment the impact a change of rules would have on the outcome of the sport of basketball, for instance. What if the average height of the players could be no more than 5'10"? What if the baskets were lowered? What if foul shots counted for two points rather than one? Basketball would be a very different game, and the teams recruited would look quite unlike the teams for which we now cheer. So it is with governments and politics: change the people who are allowed to vote or the length of time a person can serve in office, and the political process and the potential winners and losers change drastically.

Rules can be official—laws that are passed, signed, and entered into the books; amendments that are ratified; decisions made by bureaucrats; or judgments handed down by the courts. Less visible but no less important are **norms**, the tacitly understood rules about acceptable political behavior, ways of doing things, boundaries between the branches, and traditional practices that grease the wheels of politics and keep them running smoothly. Because norms are understood but not explicitly written down, we often don't even recognize them until they are broken.

Let's take an example close to home. Say it's Thanksgiving dinner time and your brother decides he wants the mashed potatoes on the other side of the table. Imagine that, instead of asking to have them passed, he climbs up on the table and walks across the top of it with his big, dirty feet, retrieves the potatoes, clomps back across the table, jumps down, takes his seat, and serves himself some potatoes. Everyone is aghast, right? What he has just done just isn't done. But when you challenge him, he says, "What, there's a rule against doing that? I got what I wanted, didn't I?" and you have to admit there isn't and he did. But the reason there is no broken rule is because nobody ever thought one would be necessary. You never imagined that someone would walk across the table because everyone knows there is a norm against doing that, and until your brother broke that norm, no one ever bothered to articulate it. And getting what you want is not generally an acceptable justification for bad behavior.

Just because norms are not written down doesn't mean they are not essential for the survival of a government or the process of politics. In some cases, they are far more essential than written laws. A family of people who routinely stomp across the table to get the food they want would not long want to share meals; eating alone would be far more comfortable.

We can think of **institutions** as the *where* of the political struggle, though Lasswell didn't include a "where" in his definition. They are the organizations where government power is exercised. In the United States, our rules provide for the institutions of a representative democracy—that is, rule by the elected representatives of the people, and for a federal political system. Our Constitution lays the foundation for the institutions of Congress, the presidency, the courts, and the bureaucracy as a stage on which the drama of politics plays itself out. Other systems might call for different institutions—perhaps an all-powerful parliament, or a monarch, or even a committee of rulers.

These complicated systems of rules and institutions do not appear out of thin air. They are carefully designed by the founders of different systems to create the kinds of society they think will be stable and prosperous, but also where people like themselves are likely to be winners. Remember that not only the rules but also the institutions we choose influence who most easily and most often get their own way.

POWER, NARRATIVES, AND MEDIA

From the start of human existence, an essential function of communication has been recording events, giving meaning to them and creating a story, or narrative, about how they fit into the past and stretch into the future. It is human nature to tell stories, to capture our experiential knowledge and beliefs and weave them together in ways that give larger meaning to our lives. Native peoples of many lands do it with their legends; the Greeks and Romans did it with their myths; Jews, Christians, Muslims, and other major religious groups do it with their holy texts; and the Brothers Grimm did it with their fairy tales. Human beings tell stories. It's what we do, and it gives us our history and a way of passing that history down to new generations.

A major part of politics is about competing to have your narrative accepted as the authoritative account. Control of political information has always been a crucial resource when it comes to making and upholding a claim that one should be able to tell other people how to live their lives, but it used to be a power reserved for a few. Creation and dissemination of **political narratives**—the stories that people believe about who has power, who wants power, who deserves power, and what someone has done to get and maintain power—were the prerogative of authoritative sources like priests, kings, and their agents.

rules directives that specify how resources will be distributed or what procedures govern collective activity

norms informal, unwritten expectations that guide behavior and support formal rule systems; often most noticeable when broken

institutions organizations in which government power is exercised

political narrative a persuasive story about the nature of power, who should have it, and how it should be used

Through much of our common history, the storytellers of those narratives were given special status. They were wise men or women, shamans, prophets, oracles, priests, and rabbis. And they were frequently in the service of chiefs, kings, emperors, and other people of enormous power. It's no accident that the storytellers frequently told narratives that bolstered the status quo and kept the power structure in place. The storytellers and the power holders had a monopoly on control for so much of human history because books were in scarce supply and few people could read in any case or had the leisure to amass facts to challenge the prevailing narratives. The **gatekeepers** of information—those who determined what news got reported and how—were very few.

Before the seventeenth-century era known as the Enlightenment, there may have been competing narratives about who had claims to power, but they were not that hard to figure out. People's allegiance to power was based on tribal loyalties, religious faith, or conquest. Governments were legitimate through the authority of God or the sword, and that was that. Because most people then were illiterate, that narrative was *mediated*, that is, passed to people through channels that could shape and influence it. Information flowed mostly through medieval clergy and monarchs, *the very people who had a vested interest in getting people to believe it.*

Even when those theories of legitimacy changed, information was still easily controlled because literacy rates were low and horses and wind determined the speed of communication until the advent of steam engines and radios. Early newspapers were read aloud, shared, and reshared, and a good deal of the news of the day was delivered from the pulpit. As we will see when we discuss the American founding, there were lively debates about whether independence was a good idea and what kind of political system should replace the colonial power structure, but by the time information reached citizens, it had been largely processed and filtered by those higher up the power ladder. Even the American rebels were elite and powerful men who could control their own narratives. Remember the importance of this when we read the story behind the Declaration of Independence in Chapter 3.

These days, we take for granted the ease with which we can communicate ideas to others all over the globe. Just a hundred years ago, radio was state of the art and television had yet to be invented. Today many of us carry access to a world of information and instant communication in our pockets.

When we talk about the channels through which information flows, and the ways that the channel itself might alter or control the narrative, we are referring to media. Just like a medium is a person through whom some people try to communicate with those who have died, media (the plural of *medium*) are channels of communication, as mentioned earlier. The integrity of the medium is critical. A scam artist might make money off the desire of grieving people to contact a lost loved one by making up the information she passes on. The monarch and clergy who channeled the narrative of the Holy Roman Empire were motivated by their wish to hold on to power. Think about water running through a pipe. Maybe the pipe is made of lead, or is rusty, or has leaks. Depending on the integrity of the pipe, the water we get will be toxic or rust-colored or limited. *In the same way, the narratives and information we get can be altered by the way they are mediated, by the channels, or the media, through which we receive them.*

Marty Bucella via Cartoonstock.com

POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

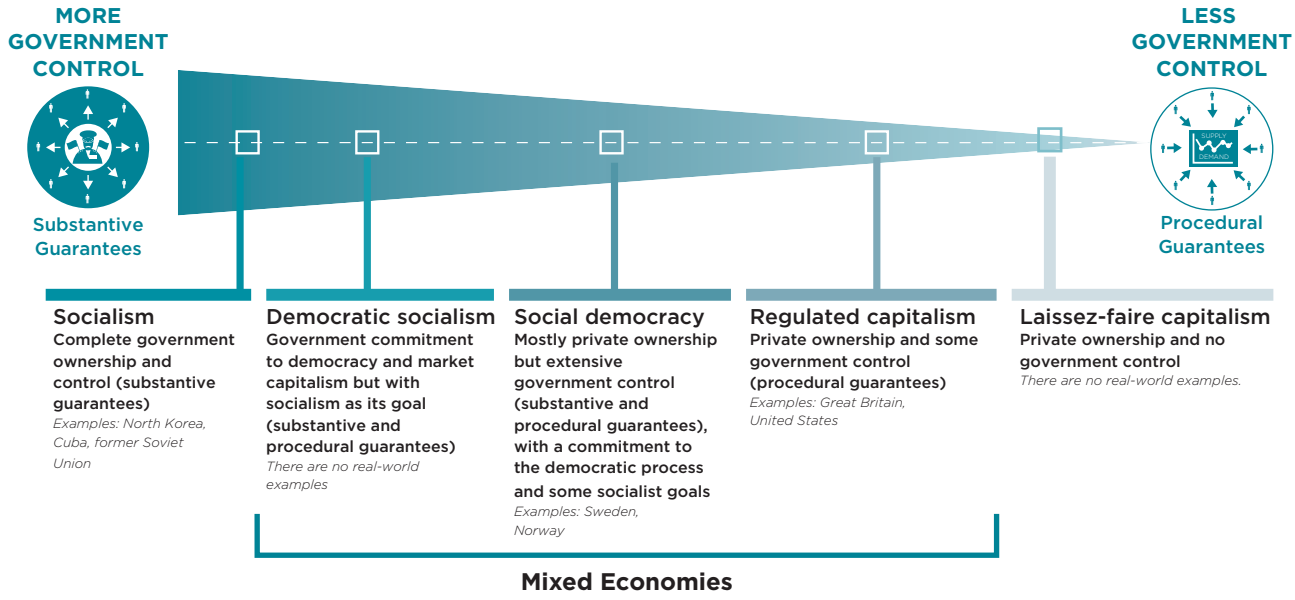
Whereas politics is concerned with the distribution of power and resources and the control of information in society, **economics** is concerned specifically with the production and distribution of society's wealth—material goods such as bread, toothpaste, and housing, and services such as medical care, education, and entertainment. Because both politics and economics focus on the distribution of society's resources, political and economic questions often get confused in contemporary life. Questions about how to pay for government, about government's role in the economy, and about whether government or the private sector should provide certain services have political and economic dimensions. Because there are no clear-cut distinctions here, it can be difficult to keep these terms straight. The various forms of possible economic systems are shown in Figure 1.1, with complete government control (pure socialism) to the far left and no government control (pure capitalism) to the far right.

gatekeepers journalists and the media elite who determine which news stories are covered and which are not

economics production and distribution of a society's material resources and services

FIGURE 1.1

A Comparison of Economic Systems



Economic systems are defined largely by the degree to which government owns the means by which material resources are produced (for example, factories and industry) and controls economic decision making. On a scale ranging from socialism—complete government ownership and control of the economy (on the left)—to laissez-faire capitalism—complete individual ownership and control of the economy (on the right)—social democracies would be located in the center. These hybrid systems are characterized by mostly private ownership of the means of production but considerable government control over economic decisions.

The processes of politics and economics can be engaged in procedurally or substantively. In procedural political and economic systems, the legitimacy of the outcome is based on the legitimacy of the process that produced it—in other words, that the rules treat everyone fairly. In substantive political and economic systems, the legitimacy of the outcome depends on how widely accepted is the narrative the government tells about who should have what. The outcome is based on the decision of a powerful person or people, not a process people believe is impartial. In procedural systems, the means (process) justifies the ends; in substantive systems, the ends justify the means.

SOCIALISM In a **socialist economy** like that of the former Soviet Union, economic decisions are made not by individuals through the market but rather by politicians, based on their judgment of what society needs. In these systems the state often owns the factories, land, and other resources necessary to produce wealth. Rather than trusting the market process to determine the proper distribution of material resources among individuals, politicians decide what the distribution ought to be—according to some principle like equality, need, or political reward—and then create economic policy to bring about that outcome. In other words, they emphasize **substantive guarantees** of what they believe to be fair outcomes, rather than **procedural guarantees** of fair rules and process.

The societies that have tried to put these theories into practice have ended up with repressive political systems, even though Karl Marx, the most famous of the theorists associated with socialism, hoped that eventually humankind would evolve to a point where each individual had control over their own life—a radical form of democracy. Since the socialist economies of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have fallen apart, socialism has been left with few supporters, although some nations, such as China, North Korea, and Cuba, still claim allegiance to it. Even China, however, introduced market-based reforms in the 1970s and by 2010 ranked as the world's second largest economy, after the United States.

CAPITALISM Capitalism is a procedural economic system based on the working of the *market*—the process of

socialist economy an economic system in which the state determines production, distribution, and price decisions, and property is government owned

substantive guarantees government assurance of particular outcomes or results

procedural guarantees government assurance that the rules will work smoothly and treat everyone fairly, with no promise of particular outcomes

supply and demand. In a pure **capitalist economy**, all the means used to produce material resources (industry, business, and land, for instance) are owned privately, and decisions about production and distribution are left to individuals operating through the free-market process. Capitalist economies rely on the market to decide how much of a given item to produce or how much to charge for it. In capitalist countries, people do not believe that the government is capable of making such judgments (like how much toothpaste to produce), so they want to keep such decisions out of the hands of government and in the hands of individuals who they believe know best what they want. The most extreme philosophy that corresponds with this belief is called **laissez-faire capitalism**, from a French term that, loosely translated, means "let people do as they wish." The government has no economic role at all in such a system, except perhaps to provide the national security in which the market forces can play out.

MIXED ECONOMIES Most real-world economies fall somewhere in between the idealized points of socialism and pure or laissez-faire capitalism, because most real-world countries have some substantive political goals that they want their economies to serve. The economies that fall in between the extremes are called mixed economies. **Mixed economies** are based on modified forms of capitalism, tempered by substantive values about how the market should work. In mixed economies, the fundamental economic decision-makers are individuals rather than the government. In addition, individuals may decide they want the government to step in and regulate behaviors that they think are not in the public interest. It is the type and degree of regulation that determines what kind of mixed economy it is.

Democratic socialism and **social democracy** are, as their names suggest, mixed economies that are a hybrid of democracy and socialism; they fall to the right of socialism in Figure 1.1. They are different from the pure socialist economy we discussed because they combine socialist ideals that empower government with a commitment to the *political* democratic principle of popular sovereignty and the *economic* principle of market capitalism that empowers individuals. The difference between them is that democratic socialists keep socialism as their end goal and social democrats are happy to keep the capitalist economy as long as they use the democratic process to attain some of the goals a socialist economy is supposed to produce (like more equality).

Socialism hybrids in theory, and often in practice, try to keep checks on government power to avoid the descent into authoritarianism that plagues most socialist experiments. They generally hold that there is a preferred distribution of stuff that requires prioritizing political goals over the market but that democracy is worth preserving as well.

When people claim to endorse a hybrid of democracy and socialism, note which word is the noun and which is the modifier. The noun will tell you where the true commitment lies. Democratic socialists (that is, "socialists") prioritize the results of a socialist economy; social democrats (that is, "democrats") prioritize the democratic process over economic outcomes.

Since World War II, the citizens of many Western European nations have elected social democrats to office, where they have enacted policies to bring about more equality—for instance, better housing, adequate health care for all, and the elimination of poverty and unemployment. Even where social democratic governments are voted out of office, such programs have proved so popular that it is often difficult for new leaders to alter them. Few people in the United States would identify themselves with social democracy, as presidential candidate Bernie Sanders found out in 2016 and 2020, although his campaign did help people understand that some versions of socialism did not require a wholesale elimination of capitalism and some of his proposals found their way into the Democratic Party platform.

Building a Better Rocket?
Internet entrepreneur and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos is also the owner of Blue Origin, an aerospace company. On May 9, 2019, he introduced a new lunar landing module called Blue Moon during an event at the Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C. Bezos said the module will be used to land humans on the moon once again.
Mark Wilson/Getty Images

capitalist economy an economic system in which the market determines production, distribution, and price decisions, and property is privately owned

laissez-faire capitalism an economic system in which the market makes all decisions and the government plays no role

mixed economies economic systems based on modified forms of capitalism tempered by substantive values

democratic socialism a mixed economy that combines socialist ideals with a commitment to democracy and market capitalism, keeping socialism as its goal

social democracy a mixed economy that uses the democratic process to bend capitalism toward socialist goals (like more equality)

Presidents for Life?
In March 2018, China's legislature, the National People's Congress, voted to change the country's constitution to eliminate the existing ten-year presidential term limit, reaffirming authoritarianism in China's political culture and setting up President Xi Jinping as a president for life. In March 2020, constitutional amendments were proposed by a member of Vladimir Putin's United Russia Party that would allow Putin to run twice more for the presidency, opening up the possibility that he could remain in office until 2036. Putin had already served three four-year terms (with a break as Russian prime minister). Here, Presidents Xi and Putin meet up at a summit in Brazil in November 2019.
Mikhail Svetlov/Getty Images

Regulated capitalism is also a hybrid system, but, unlike the socialist hybrids, it does not often prioritize political and social goals—like reducing inequality or redressing power inequities—as much as it does economic health. Although in theory the market ought to provide everything that people need and want—and should regulate itself as well—sometimes it fails. The notion that the market, an impartial process, has "failed" is a somewhat substantive one: it is the decision of a government that the outcome is not acceptable and should be replaced or altered to fit a political vision of what the outcome should be. When markets have ups and downs—periods of growth followed by periods of slowdown or recession—individuals and businesses look to government for economic security. If the market fails to produce some goods and services, like schools or highways, individuals expect the government to step in to produce them (using taxpayer funds). It is not very substantive—the market process still largely makes all the distributional decisions—but it is not laissez faire capitalism, either.

The dividing line between some of the socialism hybrids and regulated capitalism is not always crisp, as one may seem to blend into the other. The distinction to pay attention to is how much political control of the economy the system supports, and to what end. The judgment about what regulations are a legitimate use of government can be the subject of major political debates in democratic countries with mixed economies.

Like most other developed countries today, the United States has a system of regulated capitalism, which lies further to the right on the spectrum, closer to pure capitalism in Figure 1.1. It maintains a capitalist economy and individual freedom from government interference remains the norm, but it allows government to step in and regulate the economy to guarantee individual rights and to provide procedural guarantees that the rules will work smoothly and fairly.

In Your Own Words Describe the role that politics plays in determining how power and resources, including control of information, are distributed in a society.

POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND THE CONCEPT OF CITIZENSHIP

Competing ideas about power and the social order

Just as there are different kinds of economic systems on the substantive to procedural scale, there are many sorts of political systems, based on competing ideas about who should have power and what the social order should be—that is, how much substantive regulation there should be over individual decision-making. For our purposes, we can divide political systems into two types: those in which the government has the substantive power to impose a particular social order, deciding how individuals ought to behave, and those procedural systems in which individuals exercise personal power over most of their own behavior and ultimately over government as well. These two types of systems are different not just in a theoretical sense. The differences have very real implications for the people who live in them; the notion of citizenship (or the lack of it) is tied closely to the kind of political system a nation has.

Figure 1.2 compares these systems, ranging from the more substantive authoritarian governments that potentially have total power over their subjects to more procedural nonauthoritarian governments that permit citizens to limit the state's power by claiming rights that the government must protect. Figure 1.3 shows what happens when we overlie our economic and political figures, giving us a model of most of the world's political/economic systems. Note that when we say *model*, we are talking about abstractions from reality used as a tool to help us understand. We don't pretend that all the details of the world are captured in a single two-dimensional figure, but we can get a better idea of the similarities and differences by looking at them this way.

AUTHORITARIAN SYSTEMS

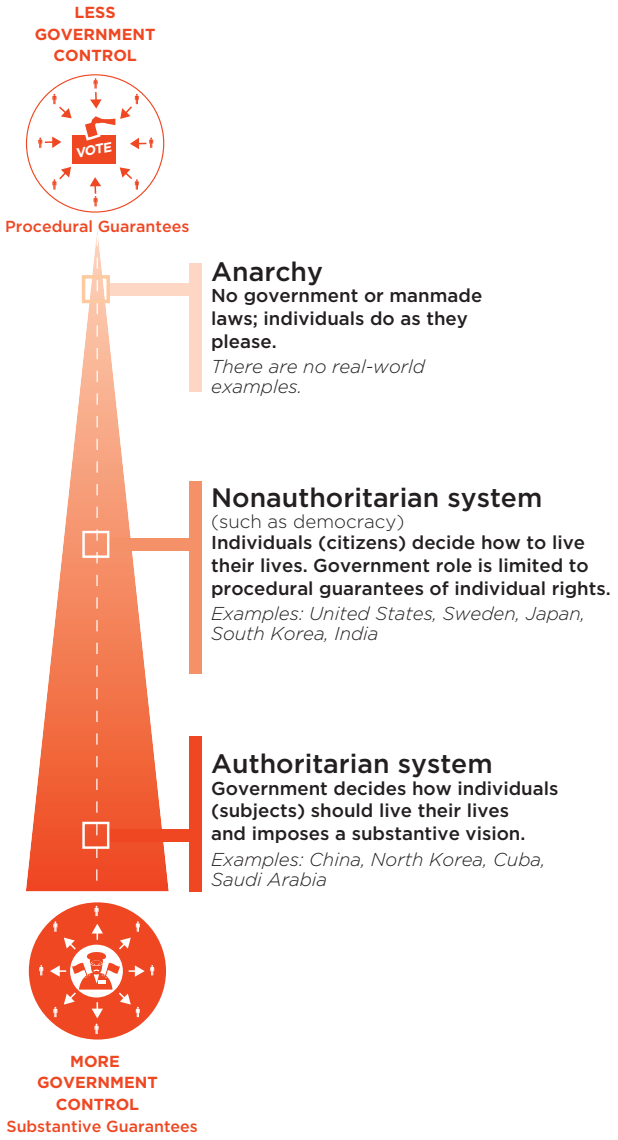
Authoritarian governments give ultimate power to the state rather than to the people to decide how they ought to live

regulated capitalism a market system in which the government intervenes to protect rights

authoritarian governments systems in which the state holds all power over the social order

FIGURE 1.2

A Comparison of Political Systems



Political systems are defined by the extent to which individual citizens or governments decide what the social order should look like—that is, how people should live their collective, noneconomic lives. Except for anarchies, every system allots a role to government to regulate individual behavior—for example, to prohibit murder, rape, and theft. But beyond such basic regulation, they differ radically on who gets to determine how individuals live their lives, and whether government's role is simply to provide procedural guarantees that protect individuals' rights to make their own decisions or to provide a much more substantive view of how individuals should behave.

totalitarian a system in which absolute power is exercised over every aspect of life

authoritarian capitalism a system in which the state allows people economic freedom but maintains stringent social regulations to limit noneconomic behavior

anarchy the absence of government and law

their lives. By "authoritarian governments," we usually mean those in which the people cannot effectively claim rights against the state; where the state chooses to exercise its power, the people have no choice but to submit to its will.

Authoritarian governments can take various forms: sovereignty can be vested in an individual (dictatorship or monarchy), in God (theocracy), in the state itself (fascism), or in a ruling class (oligarchy). When a system combines an authoritarian government with a socialist economy, we say that the system is **totalitarian** (in the lower-left quadrant of Figure 1.3). As in the earlier example of the former Soviet Union, a totalitarian system exercises its power over every part of society—economic, social, political, and moral—leaving little or no private realm for individuals.

But an authoritarian state may also limit its own power. In such cases, it may deny individuals rights in those spheres where it chooses to act, but it may leave large areas of society, such as a capitalist economy, free from government interference. China and Singapore are examples of this type of **authoritarian capitalism**, in the lower-right quadrant of Figure 1.3. In these systems, people have considerable economic freedom, but stringent social regulations limit their noneconomic behavior.

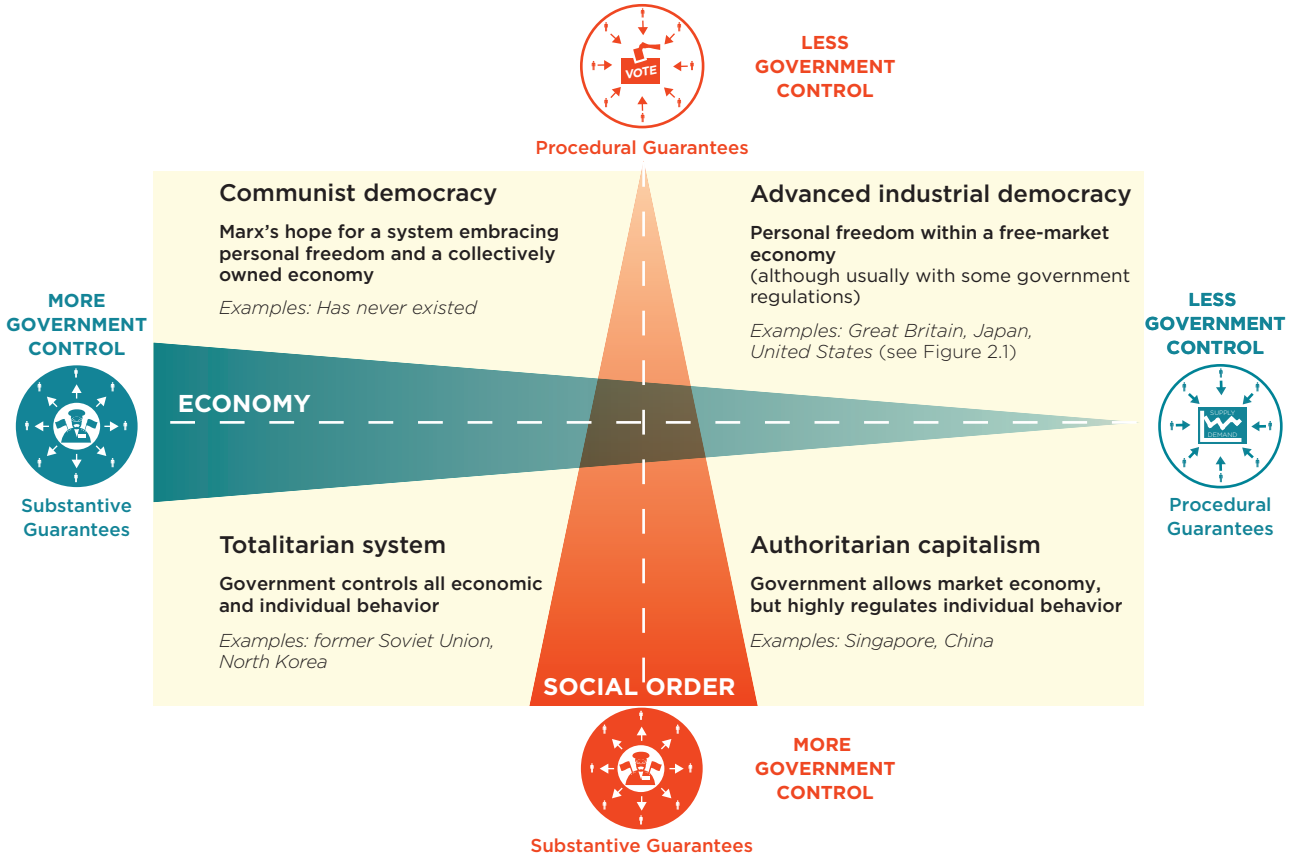
Authoritarian governments often pay lip service to the people, but when push comes to shove, as it usually does in such states, the people have no effective power against the government. Again, to use the terminology we introduced earlier, government does not provide guarantees of fair processes for individuals; it guarantees a substantive vision of what life will be like—what individuals will believe, how they will act, what they will choose. Consequently, in authoritarian governments, the narrative is not up for debate. The rulers set the narrative and control the flow of information so that it supports their version of why they should have power. They do not tolerate any criticism of their government, and they use their power to stifle those who do try to criticize them. Subjects of these governments accept the narrative for a variety of reasons: there is no free media, communication with the outside world is limited, or they may be afraid to do otherwise. Authoritarian rulers often use punishment to coerce uncooperative subjects into obedience.

NONAUTHORITARIAN SYSTEMS

In nonauthoritarian systems, ultimate power rests with individuals to make decisions concerning their lives. The most extreme form of nonauthoritarianism is called **anarchy**. Anarchists would do away with government and laws altogether. People advocate anarchy because they value the freedom to do whatever they want more than they value the order and security that governments provide by forbidding or regulating certain kinds of behavior. Few people are true anarchists, however. Anarchy may sound attractive in theory, but the inherent difficulties of the position make it hard to practice. For instance, how could you even organize a revolution to get rid of government without some rules about who is to do what and how decisions are to be made?

FIGURE 1.3

Political and Economic Systems



Political systems work in conjunction with economic systems, but government control over the economy does not necessarily translate into tight control over the social order. We have identified four possible combinations of these systems, signified by the labeled points in each quadrant. These points are approximate, however, and some nations cannot be classified so easily. Sweden is an advanced industrial democracy by most measures, for instance, but because of its commitment to substantive economic values, it would be located much closer to the vertical axis.

DEMOCRACY A less extreme form of nonauthoritarian government, and one much more familiar to us, is **democracy** (from the Greek *demos*, meaning "people"). In democracies, government is not external to the people, as it is in authoritarian systems; in a fundamental sense, government *is* the people. Democracies are based on the principle of **popular sovereignty**; that is, there is no power higher than the people and, in the United States, the document establishing their authority, the Constitution. The central idea here is that no government is considered legitimate unless the governed consent to it, and people are not truly free unless they live under a law of their own making.

Recognizing that collective life usually calls for some restrictions on what individuals may do (laws forbidding murder or theft, for instance), democracies nevertheless try to maximize freedom for the individuals who live under them. Although they generally make decisions through some sort of majority rule, democracies still provide procedural guarantees to preserve individual rights—usually protections of due process and minority rights. This means that if individuals living in a democracy feel their rights have been violated, they have the right to ask government to remedy the situation.

There are many institutional variations on democracy. Some democracies make the legislature (the representatives of the people) the most important authority; some retain a monarch with limited powers; and some hold referenda at the national level to get direct feedback on how the people want the government to act on specific issues.

Most democratic forms of government, because of their commitment to procedural values, practice a capitalist form of economics. Fledgling democracies may rely on a high degree of government economic regulation, but **advanced industrial democracies** (in the upper-right quadrant of

democracy government that vests power in the people

popular sovereignty the concept that the citizens are the ultimate source of political power

advanced industrial democracy a system in which a democratic government allows citizens a considerable amount of personal freedom and maintains a free-market (though still usually regulated) economy

Figure 1.3) combine a considerable amount of personal freedom with a free-market (though still usually regulated) economy.

The people of many Western countries have found the idea of democracy persuasive enough to found their governments on it. Especially since the mid-1980s, democracy has been spreading rapidly through the rest of the world as the preferred form of government. No longer the primary province of industrialized Western nations, attempts at democratic governance now extend into Asia, Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe, and the republics of the former Soviet Union.

It is rare to find a country that is truly committed to democratic freedom that also tries to regulate the economy heavily. The philosopher Karl Marx believed that radical democracy would coexist with communally owned property, in a form of **communist democracy** (in the upper-left quadrant of Figure 1.3), but such a system has never existed, and most real-world systems fall elsewhere in Figure 1.3.

DEMOCRATIC NARRATIVES Generally, the narrative of democracy is based on the idea that power comes from the people. This is misleadingly simple, however. Some democratic narratives hold that all the people should agree on political decisions. This rule of unanimity makes decision making very slow, and sometimes impossible, since everyone has to be persuaded to agree. Even when majority rule is the norm, there are many ways of calculating the majority. Is it 50 percent plus one? Two-thirds? Three-fourths? Decision making becomes increasingly difficult as the number of people who are required to agree grows. And, of course, majority rule brings with it the problem of minority rights. If the majority gets its way, what happens to the rights of those who disagree?

Not surprisingly, there are multiple narratives about how much and in what ways popular power should be exercised in a democracy. They argue for power at the top, in groups, and for individuals. For instance, *elite democracy* is a narrative that sees democracy merely as a process of choosing among competing leaders; for the average citizen, input ends after the leader is chosen.[7] Advocates of the narrative of *pluralist democracy* argue that what is important is not so much individual participation but rather membership in groups that participate in government decision making on their members' behalf.[8] Supporters of the narrative of *participatory democracy* claim that individuals have the right to control *all* the circumstances of their lives, and direct democratic participation should take place not only in government but in industry, education, and community affairs as well.[9] For advocates of this view, democracy is more than a way to make decisions: it is a way of life, an end in itself. In practice, those who argue for democratic government probably include elements of more than one of these democratic narratives; they are not mutually exclusive.

Ironically, some present-day democracies are now experiencing backlashes of **populism**—social movements that promote the narrative that democracy has concentrated power at an elite level and neglected the concerns of ordinary people. Because populism is a narrative based on the grievances of people who believe they are getting less than they deserve, it is relatively easy for an authoritarian figure to exploit. Often these movements backfire on the people who support them and result in the seizing of authoritarian power by an individual or group who claims to wield it in the name of the people but does not. Turkey and Venezuela are extreme examples of this, but there are serious populist movements in many democratic countries today, including the United States.

communist democracy a utopian system in which property is communally owned and all decisions are made democratically

populism social movements based on the idea that power has been concentrated illegitimately among elites at the people's expense

subjects individuals who are obliged to submit to a government authority against which they have no rights

citizens members of a political community with both rights and responsibilities

THE ROLE OF THE PEOPLE

What is important about the political and economic systems we have been sorting out here is that they have a direct impact on the lives of the people who live in them. So far we have given a good deal of attention to the latter parts of Lasswell's definition of politics. But easily as important as the *what* and the *how* in Lasswell's formulation is the *who*. Underlying the different political theories we have looked at are fundamental differences in the powers and opportunities possessed by everyday people.

THE PEOPLE AS SUBJECTS In authoritarian systems, the people are **subjects** of their government. They possess no rights that protect them from that government; they must do whatever the government says or face the consequences, without any other recourse. They have obligations to the state but no rights or privileges to offset those obligations. They may be winners or losers in government decisions, but they have very little control over which it may be.

Do subjects enjoy any advantages that citizens don't have?

THE PEOPLE AS CITIZENS Everyday people in democratic systems have a potentially powerful role to play. They are more than mere subjects; they are **citizens**, or members of a political community with rights as well as obligations. Democratic theory says that power is drawn from the people, that the people are sovereign, that they must consent to be governed, and that their government must respond to their will. In practical terms, this may not seem to mean much, since not consenting doesn't necessarily give us the right to disobey government. It does give us

the option of leaving, however, and seeking a more congenial set of rules elsewhere.

Theoretically, democracies are ruled by "the people," but different democracies have at times been very selective about whom they count as citizens. Just because a system is called a democracy is no guarantee that all or even most of its residents possess the status of citizen.

In democratic systems, the rules of government can provide for all sorts of different roles for those they designate as citizens. At a minimum, citizens possess certain rights, or powers to act, that government cannot limit, although these rights vary in different democracies. Citizens of democracies also possess obligations or responsibilities to the public realm. They have the obligation to obey the law, for instance, once they have consented to the government (even if that consent amounts only to not leaving); they may also have the obligation to pay taxes, serve in the military, or sit on juries. Some theorists argue that truly virtuous citizens should put community interests ahead of personal interests.

In Your Own Words Compare how power is distributed between citizens and government in different economic and political systems.

ORIGINS OF DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

From divine right to social contract

Government in the United States is the product of particular decisions the founders made about the who, what, and how of American politics. There was nothing inevitable about those decisions and, had the founders decided otherwise, our system would look very different indeed.

Given the world in which the founders lived, democracy was not an obvious choice for them, and many scholars argue that in some respects the system they created is not very democratic. We can see this more clearly if we understand the intellectual heritage of the early Americans, their historical experience, and the theories about government that informed them.

EUROPEAN SOURCES OF DEMOCRATIC THOUGHT AND PRACTICE

The heyday of democracy, of course, was ancient Athens, from about 500 to 300 BCE. Even Athenian democracy was a pretty selective business. To be sure, it was rule by "the people," but "the people" was defined narrowly to exclude women, enslaved people, youth, and resident aliens. Athenian democracy was not built on values of equality, even of opportunity, except for the 10 percent of the population defined as citizens. We can see parallels here to early colonial American democracy, which restricted participation in political affairs to a relatively small number of white men with wealth and particular religious beliefs.

Limited as Athenian democracy was, it was positively wide open compared to most forms of government that existed during the Middle Ages, from roughly AD 600 to 1500. During this period, monarchs gradually consolidated their power over their subjects, and some even challenged the greatest political power of the time, the Catholic Church. Authoritarianism was a lot easier to pull off when few people could read; maintaining a single narrative about power that enforced authoritarian rule was relatively simple. For instance, as we see in Chapter 3, the narrative of the **divine right of kings** kept monarchs in Europe on their thrones by insisting that those rulers were God's representatives on earth and that to say otherwise was not just a crime but a sin.

Following the development of the printing press in 1439, more people gained literacy. Information could be mediated independently of those in power, and competing narratives could grab a foothold. Martin Luther promoted the narrative behind the Protestant Reformation (1517–1648) to weaken the power of the Catholic Church. Luther's ideas spread and were embraced by a number of European monarchs, leading to a split between Catholic and Protestant countries. Where the Catholic Church was seen as unnecessary, it lost political as well as religious clout, and its decline paved the way for new ideas about the world. Those new ideas came with the Enlightenment period of the late 1600s and 1700s, when ideas about science and the possibilities of knowledge began to blow away the shadows and cobwebs of medieval superstition. Enlightenment philosophy said that human beings were not at the mercy of a world they could not understand, but rather, as rational human beings, they could learn the secrets of nature and harness the world to do their bidding. The political narratives of **classical liberalism** that emerged from the Enlightenment emphasized individual rights and nonauthoritarianism.

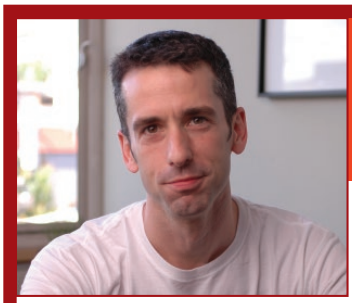
THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

One of the key classical liberal narratives was the **social contract**, a story that said power is derived not from God but from the consent of the governed. Philosopher John Locke argued that before government comes into being, people have natural rights. They give up some of those rights in order to have the convenience of government but

divine right of kings the principle that earthly rulers receive their authority from God

classical liberalism a political ideology dating from the seventeenth century emphasizing individual rights over the power of the state

social contract the notion that society is based on an agreement between government and the governed in which people agree to give up some rights in exchange for the protection of others



PROFILES IN CITIZENSHIP

Dan Savage

Dan Savage could not tell us about the start of his It Gets Better Project without choking up, and we could not hear about it without tears of our own. It started with the desperation of a young man named Billy Lucas, who had been bullied because kids said he was gay, and whose ultimate suicide filled Savage with rage that day in New York in 2010. It grieved Savage that Lucas did not have someone to reassure him and tell him in concrete ways how to survive the crappy, terrorized years so that he could have caught a glimpse of the full life that would have one day been his.

Savage, a journalist and the author of the advice column and podcast *Savage Love* at the Seattle indie paper *The Stranger*, says he survived the tough, bullying years of high school because "I never regarded my homosexuality as something damaged, or wrong, or sinful about myself. I regarded the homophobia, and the hatred, and the discrimination, and the violence as the problem."

That confidence in who he is and his Catholic upbringing and education also fueled a fiery sense of social justice and a steely patience that made Savage realize that change happens slowly, one doable action at a time. He had come of age as an activist in ACT UP: "It was really hyper-organized and included this structure where people could show up and participate and then melt back into the crowd and go home," he says. "I've always felt that one of the jobs from people like me, who still considers himself an activist, is not to guilt, and not to harangue, and not to 'where were you' when you weren't at the meeting; it's to identify the doable thing that people who can't be active 24/7 can do, and say, 'Here's this doable thing. Do it.'"

The "one doable thing" philosophy informed Savage's work in Seattle, where he acquired an army of devoted *Savage Love* followers by basically entertaining them most of the time and urging them to action a tiny bit of the time.

So, sitting on that train in 2010, fuming with anger at the kids who had tormented Billy Lucas and then had taken to Lucas's Facebook page to continue the bullying after his death, there was that one, doable thing. Savage and his husband, Terry Miller, sat in front of their computer and recorded a simple message to those kids: "It Gets Better." It told of the misery of the bullying they faced as kids and the joyful family and love-filled moments of the lives they live today, the promise that the intolerance of others would one day fade in importance, if they could just endure and look forward. He and Miller posted their video on YouTube, and it went viral: "Here's a doable thing. You can sit in front of your computer for ten minutes and you can talk." In time, all kinds of people added their own stories. Today there are more than fifty thousand videos on the itgetsbetter.org website.

Billy Lucas had become a catalyst for the saving of so many others. And in the process, Savage's work has accelerated the normalization of being LGBTQ as a simple part of being human. The nature of single doable acts is that they don't work alone. They build and they gather speed and they don't require the organization of armies, just the willingness of one person to carry the sword. It is Savage's genius to take advantage of that and to use social media to avoid the pitfalls and infighting and burnout that political organization in pursuit of social change so often falls victim to.

On patriotism

"We're an idea, and we're a document, and we're a promise . . . . I do believe that the United States is the last best hope on Earth, as Lincoln said . . . because the United States, in its founding documents, in its founding idea, was an idea about creating a more perfect union . . . . That's what fills me with kind of patriotic fervor. It's the political process and the idea that America is an unfinished thing that is imperfect and will never be perfect, but that we can keep working on making [it] more perfect."

On keeping the republic

"You're either going to be the person who can identify the doable thing, which I think is the most effective kind of activism, or be a person who is willing to jump in when asked to do the doable thing. Those are your options. Pick one or pick the other. Don't be that person who does nothing: doesn't pitch in, doesn't help, can't be bothered to do the doable thing, and then sit[s] there and complain about the state of the world."

Source: Dan Savage spoke with Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright on September 9, 2016.

Whose Hong Kong Is It, Anyway?

Millions of Hongkongers have taken to the streets since June 2019, originally in opposition to a now-abandoned proposal to allow extraditions to mainland China. The protest movement morphed into demands for greater democratic freedoms and police accountability, a clash of culture with China's authoritarian leadership. Previously an English colony, Hong Kong was turned over to the Chinese in 1997, and even though it has a special status, the Chinese cannot afford to let it call its own shots , even though Hong Kong's own heritage is that of an advanced industrialized nation.

Anthony Kwan/Getty Images

retain enough of them to rebel against that government if it fails to protect their rights. For it to work, the social contract requires that people have freedom to criticize the government (that is, to create counternarratives) and that information and narratives flow through channels that are protected from the influence of those in power.

As we will see in Chapter 3, Thomas Jefferson was clearly influenced by Locke's work. The Declaration of Independence is itself a founding narrative of the rights of Americans: it tells a story about how the British violated those rights and was designed to combat the British narrative that America should remain part of its colonial empire.

AS THE FOUNDERS SAW IT

While philosophers in Europe were beginning to explore the idea of individual rights and democratic governance, there had long been democratic stirrings on the founders' home continent. The Iroquois Confederacy was an alliance of five (and eventually six) East Coast Native American nations whose constitution, the "Great Law of Peace," impressed American leaders such as Benjamin Franklin with its suggestions of federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances, and consensus building. Although historians are not sure that these ideas had any direct influence on the founders' thinking about American governance, they were clearly part of the stew of ideas that the founders could dip into, and some scholars make the case that their influence was significant.[10]

Meanwhile, literacy among average citizens remained limited. Political elites still played a major role in mediating information, but new channels also started to play a part—newspapers, pastors, and publicans all began to shape narratives. For our purposes, the most important thing about these ideas about politics is that they were prevalent at the same time the American founders were thinking about how to build a new government. Locke particularly influenced the writings of James Madison, a major author of the U.S. Constitution. Like Locke, Madison thought government had a duty to protect property. At first he was hopeful that, with a fresh start in a new country, citizens would be driven by innate notions of *republican virtue* to put the interests of the public over their own self-interests.

Public behavior after the Revolution disillusioned him, however, and Madison ended up rejecting notions of "pure democracy," in which all citizens would have direct power to control

government, opting instead for what he called a "republic." A **republic**, according to Madison, would differ from a democracy by relying on representation and would be more appropriate in a large polity where there would be a lot of citizens to be heard. It also limited the involvement of those citizens to choosing their representatives, not doing any actual governing.

In Your Own Words Explain the historical origins of American democracy and the ways that the available media controlled the political narrative.

THE EVOLUTION OF AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP

From the founding era to the digital age

Unlike the founders, certainly, but even unlike most of the people currently running this country (who are, let's face it, kind of old), people born in this century are almost all **digital natives**. They have been born in an era in which not only are most people hooked up to electronic media, but they also live their lives partly in cyberspace as well as in "real space." For many of us, the lives we live are often mediated—that is, with much, if not most, of our relationships, our education, our news, our travel, our sustenance, our purchases, our daily activities, our job seeking, and our very sense of ourselves being influenced by, experienced through, or shared via electronic media. That reality was brought home thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, which *required* our classes, relationships, worship, work, medical consultations, commerce, and even social gatherings to take place in a mediated form. When direct, one-on-one connections become impossible or dangerous, some form of mediation is the only way to carry them out. COVID-19 taught us how valuable and yet dispensable face-to-face communication can be in a digital age.

Essentially, in a digital age we conduct our lives through channels that, like that water pipe we talked about earlier, may be made of lead, may be rusty, or may be full of holes. When we search online, certain links are offered first according to the calculations made by the search engine we use. When we shop online, we are urged to buy certain products that an algorithm thinks we will like or that people like us have purchased. When we travel, certain flights and hotels are flagged, and when we use social media, certain posts appear while others don't. Most of us don't check very hard to ensure that the information on which we base our choices isn't emerging from the cyberequivalent of lead pipes.

Citizens Stepping Up
Americans may be individualists, but that doesn't mean they don't pitch in to help others in need—at least some of the time. When Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico in 2017, Washington, D.C.–based chef José Andrés jumped into action via his organization World Central Kitchen to provide meals to people across the islands who had lost power, or even their homes.
World Central Kitchen

A mediated world has all kinds of implications for everyday living and loving and working. The implications we care about here are the political implications for our roles as citizens—the ones to do with how we exercise and are impacted by power. We will be turning to these implications again and again throughout this book.

Even though Americans today still largely adhere to the basic governing narrative the founders promoted, the country is now light years removed from the founding era, when communication was limited by illiteracy and the scarcity of channels through which it could pass. Consider the timeline in Figure 1.4. It follows the development of the media through which we get information, receive narratives, and send out our own information (see also *Snapshot of America: How Do We Engage Politically Online?*). Being a citizen in a mediated world is just flat out different from being one in the world in which James Madison wrote the Constitution. It's the genius of the Constitution that it has been able to navigate the transition successfully, so far. The mediated world we live in gives us myriad new ways to keep the republic and some pretty high-tech ways to lose it. That puts a huge burden on us as **mediated citizens**, and it also opens up a world of opportunity.

Among the things we disagree on in this country is what it means to be a citizen. James Madison obviously had some thoughts on that subject. As mentioned earlier, he hoped people would be so filled with what he called republican virtue that they would readily sacrifice their self-interest to advance the public interest. As we will see in Chapter 3, this **public-interested citizenship** proved not to be the rule,

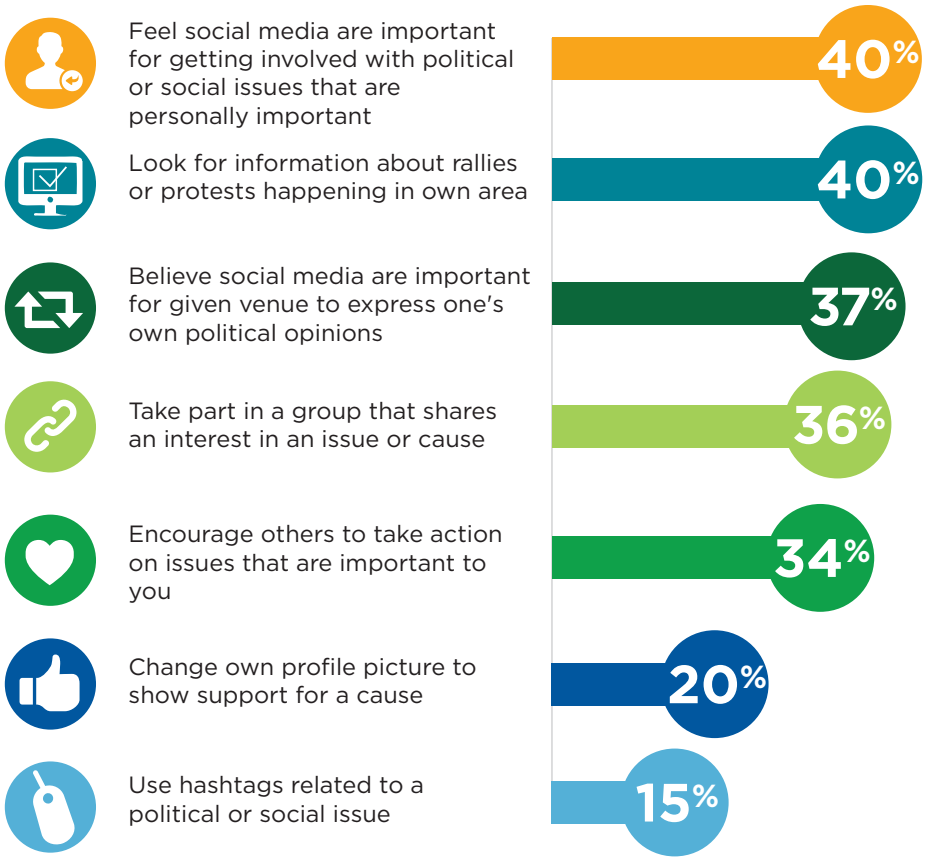
republic a government in which decisions are made through representatives of the people

digital native an individual born after the advent of digital technology who is proficient in and dependent on its use

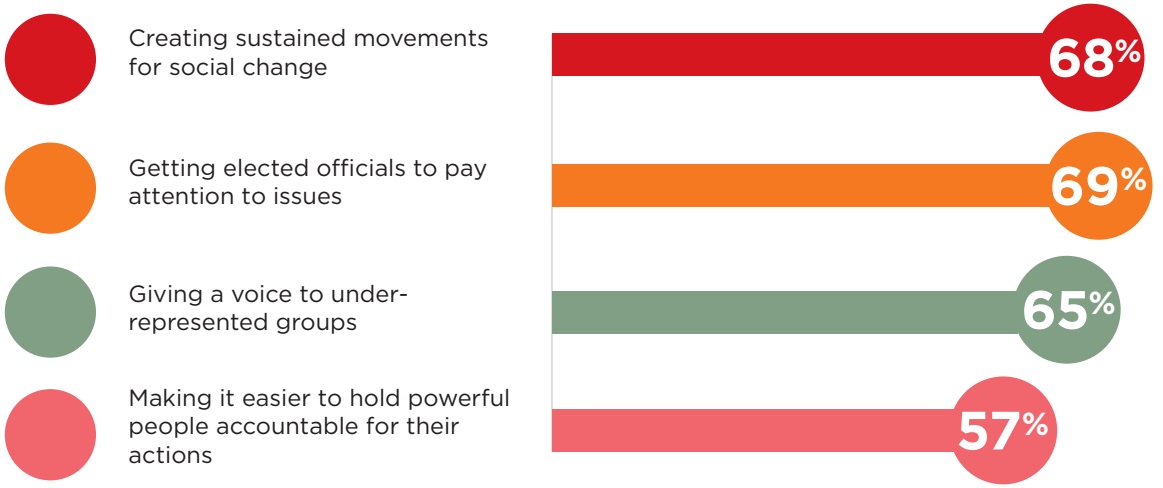
mediated citizens those for whom most personal and commercial relationships, access to information about the world and recreational or professional activities, and communication with others passes through third-party channels, which may or may not modify or censor that information

public-interested citizenship a view of citizenship focused on action to realize the common good

Snapshot of America: *How Do We Engage Politically Online?*



Believe Social Media Are Important for



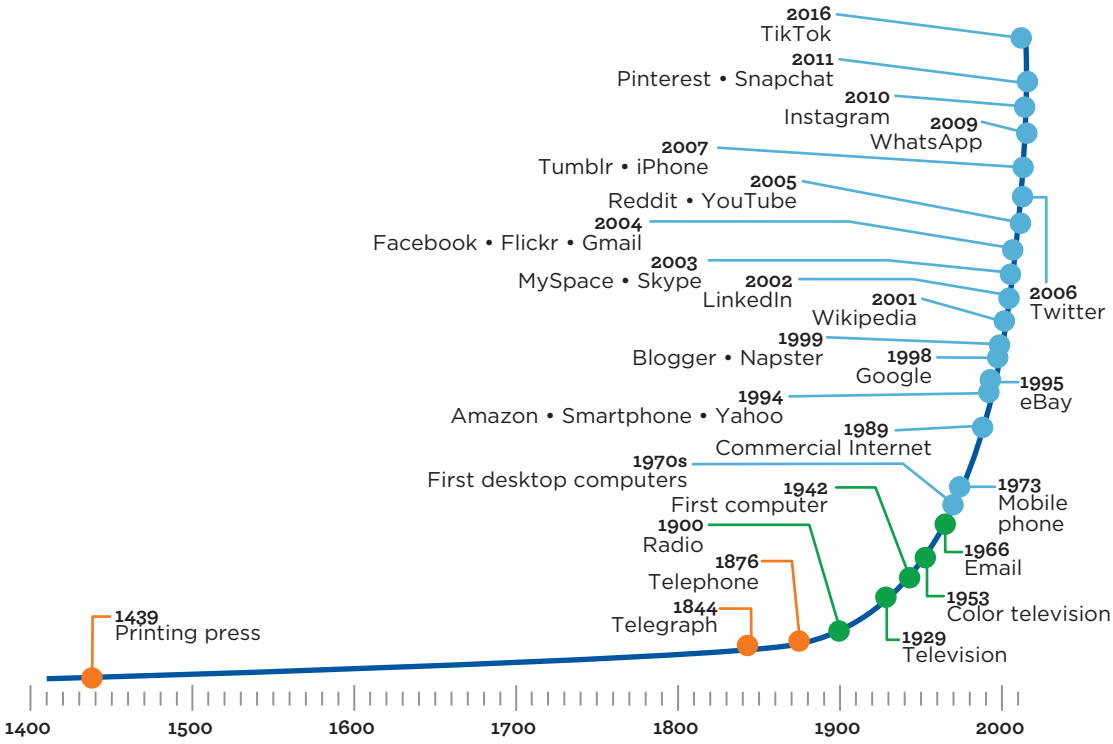
Behind the Numbers

Social media enable citizens to engage with their government, the news media, and each other much more efficiently than in previous decades. But widespread and easy access to political information comes to us with few quality checks. Did you engage politically during the 2020 presidential election in any of the ways listed above? In what ways might social media affect political outcomes?

Source: Calculated by the authors from the 2018 Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel, Wave 35, May 29–June 11, 2018, *N*=4,594.

FIGURE 1.4

Media Timeline



It is notable that over the long history of humankind's relationship with the printed word, a majority of the most significant technological developments, other than the 1439 invention of the printing press, have taken place over the last 100 years.

much to Madison's disappointment. Instead, early Americans demonstrated **self-interested citizenship**, trying to use the system to get the most they could for themselves. This was a dilemma for Madison because he was designing a constitution that depended on the nature of the people being governed. He believed he had solved that dilemma by creating a political system that would check our self-interested nature and produce laws that would support the public interest.

When, if ever, should individuals be asked to sacrifice their own good for that of their country?

Still, the Constitution has not put that conflict to rest. Today there are plenty of people who put country first—who enlist in the armed services, sometimes giving their lives for their nation, or who go into law enforcement or teaching or other lower paying careers because they want to serve. There are people who cheerfully pay their taxes because it's a privilege to live in a free democracy where you can climb the ladder of opportunity. Especially in moments of national trouble—after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September 2001, for instance, or during the COVID-19 pandemic—Americans willingly help their fellow citizens.

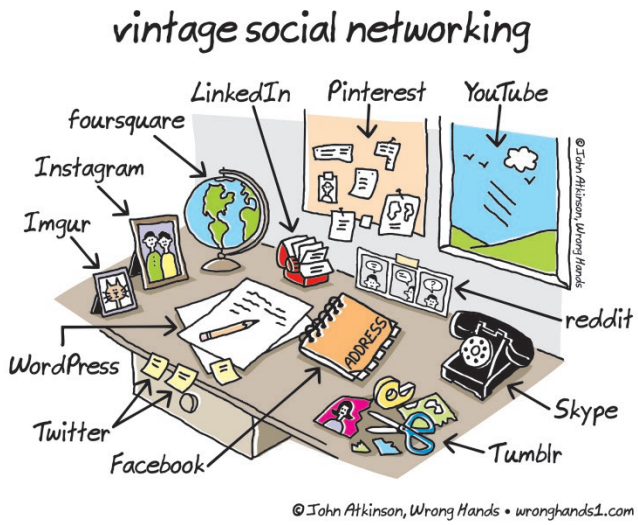
self-interested citizenship a view of citizenship focused on action to realize an individual citizen's interests

At the same time, the day-to-day business of life turns most people inward. Many people care about self and family and friends, but most don't have the energy or inclination to get beyond that. President John Kennedy challenged his "fellow Americans" in 1961 to "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country," but only a rare few have the time or motivation to take up that challenge.

Unlike the citizens Madison and his colleagues designed a constitution for, mediated citizens experience the world through multiple channels of information and interaction. That doesn't change whether citizens are self-interested or public-interested, but it does give them more opportunities and raise more potential hazards for being both.

Many older Americans who are not digital natives nonetheless experience political life through television or through web surfing and commenting, usually anonymously and often rudely. This is not always a positive addition to our civil discourse, but they are trying to adapt. You may have grandparents who fit this description. They probably want to know why you are not on Facebook.

But more media-savvy millennials, Gen Xers, and even some tech-savvy Baby Boomers not only have access to traditional media if they choose but also are accustomed to interacting, conducting friendships and family relationships,



and generally attending to the details of their lives through electronic channels. Their digital selves exist in networks of friends and acquaintances who take for granted that they can communicate in seconds. They certainly get their news digitally and increasingly organize, register to vote, enlist in campaigns, and call each other to action that way.

In fact, as we saw earlier, **hashtag activism**, the forming of social movements through viral calls to act politically—whether to march, to boycott, to contact politicians, or to vote—has become common enough that organizers warn that action has to go beyond cyberspace to reach the real world or it will have limited impact. #BlackLivesMatter, #ItGetsBetter, and #NeverAgain are just three very different, very viral, very successful ways of using all the channels available to us to call attention to a problem and propose solutions.

Although living an intensely mediated life has the potential to broaden our horizons and expose us to multiple views and cultures, it does not automatically produce public-interested citizens. People can easily remain self-interested in this digital world. We can customize our social media to give us only news and information that confirms what we already think. We can live in an **information bubble** where everything we see and hear reinforces our narratives. That makes us more or less sitting ducks for whatever media narrative is directed our way, whether from inside an online media source or from a foreign power that weaponizes social media to influence an election, as the Russians did in both 2016 and 2020. Without opening ourselves up to multiple information and action channels, we can live an unexamined mediated life.

But mediated citizenship also creates enormous opportunities that the founders never dreamed of. Truth to tell, Madison wouldn't have been all that thrilled about the multiple ways to be political that the mediated citizen possesses. He thought citizens should be seen on election day, but not heard most of the time, precisely because he thought we would push our own interests and destabilize the system. He was reassured by the fact that it would take days for an express letter trying to create a dissenting political organization to reach Georgia from Maine. Our mediated world has blown that reassuring prospect to smithereens.

Mediated citizens are not only the receivers and distributors of narratives from powerful people, like the TV-watching couch potato or earbud-wearing student with her eyes fixed on Insta. We can be the creators and disseminators of our own narratives, something that would have terrified the old monarchs comfortably ensconced in their divine right narrative. Even the founders would have been extremely nervous about what the masses might get up to.

As mediated citizens, we have unprecedented access to power, but we are also targets of the use of unprecedented power—attempts to shape our views and control our experiences. That means it is up to us to pay critical attention to what is happening in the world around us.

In Your Own Words Describe the enduring tension in the United States between self-interested human nature and public-spirited government and the way that has been shaped in a mediated world.

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICS

How to use the themes and features in this book

Our primary goal in this book is to get you thinking critically about American politics, especially about the political narratives that you encounter every day. Critical thinking is the analysis and evaluation of ideas and arguments based on reason and evidence—it means digging deep into what you read and what you hear and asking tough questions. Critical thinking is what all good scholars do, and it is also what savvy citizens do.

Our analytic and evaluative tasks in this book focus on the twin themes of power and citizenship. We have adopted the classic definition of politics proposed by the late political scientist Harold Lasswell that politics is "who gets what when and how." We simplify his understanding by dropping the "when" and focusing on politics as the struggle by citizens over who gets power and resources in society and how they get them, but we also consider how the struggle for power and resources can change dramatically over time.

hashtag activism a form of political engagement that occurs by organizing individuals online around a particular issue

information bubble a closed cycle, sometimes self-created, in which all the information we get reinforces the information we already have, solidifying our beliefs without reference to outside reality checks

DON'T BE FOOLED BY. . .

Your Own Information Bubble

Technologies that enable citizens to connect with one another, to engage in lively debate, and to organize for common purposes hold great promise for democracy. The power to communicate on a massive scale was once held only by governments and those with access to print or broadcast media outlets, but today it is in the hands of anyone with a cell phone. As every superhero learns, with great power comes great responsibility. There is no guarantee that what you learn through social media is true, and if you are sharing information that isn't reality based, you are helping to perpetuate a false narrative.

In addition, your social media feeds and even your browser are working against you, ensuring that the news that comes your way is tailored to your interests and preconceptions, creating what one observer calls a filter bubble.[11] Whether your news feed is custom made or crowd sourced, always look before you "like" since social media algorithms can channel information to you that reinforces the narrative you get about "who gets what and how" in today's political world.

What to Watch Out For

- **Don't create your own echo chamber.** Social networking sites and other tools make it easy to create your own custom news channel, ensuring that you see stories from sources you like, about subjects that interest you. Important stories can easily slip past you, and your understanding of political matters will suffer. But if you follow only the political sources you like, that will get you in trouble, too. So open yourself up to alternative sources of news and opinions that you might find offensive or wrong. If what's showing up in your news feed does not challenge your ideas and beliefs from time to time, consider whether you've been censoring news that you don't like. Make sure you're getting all sides of the story, not just the one that you want to hear.[12]
- **Don't trust your browser.** It's not just your self-selected social media feeds that are shaping your information diet: every link you click and word you search is fed into complex algorithms that tailor your results into a custom feed of "things you might like." Just as Amazon knows what items to suggest based on your browsing and purchase history, your Google results are similarly parsed and packaged for your viewing pleasure. Two people searching on a particular topic will get very different results.[13] Search around—don't just click on the first links offered to you.
- **Separate truth from truthiness.** Some of the most compelling (and viral) political material on the Internet comes from people who are intent on selling you on their narrative. Their arguments may be valid, and their evidence may be strong—but bear in mind that an opinion piece is different from a statement of fact. Take care to seek out news sources that strive for objectivity and don't have an ax to grind (such as the Associated Press or the *news* pages of the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, or Politico) alongside those that offer analysis and argument.
- **Don't be complacent about conventional news sources.** While you are watching your social networks and second-guessing Google algorithms, don't neglect old-fashioned news sources. If you watch television news, make a point of changing the channel often, especially if one of the stations has an ideological agenda like Fox or MSNBC. Ditto on the radio shows and late-night comedy. In fact, try to have political discussions with different groups of people, too. The more sources you use to gather information, the harder it will be for you to lose touch with political reality.

ANALYSIS

Lasswell's definition of politics gives us a framework of analysis for this book; that is, it outlines how we break down politics into its component parts in order to understand it. Analysis helps us understand how something works, much like taking apart a car and putting it back together again helps us understand how it runs. Lasswell's definition provides a strong analytic framework because it focuses our attention on questions we can ask to figure out what is going on in politics.

Accordingly, in this book, we analyze American politics in terms of three sets of questions:

- Who are the parties involved? What resources, powers, and rights do they bring to the struggle?
- What do they have at stake? What do they stand to win or lose? Is it power, influence, position, policy, or values?
- How do the rules shape the outcome? Where do the rules come from? What strategies or tactics do the political actors employ to use the rules to get what they want?

THINKING LIKE A POLITICAL SCIENTIST

The Critical Importance of Critical Thinking

This book is an introduction to American politics, and in a way it is also an introduction to political science. Political science is not exactly the same kind of science as biology or geology. Not only is it difficult to put our subjects (people and political systems) under a microscope to observe their behavior, but we are also somewhat limited in our ability to test our theories. We cannot replay World War II to test our ideas about what caused it, for example. A further problem is our subjectivity; we are the phenomena under investigation, and so we may have stronger feelings about our research and our findings than we would about, say, cells and rocks.

These difficulties do not make a science of politics impossible, but they do mean we must proceed with caution. Even among political scientists, disagreement exists about whether a rigorous science of the political world is a reasonable goal. We can agree, however, that it is possible to advance our understanding of politics beyond mere guessing or debates about political preferences. Although we use many methods in our work (statistical analysis, mathematical modeling, case studies, and philosophical reasoning, to name only a few), what political scientists have in common is an emphasis on critical thinking about politics.

Critical thinking means challenging the conclusions of others, asking why or why not, and exploring alternative interpretations. It means considering the sources of information—not accepting an explanation just because someone in authority offers it, or because you have always been told that it is the true explanation, but because you have discovered independently that there are good reasons for accepting it. You may emerge from reading this textbook with the same ideas about politics that you have always had; it is not our goal to change your mind. But as a critical thinker, you will be able to back up your old ideas with new and persuasive arguments of your own, or to move beyond your current ideas to see politics in a new light.

Becoming adept at critical thinking has a number of benefits:

- **We learn to be good democratic citizens.** Critical thinking helps us sort through the barrage of information that regularly assails us, and it teaches us to process this information thoughtfully. Critical awareness of what our leaders are doing and the ability to understand and evaluate what they tell us is the lifeblood of democratic government.
- **We are better able to hold our own in political (or other) arguments.** We think more logically and clearly, we are more persuasive, and we impress people with our grasp of reason and fact. There is not a career in the world that is not enhanced by critical thinking skills.
- **We become much better students.** The skills of the critical thinker are the skills of the scholar. When we read critically, we figure out what is important quickly and easily, we know what questions to ask to tease out more meaning, we can decide whether what we are reading is worth our time, and we know what to take with us and what to discard.

It may sound a little dull and dusty, but critical thinking can be a vital and enjoyable activity. When we are good at it, it empowers and liberates us. We are not at the mercy of others' conclusions and decisions. We can evaluate facts and arguments for ourselves, turning conventional wisdom upside down and exploring the world of ideas with confidence.

How does one learn to think critically?

The trick to learning how to think critically is to do it. It helps to have a model to follow, however, and we provide one in *The Big Picture*, which traces this process. The focus of critical thinking here is on understanding political argument. Argument in this case refers not to a confrontation or a fight, but rather to a contention, based on a set of assumptions, supported by evidence, and leading to a clear, well-developed conclusion with consequences for how we understand the world.

Critical thinking involves constantly asking questions about the arguments we read: Who has created it, what is the basic case and what values underlie it, what evidence is used to back it up, what conclusions are drawn, and what difference does the whole thing make? To help you remember the questions to ask, we have used a mnemonic device that creates an acronym from the five major steps of critical thinking. Until asking these questions becomes second nature, thinking of them as CLUES to critical thinking about American politics will help you keep them in mind. To help you develop the critical thinking habit, readings featured in each chapter of this book will provide a CLUES model for you to follow.

This is what CLUES stands for:

- Consider the source and the audience
- Lay out the argument and the underlying values and assumptions
- Uncover the evidence
- Evaluate the conclusion
- Sort out the political significance

When you read each of the *CLUES to Critical Thinking* features in the book, keep in mind *The Big Picture*.

Source: Adapted from the authors' "Preface to the Student," in Christine Barbour and Matthew J. Streb, eds., *Clued in to Politics: A Critical Thinking Reader in American Government*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010).

If you know who is involved in a political situation, what is at stake, and how (under what rules) the conflict over resources will eventually be resolved, you will have a pretty good grasp of what is going on, and you will probably be able to figure out new situations, even when your days of taking a course in American government are far behind you. To get you in the habit of asking those questions, we have designed several features in this text explicitly to reinforce them.

As you found at the start of your reading, each chapter opens with key tasks that we expect you to be able to perform, *In Your Own Words*, which will help you to set goals for your reading and evaluate whether or not you've accomplished them. Each chapter begins with a *What's at Stake . . . ?* feature that analyzes a political situation in terms of what various groups of citizens stand to win or lose, and ends with *Let's Revisit . . .*, in which we reconsider those issues once you have the substantive material of the chapter under your belt. We also focus our analysis along the way by closing each major chapter section, beginning in Chapter 2, with a *Pause and Review* feature that explicitly addresses the questions of who gets what, and how they get it; concisely summarizes what you have learned; and asks you to put your understanding in your own words.

We reinforce the task of analysis with a *Don't Be Fooled by . . .* feature that discusses ways you can improve your critical thinking skills by analyzing (that is, taking apart) different sources of information about politics. Similarly, *CLUES to Critical Thinking* readings in each chapter provide a text that is central to the material you are learning to give you some practice in using the critical thinking model we described in *The Big Picture*.

In addition to focusing on analysis of what you read, we offer graphics that will help you visualize processes and data that affect and are affected by politics. *The Big Picture* infographics relate the book's themes to the big concepts, big processes, and big data that will help you make sense of American politics. *Snapshots of America* provide you with a lot more data to help you understand who the American people are and to help you dig into the question of what challenges our diversity poses for the task of governance. Finally, we highlighted key questions throughout each chapter, challenging you to take the analysis one step further: What if the rules or the actors or the stakes were different? What would be the impact on American politics? How would it work differently?

EVALUATION

As political scientists, however, we want not only to understand how the system works but also to assess how well it works. A second task of critical thinking is evaluation, or seeing how well something measures up according to a standard or principle. We could choose any number of standards by which to evaluate American politics, but the most relevant, for most of us, is the principle of democracy and the role of citizens.

We can draw on the traditions of self-interested and public-interested citizenship and the opportunities offered by digital citizenship to evaluate the powers, opportunities, and challenges presented to American citizens by the system of government under which they live. In addition to the two competing threads of citizenship in America, we can also look at the kinds of action that citizens engage in and whether they take advantage of the options available to them. For instance, citizen action might be restricted by the rules, or by popular interest, to merely choosing between competing candidates for office, as in the model of elite democracy described earlier. Alternatively, the rules of the system might encourage citizens to band together in groups to get what they want, as they do in pluralist democracy. Or the system might be open and offer highly motivated citizens a variety of opportunities to get involved, as they do in participatory democracy. American democracy has elements of all three of these models, and one way to evaluate citizenship in America is to look at what opportunities for each type of participation exist and whether citizens take advantage of them.

Why does critical thinking feel like so much more work than "regular thinking"?

To evaluate how democratic the United States is, we include in most chapters a section called *The Citizens and . . .*, which looks at the changing concept and practice of citizenship in this country with respect to the chapter's subject matter. That feature looks at citizenship from many angles, considering the following types of questions: What role do "the people" have in American politics? How has that role expanded or diminished over time? What kinds of political participation do the rules of American politics (formal and informal) allow, encourage, or require citizens to take? What kinds of political participation are discouraged, limited, or forbidden? Do citizens take advantage of the opportunities for political action that the rules provide them? How do they react to the rules that limit their participation? How have citizens in different times exercised their rights and responsibilities? What do citizens need to do to keep the republic? How democratic is the United States?

To put all this in perspective, the book uses two features to give you a more concrete idea of what citizen participation might mean on a personal level. *Profiles in Citizenship* introduce you to individuals who have committed a good part of their lives to public service and focus on what citizenship means to those people and what inspired them to take on a public role. The *Snapshots of America*, described earlier, provide demographic data to bring the diversity of the American citizenry front and center and to highlight the difficulties inherent in uniting into a single nation individuals and groups with such different and often conflicting interests.

We have outlined several features that recur throughout this book. Remember that each is designed to help you to think critically about American politics, either by analyzing power in terms of who gets what, and how, or by evaluating citizenship to determine how well we are following Benjamin Franklin's mandate to keep the republic.

In Your Own Words Apply the five steps of critical thinking to this book's themes of power and citizenship in American politics.

THE BIG PICTURE:
How to Think Critically

Follow the CLUES to Critical Thinking

CONSIDER THE SOURCE

ASK YOURSELF

- *Where does this information come from?*
- *Who is the author?*
- *Who are they talking to?*
- *How do the source and the audience shape the author's perspective?*

LAY OUT THE ARGUMENT

ASK YOURSELF

- *What argument is the author asking you to accept?*
- *If you accept the argument, what values are you also buying?*
- *Does the argument hold together logically?*

UNCOVER THE EVIDENCE

ASK YOURSELF

- *Did the author do research to back up the conclusions?*
- *Is there any evidence or data that is not provided that should be there?*
- *If there is no evidence provided, does there need to be?*

OCEAN OF EXCUSES

I read it on the Internet. It must be true.

My parents always watch this TV station. Of course it's reliable.

Arguments sound like conflict. I hate conflict.

Values are private. It's rude to pry.

Logic gives me hives!

Data mean numbers. Numbers freak me out.

BRIDGE to ENLIGHTENMENT

What, do I look like some kind of detective?