

# THE HUMAN POLITY

An Introduction to Political Science

Second Edition



Kay Lawson

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to Political Science

Second Edition

**Kay Lawson**

San Francisco State University

**for Toby, Kevin, and Marta**

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## PREFACE

This new edition of *The Human Polity* is prompted by good news and bad: the good news is that enough people liked the first edition to make a second one worthwhile; the bad news—well, not so very bad—is that there was clearly room for improvement. I have made many changes recommended by students, teachers, editors, and my own hindsight, but the basic organization and theme of the book remain the same. *The Human Polity* continues to be a book about politics and about the study of politics in a world that is increasingly and irreversibly interdependent. The human polity is the polity—the political community—to which we all belong merely by virtue of living together on the globe. At the same time that we proudly give our first loyalties to the separate nation states that lay claim to our citizenship, we also recognize that there are problems we can resolve only in unison with the citizens of other states. The study of politics has thus become the study of the web of life on our planet.

The primary focus of that study remains the nation state. However, we political scientists know that we cannot understand the state without examining all the political communities it contains—from small town to highly specialized regional organization. Nor can we grasp the meaning of national politics without an understanding of the international setting in which it takes place. We learn about that international context in part by studying the pacts, the wars, and the organizations that nation states engage in with one another—but also by studying the less formal evidence of our shared membership in the human polity.

The complexities of political science are thus an outgrowth and an accompaniment to the increasingly complex scope of politics itself. Complexity is interesting, and does not in itself make something difficult. We can respect the complexity of politics and at the same time write about it clearly, using a familiar vocabulary and explaining new terms in a context that makes their meaning immediately comprehensible and easy to remember. The style of *The Human Polity* is one of informal but respectful dialogue between author and reader. Direct questions are occasionally posed in the text in order to stimulate the students' interest and to prompt them to apply their steadily increasing knowledge of political science to the more familiar experiences of their own lives. Students who take this opportunity to "talk back" to the author will find that as a consequence they are better prepared to enter into class discussions and to recall what they have read. Both normative and practical problems are raised

throughout the book, in a manner intended not only to inform but also to encourage students to form their own opinions and make their own recommendations for change.

### Features of the Book

*The Human Polity* offers a full and comprehensive introduction to political science. It describes the nature of the discipline, explains the ways in which political scientists study politics, and offers introductory treatment of all the major topics we normally think of as constituting political science. The text begins with a consideration of interdependence, the nature of politics and polities, and the methods of political science in a new and much improved Chapter 1. Succeeding chapters cover the language of politics, the chief political ideologies, the relationships between politics and economics and between politics and culture, the role of the media in politics, the ways in which individuals can and do act in politics, the nature of political organizations, executive leadership, the work of legislatures, executive bureaucracies, the judiciary and systems of law, local and provincial government, international relations, and the dynamics of political change. The chapter on the media is new to this edition and draws on the most recent research and commentary regarding the fascinating, sometimes perplexing, and extremely important relationship developing between modern communications technology and the politics of nations. The first edition's innovative chapter (Chapter 14) on government by extraconstitutional bodies—institutions that assume the duties and rights, but not the responsibility, of official government—has been retained and updated. The chapter on politics and economics (now Chapter 4), another chapter that was well received in the first edition, has also been brought up to date, and more stress has been placed on international economic issues. Throughout the book, the theme of the global interdependence of nations has been deepened, by including more current examples. The final chapter (Chapter 16) offers more detailed treatment of such issues as worldwide environmental problems and international terrorism.

Examples are used throughout to highlight important points and clarify difficult concepts. They are drawn from every continent of the globe. Special care was taken in this edition to bring in new examples from the Middle East, Latin America, and the Far East, but not at the expense of other regions. The proportion of examples drawn from the United States remains what it was in the first edition. Overall, there are more examples, and they are better and more timely. As before, multiple examples are used frequently, both to make a point abundantly clear and to illustrate the global nature of its application (thereby quietly underlining the theme of the book). Some of the examples are personal, drawing from my own experience (see the beginning of the new chapter on the media, for example) or asking the students to reflect on their own (see the discussion

of political socialization in Chapter 5), as a way of helping my readers to realize the relevance of topics and issues they might otherwise regard as remote or arcane.

The *Instructor's Manual with Test Items*, written by Robert Davey of Jackson Community College, Michigan, provides a chapter overview, questions for class discussion, a chapter outline, and additional readings for each chapter. The test items include essay questions for each chapter and approximately 30 multiple-choice items per chapter.

### Acknowledgments

This book is itself the product of interdependence. I have leaned often and with profit on the work of student assistants, who, in exchange for remuneration far from equal to their labors, helped me get the books I needed from libraries, find many of the examples, and work up several of the charts and tables. For this new edition, Marisa Kelly proved herself invaluable, understanding what I needed before I was fully aware myself and finding it with unfailing skill and resourcefulness. Both she and I were able to build on the earlier, hard, and excellent work of Andrea Bonime, Robin Davis, Mark Dorfman, Paula Fleming, Lynne Laidlaw, Adrienne Levey, James McGuire, Alan Vlautin, and Cynthia Witman, all of whom helped me with the first edition. It is also a pleasure to thank the following reviewers, who read and critiqued the manuscript throughout its development:

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As was the case for the first edition, my husband, daughter, and son all helped, most importantly by reading and praising the first edition and encouraging me to go on. In this latter task, they have had the help of the decaying roof, windowless kitchen, and ancient plumbing of an old house that has recently joined our family and already knows how to clamor for repairs in both English and French. My friends at Houghton Mifflin, old and new, continue to provide the same wonderful resources as before: endless patience, flattery, and cajolery, combined with confident expertise. As before, I happily take responsibility for the book's faults and share any praise for its merits. But also as before, I insist on the larger share of the latter, this time because I now know that although it is true that

"second editions are much easier to write," it is also true that they do require a great deal of time and energy. I hope the results will seem worth it, not only to those I kept waiting on other projects while I finished this one, but also, and most importantly, to the students for whom *The Human Polity* is their introduction to political science.

Kay Lawson



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**I.**

**THINKING  
ABOUT  
POLITICS**

# **1. Politics and the Human Polity**