

An abstract, textured background featuring a large, faint, and somewhat obscured face in the upper right quadrant. The face appears to be composed of white and grey tones against a dark, swirling backdrop. Below the face, there are various colored strokes, including a prominent red one. In the lower left, several chess pieces are scattered, including red and yellow pawns, and green spheres. The overall composition is layered and complex, with a sense of depth and movement.

W. LANCE  
BENNETT

# INSIDE THE SYSTEM

CULTURE, INSTITUTIONS, AND POWER  
IN AMERICAN POLITICS

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IN AMERICAN POLITICS

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# PREFACE

**L**ike most teachers of the introductory course in American government, my goal is to bring the material to life for the students. It can be challenging to grasp the logic behind a complex government design that includes separate national institutions, strong state governments, and a host of unique features—from filibusters to the electoral college. If presented as a vast collection of facts to be memorized, government often remains a distant and puzzling abstraction. Yet the classroom comes alive when topical discussions are held on issues such as abortion, the deficit, affirmative action, bureaucratic mismanagement, or balancing environmental protection with economic growth. For many students, learning begins when they see the connections between these political issues and the workings of the government. This textbook sets the workings of government in the broader context of politics in American society.

## POLITICS AS PERSPECTIVE

Is it possible to talk about politics in a mainstream text without introducing a narrow point of view? My experience in the classroom suggests that it is, if one pursues an approach that might be termed “political realism.” Clearly, there are and have always been profound political conflicts in society. Rather than dismiss or even shy away from these conflicts, the first step for a political realist is to recognize these as signs of democracy at work. The next step is to move beyond debates over who is right or wrong about an issue and analyze how political players advance or defend their positions. When developed like this, the approach links politics and government; it enables students to evaluate hotly contested issues, and it motivates learning about how government actually works. Thus, this text strikes a balance between political science and politics, using each to explain and explore the other.

## INSIDE THE SYSTEM

To help students see how political situations develop, this book introduces the idea of government in the context of a larger political system. The simple framework of a political system presented here involves three core elements: institutions, culture, and power. First, institutions are presented as the foundation of the system. Next, the political culture that *shapes* these institutions and that serves as a source for much political behavior is emphasized. Bringing political culture into play reminds us that politics begins with enduring conflicts and tensions over core values: freedom, social order, equal rights, morality, patriotism, and the role of government in society. Explaining our distinctive political culture is made easy by addressing familiar struggles that most citizens experience firsthand: the eternal question of how much individual freedom we can tolerate before social order is lost; the problem of making sure individual freedoms do not deprive others of an equal opportunity to compete for the American Dream; deciding how much government involvement is desirable in working out these conflicts. These and other themes from the political culture put students squarely into the political picture.

Finally, our overview of the political system is completed by describing patterns of power in society. When citizens make their demands on government, they also mobilize what power they have to make government officials act. One of the most fascinating aspects of politics is how people who lack one political resource, such as money, may make up for it by mobilizing other resources, such as voter movements or political protests. Understanding the ways in which power is mobilized by different groups in society helps explain how government responds to different people and their causes. This book introduces students to three leading



models of power in the U.S. political system: majoritarianism, the idea of majority rule; pluralism, the idea that many groups exercise influence and compete with one another; and elitism, the idea that wealthy or well-connected elites often gain a political advantage. Rather than promote a single picture of power, however, this book shows readers that each perspective on power can be useful in understanding particular situations. By weighing these theories, then, students are encouraged to think critically about what makes the government work and thus come to terms with the ultimate question of democratic theory: *Who governs?*

### ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT

The basic organization of this book remains fairly conventional; it covers all the major topics of an introductory course in much the same order and with similar attention to research and factual detail found in most major textbooks. Departures from basic organization are minor and are intended to enhance students' grasp of the material.

The idea of a political system and a simple definition of politics are presented in the first chapter. Instructors who wish to present their own perspective (or to emphasize the general theme of politics over the specific ideas of culture, institutions, and power) may wish to start their reading assignments with Chapter 2. The nation's founding and the Constitution are presented over two chapters instead of the usual one. Chapter 2 explains the politics that shaped the Constitution, and Chapter 3 emphasizes the workings of the Constitution and its impact on contemporary politics. Chapter 4 enlivens the sometimes dull subject of federalism with a broad look at the historical conflicts and struggles over race, economy, and rights that have been played out in the balance between states and the national government. The emphasis in Chapter 5 on rights as the American citizen's most personal political resource explains the decision to introduce rights and liberties early in the book.

The civic culture of participation is covered fully in chapters 6–11, on, respectively, opinion, participation, interest groups, parties, elections, and the media. I am pleased that this

coverage of participation and political interest organization has been so well received by pre-publication reviewers. The media chapter is, I believe, the most extensive of any text, featuring standard First Amendment issues along with sections on how the news is produced and how its status as a commercial product affects political content.

The treatment of institutions in chapters 12–16 follows the conventional organization of these topics presented in most major textbooks—with two exceptions. First, the topic of Congress has been divided into two chapters. Chapter 12 covers the workings of the legislative process, and chapter 13 evaluates the inside politics that affects the performance of the institution. A highlight of Chapter 13 is an in-depth look at how the career calculations of individual members affect what Congress does. Second, the topic of the executive branch is also divided into two chapters. Chapter 14 focuses on the president as a national leader, and Chapter 15 explores the politics inside the bureaucracy from the standpoint of how presidents try to manage a vast set of organizations that have independent political ties to Congress and interest groups. Chapter 16, on the judiciary, explains the unique role of law and courts in the American system, with special attention to how the Supreme Court operates.

The concluding chapters on public policy (chapters 17–20) emphasize how all of the above-mentioned parts of the system work together (and sometimes do not) to create the guidelines for government action that we know as policy. There are several departures here from most traditional textbooks. First, an overview chapter (17) helps students to think about policy as a political process. This chapter integrates themes presented throughout the book, and provides a simple framework for understanding how government policies develop. Chapter 18, on social policy, compares three broad areas (health, education, and welfare) and shows the different political forces at work in each. Chapter 19, on economic policy, introduces the economic terms and theories that are increasingly heard in national debates about economic issues, and it explains the inner workings of fiscal, monetary, and regulatory policies. Chapter 20, on military and foreign



policy, looks to future domestic and international issues that may be raised by an emerging new world order.

## FEATURES

One goal of this journey inside the U.S. political system is to make basic facts and concepts memorable by giving readers a satisfying taste of political analysis. Another goal is to make the material useful to student readers as citizens long after the course itself is over. To reinforce these goals, this book contains these features:

- All chapters open with a *political issue or conflict* that has appeared prominently in the news. This creates a real-world reference for the material in the chapter. Also, the opening raises questions of enduring political importance, and can serve as a guide to help students to recognize similar situations in the future.
- At the close of each chapter is a *Revisited* section that re-examines the main concepts, relates these concepts to broader issues, and reveals their relevance to the reader's life today.
- All chapters conclude with *A Citizen's Question*, to promote thinking about how material from the chapter may be incorporated into a personal philosophy of citizen participation. Some of these questions are, naturally, more philosophical—involving personal questions about dealing with authority or carrying out a citizen's obligations—while others are more practical—informing readers on how to contact political parties or join interest organizations.
- Every chapter contains at least one *Inside the System* feature essay that illustrates various examples of culture, institutions, or power in action.
- Every chapter contains at least one *How We Compare* feature essay that relates important features of the U.S. system to those of other nations. Comparison enriches the learning experience and provides critical understanding of how various systems solve similar problems.

- Whenever possible, historical perspectives show students how American politics has changed, often through the involvement and participation of “ordinary” citizens.
- Each chapter contains a photo essay, *The Players*, which depicts people involved in significant issues—people who represent various forms of power and interest. Also, many captioned photographs throughout the book illustrate and comment on such concepts at work.
- *Suggested Readings* at the end of each chapter combine key works in political science with complementary works—both classic and current—by sociologists, economists, historians, journalists, and political commentators of diverse viewpoints. This section is designed to broaden the student reader's interest in contemporary political issues.

## SUPPLEMENTS

The editorial team at Harcourt Brace Publishers has worked with me and with a number of reviewers to develop supplementary materials that will help in presenting the above-mentioned ideas inside the classroom. Particular attention has been paid to integrating the instructor's manual with the test bank, the study guide, the *Getting Involved* supplement, and the overhead transparencies.

**Instructor's Manual (printed, IBM, and Mac).** Provides the following information for each chapter: Overview, learning objectives, key points, topical outline, key terms, additional lecture suggestions, interjection of “multiculturalism,” and additional readings. Free to adopters.

**Study Guide (printed, IBM, and Mac).** Includes chapter outline, learning objectives, key concepts, terms to identify, self-test with questions from the test bank, answers to self-test, “multicultural” issues, and citizen participation.

**Test Bank (printed) and ExaMaster+ software program (IBM and Mac).** Provides 2,000 questions in multiple-choice, true/false, and essay formats. ExaMaster+ allows the instructor to add and edit questions, select questions according to several criteria, link related



questions, block questions from random selection, and create and print up to 99 versions of the same test and answer sheet. It also includes on-line testing, grading, and scoring features. Free to adopters.

**Exam Record.** A grade-book program that calculates grades, converts letter grades to numeric, prints grades for posting, and determines distributions and curves. Free to adopters.

**Getting Involved.** Complements the citizen involvement orientation of the book. Provides assignments and discusses, step by step, how to make contact with public officials on a range of issues. May be used as a citizenship exercise, a self-paced research project, or both. Helps students to make contact with government and to learn from the experience.

**Color Transparencies (with an Instructor's Guide).** More than 50 four-color transparencies from the book. Free to adopters.

**Annenberg Video Cassette Series.** The series *The Constitution: That Delicate Balance*. Free to adopters, subject to Harcourt Brace video policy.

**American Government Software Simulators (IBM and Mac).** Provides simulations of topics such as the Constitution, political participation, campaigning, the presidency, and public policy.

**Guide for Writing in Political Science.** Discusses doing library research, using sources, developing an outline, observing conventions of style and format, and noting documentation styles. Provides student sample papers.

**The New Republic.** Free to adopters.

**Video Newsletter.** A quarterly video news magazine drawn from segments of *The MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour*. These videotapes contain features that reflect current issues in American politics.

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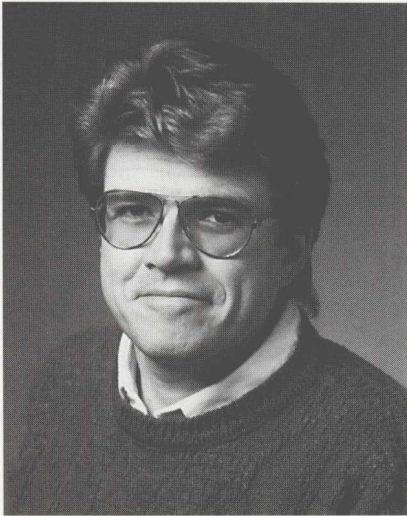
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