CHAPTER 1
THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Chapter Goals and Learning Objectives

Probably one of your questions you ask of a classmate on the first day of class is, “Where are you from?” To better know and understand a person, you want to know about his or her history and background. Similarly, to know and understand our government, you need to understand its origins, its history, and its beginnings. The government we have did not suddenly descend from the sky, *deus ex machina*, one day perfectly formed. It has deep roots in the past. To understand our present, we must understand our history, the circumstances, ideas, and people who drove our development as a nation. Where did we come from? What were and are our goals? Why does our government look, act, and function the way it does? Why *this* form of government and not another?

You may be one of the many students holding this book, looking at the first chapter at the start of the new semester thinking, “I don’t like politics and I’m not interested in government!” Stated bluntly, while you might not be interested in government, government is darn sure interested in you. From the moment of your very conception until you’re dead and buried, and every moment in between, the government is involved in all aspects of your life. How so, you ask? Ask yourself: Will abortion be legal or illegal? My Mom has Parkinson’s disease—why won’t they let stem cell research cure it? Why are tuition rates soaring and student loans harder to get? What kind of education will my kids get when I get married? Will I be sent to a war in Iraq or some other far-off country? Is my sexual choice legal? Are we safe from terrorists? Will my civil liberties be curtailed in the effort to combat terrorism? Will there be a decent job for me in the future? Will Social Security be there when I’m old? Should my Grandfather, who is terminally ill and suffering severely, be euthanized at his request?

Who makes these decisions? Most directly, our representatives in government: in the legislative, executive and judicial branches of both the state and national government. In our republican form of government, you and I pick the people who make those decisions—if we vote; if we involve ourselves. If we don’t vote, if we don’t get involved, someone else picks those people who act in our behalf in government, and the decisions they make won’t reflect what you want and need. From the standpoint of self-interest alone, apathy is an unwise attitude to hold about government and politics.

Our government is, essentially, made up of the people who understand it and take part in it. Can you make a difference? Can you protect yourself from the abuses of government? Can you improve your community? Can you try to make a better life for yourself and your family through having a role in politics and government? You can better answer these questions when you have an understanding of our government, its structure, and its foundations.
Equipped with such understandings, you can be a better citizen and, in turn, make your life, your community, and your government better. This nation is changing. It always has. It always will. Many Americans are not satisfied with the workings of the government. Many Americans do not understand how their government works. This leads to apathy and frustration. You may be one of these people. However, a thorough understanding of the system, its history, and, structure can help you improve and reform the system. Armed with this knowledge, you can become a more active participant in the political process.

This chapter is designed to give you an overview of the subject of the text as well as a look at the theories and ideas that underpin our political and economic system. The main topic headings of the chapter are:

- The Origins of American Government: What It Is and Why We Need It
- The Roots of American Government: Where Did the Ideas Come From?
- American Political Culture and the Characteristics of American Democracy
- Changing Characteristics of the American People
- Political Ideology: Its Role in the World and in American Politics
- Current Attitudes Toward American Government

In each section, there are certain facts and ideas that you should strive to understand. Many are in boldface type and appear in both the narrative and in the glossary at the end of the book. Other ideas, dates, facts, events, people, etc. are more difficult to pull out of the narrative. (Keep in mind that studying for objective tests [multiple choice, T/F] is different than studying for essay tests. See the Study Guide section on test taking for hints on study skills.)

In general, after you finish reading and studying this chapter, you should understand the following:

- the origins of American government: what it is and why we need it (essentially, the functions and structure of American government)
- the roots of American government and the philosophies that guided its development
- American political culture and the characteristics of American democracy (the enduring values that have long defined American democracy)
- the changing characteristics of the American people (such as age, racial make-up and ethnic composition)
- political ideologies of Americans and how they affect government policy
- how Americans view their government and the role it plays in their lives
Chapter Outline and Key Points

In this section, you are provided with a basic outline of the chapter and key words/points you should know. Use this outline to develop a complete outline of the material. Write the definitions or further explanations for the terms. Use the space provided in this workbook or rewrite that material in your notebook. This will help you study and remember the material in preparation for your tests, assignments, and papers.

the Framers—

Preamble to the United States Constitution—

“best hope” and “last, best hope on earth”—

Government: What It is and Why We Need It

government—

citizen—

politics—

Functions of Government

“to form a more perfect union”—

establishing government—

ensuring domestic tranquility—

providing for the common defense—

promoting the general welfare—

securing the blessings of liberty—

Types of Government

monarchy—

totalitarianism—

oligarchy—

democracy—
Aristotle’s Classifications of Government (Table 1.1)—

Roots of American Government: Where Did the Ideas Come From?

The Reformation and the Enlightenment: Questioning the Divine Right of Kings

Enlightenment—
divine right of kings—
Isaac Newton—
the Pilgrims—
social contract—

Hobbes, Locke, and a Social Contract Theory of Government

social contract theory—
Thomas Hobbes—
Leviathan (1651)—
“solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short”—
John Locke—
Second Treatise on Civil Government (1698) and Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690)—
natural rights—
life, liberty, and property—
Thomas Jefferson and the original draft of the Declaration of Independence—

Devising a National Government in the American Colonies

Jean-Jacques Rousseau—
Virginia House of Burgesses—
“taxation without representation”—
direct democracy—
indirect democracy (representative democracy)—
republic—

**American Political Culture and the Characteristics of American Democracy**

political culture—

**Personal Liberty**

personal liberty—
the change from “freedom from” to “freedom to”—

**Equality**

political equality—

**Popular Consent and Majority Rule**

popular consent—
majority rule—
minority rights—

**Popular Sovereignty**—

popular sovereignty—
natural law—

**Civil Society**

civil society—

**Individualism**

individualism—
“certain unalienable rights”—
Religious Faith

religion and religious faith in America—

wall of separation—

Christian evangelicals—

Changing Characteristics of the American People

things Americans have in common—

focus on differences among Americans—

Changing Size and Population

U.S. population today and when Constitution adopted—

U.S. population, 1880-2040 (Figure 1.2)—

population and representation in Congress—

Changing Demographics of the U.S. Population

Changes in Racial and Ethnic Composition

immigration—

Race and Ethnicity in America: 1967 and 2006 (Figure 1.3)—

Huntington Theory of Hispanization—

Changes in Age Cohort Composition

Baby Boomers—

America is Getting Older (Figure 1.4)—

potential effects of aging population—

Changes in Family and Family Size

factors affecting family size and household arrangements—

“ideal” family size in 1949 and 2004—
single-parent families—

**Implications of These Changes**

illegal immigration: problems and reactions—

anti-immigration sentiments in America—

affirmative action programs—

effects of demographics—

**Political Ideology: Its Role in the World and in American Politics**

ideologies—

two factors that shaped human history in 20th century (Isaiah Berlin)—

ideologies perform four key functions—

**Prevailing American Political Ideologies**

Adult Self-Identification as Liberal, Moderate, or Conservative, 1974-2006 (Figure 1.5)—

Conservatism

conservative—

social conservative—

Liberalism

liberal—

liberals favor equality—

**Problems with Political Labels**

studies show conservatives often take liberal positions on issues and vice-versa—

states are not uniformly “red” or “blue” (Figure 6.1)—
Current Attitudes Toward American Government

American Dream—

major sources of most American’s on-the-air news supplemented by growth of news and quasi-news outlets—

growth of Internet and blogs—

effects of news media dynamics (rush to be first with the news, instantaneous nature of communications, focus on personality and scandal)—

High Expectations

Americans’ relation to government (federal and state) in the first 150 years of our nation’s history—

the rise in public expectations of the federal government—

effect of unmet expectations on citizens—

A Missing Appreciation of the Good

our lack of faith in country’s institutions and symbols (Figure 1.7)—

Americans’ high standard of living due to governmental programs and protections (Table 1.2)—

everyday pervasive influence of government rulings or regulations in Americans’ lives—

the good government can do—

Mistrust of Politicians

Roper poll of Americans’ trust in politicians—

examples of scandals and misdeeds—

how most politicians act—
Voter Apathy

reasons presented for not voting—

Redefining Our Expectations

government’s role and our expectations—

redefining our ideas and expectations of government: what do we want?—

eamples of how various crises led to change—

Research Ideas and Possible Paper Topics

1) Further examine the Enlightenment and some of the political philosophers who developed concepts that the Founders incorporated into our system of government. What were some of the key ideas that formed the predicates for the government we have today?

2) Do you believe government is “good” or government is “bad” intrinsically? Or is government merely a tool, with the good or bad affects it produces a result of the intentions and abilities or those who control it? What are your expectations of government, if any? Does government affect your life in any way? Why or why not?

3) Discuss the nature of the challenges to America posed by the changing racial, ethnic, and age distribution in society. Look at the contemporary controversy regarding illegal immigration from Mexico as well as more philosophical arguments. Has the meaning of the phrase “We the People” from the Preamble to the United States Constitution changed from the meaning vested in that statement by the Founders?

4) What actions by Republicans led in 2006 to Americans turning control of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party? Was public cynicism about government and politics the principal factor? Was public cynicism limited only to the national scene or to states as well? Was public cynicism limited only to Republicans? Do you think public cynicism will continue in such a fashion through the presidential election in 2008, and with what result?
Web sites

**U.S. Census Bureau** offers information on the demographic, geographic, and economic make-up of our country. Includes the ability to search for state-level data.

http://www.census.gov

The **University of Michigan Documents Center** page titled “Statistical Resources on the Web for Political Science” provides a one-stop academic research site for students, listing numerous links to sites to assist in researching political, racial, ethnic, social, and other demographic information.

http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/stpolisc.html

The **Gallup Organization** offers up-to-date and historical perspectives on the opinions of the American public.

www.gallup.com

**Brandeis University’s** Political Philosophy Internet Resources Web page provides links to numerous sites of interest in political philosophy.

http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/polphil.html

To better understand the Enlightenment, go to a marvelous Web site developed by a high school history teacher in Mesquite, Texas titled **TeacherOz.com**. The Enlightenment page lists scores of resources. (The TeacherOz.com Web site received a recommendation by The History Channel.)

www.teacheroz.com/Enlightenment.htm

**PBSKids** presents an interactive Web page titled “How Does Government Affect Me?” While prepared for grammar school children, the site nevertheless can engage your thinking as to how government does indeed affect everyday life of students and other Americans. It is also a great site to share with, if you have any, your children or younger siblings.

http://pbskids.org/democracy/mygovt

**PBS P.O.V.** developed a Web site for the 2004 election on the question “Why Vote?” Although we have experienced another general election since it’s posting, the Web site provides interesting commentary from a wide range of citizens offering their “point of view” about voting or non-voting.

http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2004/election

**Yahoo.com.** Yahoo is a commercial search engine that has a wide variety of information. For our purposes, there is a government subheading of Yahoo that will provide you with links to many topics on government, regime type, ideology, political thought, and more.

http://dir.yahoo.com/Government
MULTIPLE CHOICE

1) The type of government where the rule of one in the interest of all, a government rejected by the Framers of the Constitution, is called a
a. monarchy.  
b. totalitarian state.  
c. oligarchy.  
d. democracy.

2) The first political philosopher to argue the necessity of government to control society because of mankind’s bestial tendencies, and that without government life would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short,” was
a. John Locke.  
b. Thomas Hobbes.  
c. Baron de Montesquieu.  
d. Jean Jacques Rousseau.

3) The idea that men form governments largely to preserve life, liberty, and property comes from
a. John Locke.  
b. Thomas Hobbes.  
c. Baron de Montesquieu.  
d. Jean Jacques Rousseau.

4) In the original draft of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson directly quoted which Enlightenment philosopher with regard to rights?
 a. John Locke  
b. Thomas Hobbes  
c. Baron de Montesquieu  
d. Jean Jacques Rousseau

5) The belief that all people are free and equal by natural right and that this requires that a government which rules the people be one of the consent of those governed is called
a. a monarchy.  
b. political culture.  
c. an oligarchy.  
d. the social contract theory.
6) A system of government in which representatives of the people are chosen by ballot is called
   a. hegemonic democracy.
   b. tutelary democracy.
   c. indirect democracy.
   d. direct democracy.

7) The set of attitudes, beliefs, and values that people have toward how their government should operate is called
   a. public opinion.
   b. norms.
   c. ideology.
   d. political culture.

8) The population of the United States around the time of the ratification of the Constitution was
   a. 1 million.
   b. 4 million.
   c. 30 million.
   d. 100 million.

9) For the first time in our nation’s history, the U.S. population is getting
   a. younger.
   b. older.
   c. shorter.
   d. thinner.

10) Because people in this country are living longer than ever before, which one of the following issues do you think this burgeoning population of voters might be most interested in?
   a. public school quality
   b. college loan programs
   c. tax cuts for parents of young children
   d. Social Security

11) An individual's coherent set of values and beliefs about the purpose and scope of government are called
   a. individualism.
   b. attitude.
   c. political culture.
   d. political ideology.
12) One who favors a free market and no governmental interference in personal and economic affairs is called a
a. libertarian.
b. conservative.
c. liberal.
d. mercantilist.

13) One who favors governmental regulation of the economy to protect the environment and the rights of workers, who stresses the need for social services to aid the poor, and who seeks to promote the values of equality through governmental action is called a
a. libertarian.
b. conservative.
c. liberal.
d. mercantilist.

14) Many Americans say they don't vote because they
a. have no time.
b. have no real choice.
c. are content.
d. All of the above.

15) Which of the following is an accurate description of Americans’ views of government?
a. Americans have high expectations for what government can accomplish.
b. Americans are generally trusting of politicians.
c. Many Americans are apathetic about voting.
d. Many Americans believe that government looks out for “people like me.”

TRUE/FALSE

1) The Reformation and the Enlightenment altered the nature of government as people began to believe they could also have a say in their own governance.

2) John Locke argued that man's natural state was war and government was necessary to restrain man's bestial tendencies.

3) A republic is an economic system based on the market.

4) The American system tries to balance the ideals of majority rule and minority rights.

5) A single member of the House of Representatives serves as many as 927,000 constituents in 2006.
6) Since the 1940s, the number of single-parent households in the United States has decreased dramatically.

7) Liberals favor local and state action over federal action and emphasizes less government regulation of the economy.

8) Studies show that people who identify themselves as conservatives never take liberal views on issues.

9) For some, the American dream includes the ability for their children to grow up to be president.

10) American voters get a chance to vote for candidates and issues in far fewer elections than voters in other countries.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

natural law and social contract theory

the theories of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke

monarchy, oligarchy, aristocracy, and democracy

direct democracy and indirect democracy

conservatism and liberalism

ESSAY AND SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1) The United States, seeking to overthrow the government of Saddam Hussein, invaded Iraq in 2003. Since the invasion and during the subsequent occupation, the U.S. has worked to create a new political, governmental, and economic structure in that country. What success has been achieved toward that goal and what measures has the U.S. used to foster the institution of democracy in Iraq? What type of governmental system existed under Saddam Hussein? What type exists now under Iraqi President Jalal Talabani? Is this an exercise of popular consent?

2) What is popular consent and what are its historical roots?

3) How does the Preamble of the United States Constitution reflect not only the structure of our government but also the character of the nation?

4) What is political culture in general and what is American political culture?
5) Discuss the roots of the American government. Discuss what philosophies guided the Founders of our country as they created a new system of government.

6) What are some of the characteristics of democracy in the United States? Compare democracy in the U.S. to other democracies in the world.

7) In order to understand the nature of the American government, one must know who the American people are. Discuss the demographics of the United States and the effects of these demographics on the political system.

8) Many Americans are displeased with their government and with politicians. Discuss why.

9) Discuss the changing nature of America and what it means to be an American, particularly in the world after September 11, 2001.

10) What expectations do you think most Americans have of their government and its leaders? What expectations do you have toward your government and its leaders? Are those expectations realistic? What is the role of government in meeting the needs of the people of this country and do you think it is meeting those functions?

ANSWERS TO STUDY EXERCISES

MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS

1) a
2) b
3) a
4) a
5) d
6) c
7) d
8) b
9) b
10) d
11) d
12) a
13) c
14) d
15) c
TRUE/FALSE ANSWERS

1) T
2) F
3) F
4) T
5) T
6) F
7) F
8) F
9) T
10) F