

# Preface

## Understanding and Using This Book

### Unifying Themes: Accessibility, Relevance, and Choice

For many of us, government seems distant and irrelevant—in part because it's so big, in part because it's hard to draw the connection between what political figures do and the things that have meaning in our lives. I constantly talk to students who don't care about the political world, don't see how it affects them, or don't wish to find out. Maybe you feel that way, too. If you do, it certainly doesn't help to have an American government text that portrays government as a far-away abstraction. Too often, I've heard my students complain about government texts being too plodding and inaccessible. I've heard similar complaints from professors.

Here, you'll be presented with an entirely different version of American government. Think of it as an up-close version, where abstractions give way to gritty fundamentals, revealing a government composed of all-too-ordinary people who share our daily concerns and priorities. Members of Congress struggle to fit in and find ways to get their homework done. Lobbyists struggle to beat out other lobbyists and make the case that will win over members of Congress. Supreme Court justices play high-stakes poker with their colleagues in an effort to shape their decisions on a case without realizing they've been influenced. The political system is filled with situations like these and with people trying to do their jobs under conditions of uncertainty and in the face of great time pressures.

If this sounds familiar, that's the point. Government cannot be relevant to our lives until we're able to see it in terms that make sense to us. This book will encourage you to experience American government in a way to which you can relate, because the truth is that when you strip away the generalizations and remove the distance, the people and situations you encounter in Washington or in your state capital are remarkably like those you encounter in any institution or social situation—including college.

Making government less mysterious and more real should make it easier for you to wrestle with the central question of the book: What do you want your relationship to government and politics to be? We all have a choice to

participate in the political system or to opt out, and if we choose to participate, we also can decide how much and in what form we want to get involved. There are a lot of options, starting with voting and branching out to include reading about politics, signing an online petition, giving money to a political cause or candidate, sending email to an elected representative, engaging in protest demonstrations, and much more.

Because the choice of whether and how to participate is deeply personal, only you can make it, and by the time you've finished with this book, I sincerely hope you are interested in doing just that: deciding what you want your political role to be. I could spend sixteen chapters telling you why I believe it's important for you to participate—and I do believe it's important, or I wouldn't have bothered writing this book—but what's the point of that? It's far more important for you to decide for yourself what, if anything, you're going to do, to have ownership of your decision, and to feel comfortable with it. You may conclude that you don't want to have a role in politics or that it doesn't matter whether or not you get involved. With this book, I'll help you make an informed decision, whatever that decision may be.

### How This Book Is Organized

Think of this book as a round-trip journey on which you are the navigator. It's a round-trip journey because if you were to read the book straight through, you'd find that in the last four chapters of the book, we're back to talking about some of the same issues we discuss in the first two, reconsidering them in light of everything we've learned along the way. In five parts encompassing sixteen chapters, *American Government: Your Voice, Your Future* 6e maps out a route designed to take you from understanding your place in the political system to how people connect with government, how the political system works and what it does, and finally—to come full circle—how responsive it is to your demands and desires.

### Part 1 Why Should We Care about American Democracy?

We'll start with background on the fundamental concepts you'll need to understand if you're going to be able to make an intelligent decision about what you want your

political role, if any, to be. Although this is the most abstract portion of the book, the concepts are illustrated with concrete examples. Think of this part as a presentation of the building blocks you'll need for the rest of the book and the place where you'll encounter foundational questions about the role and purpose of government that will set the tone for the discussions that follow.

**Chapter 1 Should We Care about Politics?** The question posed by the chapter title is one you will be able to answer for yourself by the time you've finished reading this book. It's a personal question with no correct answer, but an informed response necessitates understanding how government fits into everyday life—whether we care about politics or not. Chapter 1 addresses how societies come together to make choices about governing themselves, discussing the fundamentals of such things as authority, legitimacy, power, equality, and liberty.

**Chapter 2 The Constitution and Federalism: Setting the Ground Rules for Politics** The Constitution establishes the broad outlines for how American government operates, and federalism is one of the most important and distinctive features of the American system. Together, the Constitution and federalism shape the rules for American politics. We'll look at the origin, makeup, and evolution of both, keeping an eye on how the ground rules influence who is favored and who is disadvantaged in the political process.

## Part 2 Citizenship and Democracy

Moving from a discussion of concepts to a discussion of their application, this section explores the parallel issues of how the United States developed as a nation and how individual Americans develop—or don't develop—into political creatures. We'll examine public opinion about politics and politicians, the elements of political culture that lead people to identify as Americans, aspects of political socialization that acquaint us with that culture while teaching the basics of civic involvement, and the kinds of political participation in which, once socialized, we may choose to engage.

**Chapter 3 Public Opinion: What Is It, and What Does It Have to Do with Me?** To answer the question posed in the chapter title, we'll look at three important components of public opinion: political knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs. Political knowledge is our factual understanding of politics, and we'll find that it tends to be not particularly extensive. Political attitudes encompass how we feel about politics, such as whether we feel distant from political figures and what they do. Political beliefs involve what we think is true about politics. Together, these elements of public opinion influence the way we relate to what politicians do.

**Chapter 4 Political Culture, Socialization, and Participation** By broadening the discussion of public opinion to include issues of national and individual identity, we consider ways that Americans unite as a nation, come of age as political individuals, and engage in political action. National self-identification is rooted in something we call political culture. The process of political socialization explores how important people in our lives shape our adult perspectives on politics and government. The political activities we might consider doing encompass a variety of forms of political participation—from voting to attending protest rallies.

## Part 3 Connections between Citizens and Government

Once we have explored the nature of public opinion and the origins of political involvement, we'll look at three institutions that link us to the people who represent us in government: the mass media, political parties, and interest groups. When working properly, each of these institutions functions like the connective tissue of government by channeling citizen demands and concerns to political figures and information about political figures to citizens. As we'll see, sometimes these connections aren't as clear or as simple as you might expect.

**Chapter 5 Mass Media: Influencing What We Think About** The media comprise the first of the three linking institutions that we'll examine. Most everyone is familiar with media like television, radio, newspapers, and the Internet, but we may have thought of these media only as sources of entertainment. They also play a central role in politics by providing us directly and indirectly with information that can shape the way we think about our government and the people in it. We'll look at how they do it and evaluate how effectively the media keep us informed about politics and government.

**Chapter 6 Political Parties: Connecting Us to the Electoral Process** Political parties may be less familiar to us than the media, even though they help to organize a lot of political activity, particularly in terms of how candidates for office are recruited, funded, and ultimately elected. This is the case despite the fact that the Constitution does not provide for parties. We'll look at why the United States has only two major parties (most nations have more), explore how political parties have evolved through American history, and examine how parties are organized and what they do.

**Chapter 7 Campaigns and Elections: Vehicles for Democratic Expression** One of the most important functions of political parties is structuring the way we choose elected officials. We'll devote a chapter to examining this essential role of parties in connecting candidates and voters. We'll spend some time in the cut-throat world of political campaigns, where the stakes

are high and the winner takes all, examining the process for selecting candidates, the strategies candidates use to try to win elections, and the vital role of money in the campaign process.

**Chapter 8 Interest Groups: Accessing Government through Common Membership** Probably the least familiar of our three linking organizations, interest groups are nonetheless vital to determining important national policies, as people who organize around common interests are the ones who are best positioned to be heard by elected leaders. We will consider what interest groups are, where they come from, why people belong to them, the resources they have to get the ear of government officials, and the way they use those resources to advance their agendas.

## Part 4 Institutions of Democracy

The discussion of institutions that connect us with government will lead directly to Part 4, where we address the operation of the institutions that constitute government: Congress, the presidency, the federal bureaucracy, and the judiciary. Rather than regarding them as abstractions, we will treat these institutions as organizations run by people just like us, who (also just like us) have goals and objectives and a lot of work to do, and who try to advance their objectives as best they can with limited resources. We'll look at the world of Washington as a place where lots of people press to get all sorts of things done, looking for allies to help them, while trying to dodge the equally determined efforts of those who oppose them.

**Chapter 9 Congress** We will begin Part 4 by looking at Congress. Like any institution, including your college or university, Congress operates under a set of unspoken rules that attempt to promote civility and encourage compromise. We'll look at these rules and how Congress is organized to facilitate legislative work—a rather messy process in which it's far easier to frustrate someone else's initiative than it is to get something accomplished.

**Chapter 10 The Presidency** The presidency is probably the most visible office in the world, yet it can be surprisingly mysterious—and complex. There is a highly institutionalized side to the presidency composed of a web of offices and presidential advisors operating within the White House. At the same time, the presidency is the most personal of government institutions, responding more to the character of its chief occupant than any other political office. We'll look at how strong presidents have shaped the office and at the many—often contradictory—roles we ask the president to assume.

**Chapter 11 The Federal Bureaucracy** The president is the chief executive, and the branch of govern-

ment he ostensibly heads is the executive branch, or the federal bureaucracy. Even though it may be less well known than the president himself, the federal bureaucracy has an important place in the functioning of Washington. Hierarchical and specialized, it is a sometimes explosive mix of lifelong civil servants and political appointees who serve at the president's pleasure. With the president as the head of the executive branch, you might think that bureaucrats would be responsive to him, but the reality is far more complicated. We'll explore why as we examine the functions bureaucrats perform.

**Chapter 12 The Judiciary** Perhaps the most mysterious branch of government, the judiciary can be just as political as any other institution—despite its dark-robed justices and secretive deliberations. From state courts to the federal courts, up to and including the United States Supreme Court, the judiciary faces a dilemma: It is charged with making judgments it has no power to enforce. As we look at how the court system is constituted, we will explore the informal mechanisms available to judges and justices that give them standing to confront others in the political system.

## Part 5 What Government Does and How Well It Works

We ask our government officials to do two important things: (1) to protect the rights and liberties discussed in Part 1 and (2) to make policy on behalf of the country. We'll see how some policies are more controversial than others and how even the least controversial policies can have their detractors. Does discord mean government isn't responding well to our needs—or is it just a characteristic of being human that we're going to have disagreements about the policies government produces? We'll consider these issues by looking at policy from the standpoint of government responsiveness. We'll examine how effectively the officials we discussed in Part 4 listen to the voices expressed through the institutions we discussed in Part 3—voices reflecting opinions and participation styles of people like us, as we discussed in Part 2.

**Chapter 13 Establishing Civil Rights** Civil rights policies ensure that the law treats everyone equally and protects individuals from discrimination. We will explore the history and development of civil rights law as it pertains to the struggle for equal treatment fought for by groups that have historically experienced discrimination in America: African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, women, Asian Americans, disabled individuals, LGBT individuals, and senior citizens.

**Chapter 14 Protecting Civil Liberties** Civil liberties are constitutional and legal protections against government infringement on personal freedoms. This encompasses a wide range of freedoms, almost all of



which are universally accepted in principle but may be controversial in practice. For instance, the Constitution prohibits the government from restricting religious freedom, but does this right extend to permitting prayer in public places? The Constitution establishes the right of Americans to bear arms, but is this a relatively unrestricted personal right to own firearms or a collective right to form militias? We will explore questions like these, which illustrate the complexity of civil liberties.

### **Chapter 15 Domestic Policy and Policy Making**

Domestic policies include budgetary decisions, regulations, and legislation pertaining to how Americans resolve domestic problems. Regulatory policies give government a role in adjusting the marketplace in ways that would not otherwise occur, in order to minimize hazards created by a free market or to maximize its benefits. Domestic legislation comes in several forms, most notably distributive policies, which claim tax dollars for projects or programs that could potentially benefit anyone, and redistributive policies, which transfer resources from one group to another. Because domestic policy decisions have “losers” who bear the cost and “winners” who benefit, they can be controversial. We’ll explore this controversy in detail.

**Chapter 16 Foreign and Defense Policies** Foreign policy is about how the United States conducts itself as a nation among other nations. It encompasses a host of economic, diplomatic, and military concerns, ranging from questions about global trade to relationships with other nations and how much to invest in maintaining a military. An extensive network of political advisors, diplomats, military personnel, and international leaders shape the direction of foreign policy and influence foreign policy decisions, which because of their life-and-death implications are among the most crucial decisions a nation has to make.

## **A Word on Critical Thinking**

You’ll find that the more you learn about how American government operates and affects your life, the more important it will be to have the skills to assess the many claims that politicians and elected officials make. Critical thinking skills make navigating the political process possible. With them, you can evaluate the content of news stories, determine if a policy proposal is in your best interest, assess whether claims made by your senator about her performance in office accurately represent her record—all things you’ll need to do to have a meaningful political voice.

That’s why this book approaches the American political system as a forum for developing critical thinking skills. From the outset, when we talk about the origins

and foundation of the political system, through the closing chapters that connect those foundations with policies that affect our daily lives, we’ll never stop asking questions about how theory is connected to practice, or why citizens, politicians, reporters, lobbyists, and judges act the way they do, or whether an observation about government is rooted in opinion or fact. Questions like these will develop and sharpen the analytical tools that will make us better citizens—and students—and help us make intelligent decisions about whether and how to participate in politics.

## **Before You Start: How to Use This Book**

Four things set *American Government: Your Voice, Your Future* 6e apart from conventional textbooks. They are:

- Student options: print and online versions
- Natural and relaxed writing style
- Modular presentation
- Ease of navigation and repetition

Here’s a quick overview of each one.

### **Student Options: Print and Online Versions**

*American Government: Your Voice, Your Future* 6e is available in multiple versions, offered online, in PDF, and in print. The content of each version is identical. The most affordable version is the online book, with upgrade options including the online version bundled with printable PDFs or paperback. What’s nice about the print version is it offers you the freedom of being unplugged—away from your computer or device. The people at Academic Media Solutions recognize that it’s difficult to read from a screen at length and that most of us read much faster from a piece of paper. The print options are particularly useful when you have extended print passages like this one to read. Then, you can turn to the online edition to take full advantage of the digital version, including search and notes. Use the search feature to locate and jump to discussions anywhere in the book. You can move out of the book to follow web links. You can navigate within and between chapters using a clickable table of contents. These features allow you to work at your own pace and in your own style, as you read and surf your way through the material. (See “Harnessing the Online Version” for more tips.)

Whether you’re working in print or online, each chapter concludes with a set of features designed to reinforce and expand what you’ve learned, including a concise chapter review, a list of key terms and definitions, an annotated bibliography that lists readings you could consult for more details, and a list of notes with follow-up information.

## Natural and Relaxed Writing Style

Conventional textbooks supply you with information. *American Government: Your Voice, Your Future* 6e is a book that can teach. It's not a substitute for the learning you do in class—no book can be—but it is a core learning tool in a way that traditional books cannot be. The difference lies in the way the material is presented to you. Some of this comes from the interactive capability of working online, but an important component of teaching is how information is presented. That's where the style of the book comes into play.

I'm sure you've already noticed that this book has an informal, open quality. That's by design. The intent is to have a conversation between author and reader, much like you would find in a first-person novel or an in-class lecture. The philosophy that guided the writing of this book is that learning is a dynamic process and that we learn best when we interact with the material—when we feel engaged in the story a book tells. In this regard, both the online and print versions are designed to be interactive learning devices. Both present a detailed and thoughtful account of the people, processes, systems, and institutions that comprise American government in an engaging, challenging, personalized, true-to-life manner that talks to you rather than down to you or past you.

## Modular Presentation

Most of us are used to learning one chunk of information at a time. So *American Government: Your Voice, Your Future* 6e reduces information to its component parts for easier digestion. You may have noticed how this preface is broken into small, modular sections; in the online version, it's on several brief screens that you can move through quickly and easily. The entire book follows this format.

Moreover, the construction of this book permits some deviation from the traditional linear textbook model, where material is presented through a running text narrative offset with secondary material in boxes. In this book, the set-aside information is not secondary at all, but core text that appears in pedagogical boxes. These features may illuminate or elaborate on a point in the text, or they may use something in the text as a point of departure for a related discussion. They should be regarded as core material, not peripheral content you can ignore.

This is important to remember because it defies convention. You may have seen textbooks that are dotted with little bordered “boxes” that scream, “This is secondary material—don't read me!” Such is not the case with the boxes in this text. Far from it. As you navigate the book, you will find that these boxes supplement the core text by explaining complicated processes in simple terms, placing material about American government in a global context, and challenging you to think about issues and political events. In particular, you will encounter:

**Demystifying Government** boxes, which clarify things about American government that might otherwise seem cloudy or complex;

**Global Topics** boxes, which invite you to think comparatively about American government in an increasingly interconnected world; and

**Biography** boxes, which illustrate the lives of key political figures, helping you to figure out how they fit into the American political system.

You'll find glossary terms and footnotes in this material, just like you'll find in the body of a chapter. The only difference is in the way you navigate through them. Having material set aside like this permits you to read ahead and come back if you so choose. It's another way this book presents you with a nonlinear approach to the material. You just have to remember not to ignore it.

## Ease of Navigation and Repetition

Whether you're working online or with print, you'll find that the design of the book allows you to move quickly and easily within and between chapters, jumping ahead to explore an essay or game that applies to what you're reading, bouncing back to a place you've already been to review something you haven't seen in a while. Because repetition is an important part of learning, key terms introduced early in the book are emphasized again when they appear in later chapters, and because we often forget some of what we learned weeks and months ago, key segments of early chapters are repeated for quick review when they are relevant to understanding material in later chapters. It's all part of the philosophy of having a book that teaches rather than simply presents information.

## Harnessing the Online Version

The online version of *American Government: Your Voice, Your Future* 6e offers the following features to facilitate learning and to make using the book an easy, enjoyable experience:

- **Easy-to-navigate/clickable table of contents**—You can surf through the book quickly by clicking on chapter headings, or first- or second-level section headings. And the table of contents can be accessed from anywhere in the book.
- **Key concepts search**—Type in a term, and a search engine will return every instance of that term in the book; then jump directly to the selection of your choice with a click of your mouse.
- **Notes and highlighting**—The online version includes study apps such as notes and highlighting. Each of these apps can be found in the tools icon embedded in the Academic Media Solutions/Textbook Media's online eBook reading platform

(<http://www.academicmediasolutions.com>; <http://www.textbookmedia.com>).

- **Upgrades**—The online version includes the ability to purchase additional study aids that enhance the learning experience.

## Instructor Supplements

In addition to its student-friendly features and pedagogy, the variety of student formats available, and the uniquely affordable pricing options designed to provide students with the flexibility that best fits any budget and/or learning style, *American Government: Your Voice, Your Future*, 6e comes with the following teaching and learning aids:

- **Test Item File**—An extensive set of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions for every chapter for creating original quizzes and exams.
- **Instructor's Manual**—An enhanced version of the book offering assistance in preparing lectures, identifying learning objectives, developing essay exams and assignments, and constructing course syllabi.
- **PowerPoint Presentations**—Key points in each chapter are illustrated in a set of PowerPoint files designed to assist with instruction.

## Student Supplements and Upgrades (Additional purchase required)

- **Lecture Guide**—This printable lecture guide is designed for student use and is available as an in-class resource or study tool. Note: Instructors can request the PowerPoint version of these slides to use as developed or to customize.
- **Study Guide**—A printable version of the online study guide is available via downloadable PDF chapters for easy self-printing and review.
- **Online Video Labs with Student Worksheets**—A collection of high-quality, dynamic, and sometimes humorous video segments (contemporary and classic) produced by a variety of news, entertainment, and academic sources, accessed via the web. Organized by chapter, the video segments illustrate key topics/issues discussed in the chapters. Each video segment is accompanied by a student worksheet that consists of a series of discussion questions that help students connect the themes presented in the video segment with key topics discussed in the specific chapter. Instructors are provided with suggested answers for each worksheet (for questions not based on student opinion).