



SECOND EDITION

# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

*Readings on Continuity & Change*

ROBERT HARMEL

# American Government

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Readings on Continuity and Change  
Second Edition

ROBERT HARMEL  
Texas A&M University

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# American Government

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Readings on Continuity and Change

Second Edition

To these future participants in American politics:

Chris Dale

Vickie and Kristine Petersen

Rachel, Kayme, Naomi, and Paul Fritz

Jenna and Bruce Holman

and Charles and Christine Wu

# Preface

As Madison Avenue would say, *American Government: Readings on Continuity and Change* is an American government reader “with a difference.” In many respects, it resembles a number of fine readers already in print: its contents cover the broad range of topics normally covered in American government classes; it is organized according to the standard outline for such classes; and it includes classics and important historical documents along with a majority of contemporary pieces. The “difference” is the book’s emphasis on continuity and change, which runs throughout the various sections of the book, and which highlights the dynamic quality of American politics. Collectively, the seventy-five readings provide a picture of a political system that has undergone tremendous change, but within a basic framework that has endured for over two centuries. More than half of the readings deal directly with change. Others provide important historical background, and some others deal primarily with significant continuities in American politics. Change within continuity has been one of the most important features of the American political system, and this book has been specifically designed to reflect that quality.

## New to the Second Edition

Though the second edition of this book differs from the first in some important respects, it continues the same central focus: continuity and change in American government and politics, with nearly all readings being either of historical importance (such as Federalist papers and Supreme Court cases) or documenting and analyzing change. And again, several pieces predict future trends; others offer suggestions for reform.

The new edition goes beyond the first in

- giving consideration to the lasting impact of the “**conservative Reagan era**” and the policies formulated in those years (Readings #15, #34, #75)
- giving more attention to the impact of the **media** in American politics (#31, #32, #49, #50)
- giving more attention to the **nominating phase** of the electoral process (Chapter Nine)
- covering some new trends and controversies, including the **recentralization of power within the House of Representatives** (#54), the **lessening impact of individual interest groups** as the number of them rises (#47), the issue of **strict vs. loose constructionism** in the Supreme Court (#62, #63), the **increasing involvement of the House and of state/local governments in the foreign policy area** (#16, #68), and what could prove to be fundamentally important changes in **political values** (Chapter Six)

- giving attention to some foci not covered (or only barely so) in the first edition, such as the “other” federal courts (#66), direct marketing (#42), the cabinet (#60), the amendment process (#5, #28), and the importance of the “black vote” in presidential elections (#35).

Structurally, there are four new chapters in the second edition, covering **constitutional change** (Chapter Two), **political values and issues** (Chapter Six), the **presidential nominating process** (Chapter Nine), and **policy-making** (Chapter Eighteen). In addition, a number of the readings are cross-listed (set within brackets in the Table of Contents) for additional chapters where they are of special relevance.

Though some of the readings are “historical” and as such are not subject to change, every effort has been made to make the book as current as possible. Fully thirty-three of the seventy-five readings are new for this edition, and an additional six are based on updates of material included in the first edition. Sixteen of the readings are from sources published since 1991, and another fourteen were published in 1989 or 1990.

### Using the Book in the Classroom

*American Government* has been specifically designed to be *useful* in American government classes. Although students will learn a great deal simply by reading the selections, the class as a whole will benefit even more from actively discussing them. And as readings on change are inherently well suited to generating discussion, so the emphasis of this book should contribute to its usefulness. Some of the readings will raise questions concerning the likely consequences of certain changes that have already been implemented; others will stimulate thinking about the possible impact of proposed reforms. In addition, a number of readings with potentially controversial content are offset by others with alternative points of view (for instance, Michael Parenti and David G. Smith, Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, Edward S. Greenberg and Susan Love Brown et al.); such readings can support “debate” on important topics. In selecting the readings, I placed a good deal of emphasis on their “discussibility.” If a reading could not easily be used to stimulate class discussion (or discussion outside the class, for that matter), I chose not to include it.

The book is also organized to maximize usefulness in a variety of class structures. The organization uses the standard, systems-analysis approach of setting-inputs-institutions-outputs. However, instructors whose courses are structured differently will have no difficulty rearranging the various chapters. To facilitate this, I have written *separate chapter introductions*, rather than broader introductions to the four main parts. In addition, brief introductions to the selections themselves add even greater flexibility by equipping each reading to “stand alone.”

Besides the chapter and selection introductions, I have also provided a brief introduction to Part Four, “The Outputs.” While there is a general understanding of what constitutes the setting, the inputs, and the institutions of American government and politics, the concept of *outputs* is treated in

a variety of ways in some texts and classes, and often it is not treated at all. The six readings in Part Four do not cover a range of specific policy areas, but instead deal with two of the broadest questions concerning the policy process and its outputs: who rules and who wins? The readings provide alternative answers that should serve to stimulate discussion and debate.

The book's emphasis on continuity and change clearly involves looking at the past as well as the present of the American system. An underlying assumption of this anthology is that we cannot fully understand current institutions and events without taking history—whether recent or distant—into account. For instance, many references are made in these pages to the experiences and intentions of the framers. And because their concerns influenced the shaping of the Constitution, including the document it replaced, both the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution of the United States of America are provided in full in the *Documents* section at the end of the book.

### Acknowledgments

An anthology is, by definition, a collective effort. The authors of the readings in this book deserve the bulk of the credit for whatever success it has. I, of course, bear full responsibility for the choice of material and for any internal deletions, as well as for changes in many of the titles and removal of many footnotes that appeared in the selections when they were first published. I am grateful to the publishers of the original works for granting permission to reprint them.

As in the first edition, I need to acknowledge debts to friends and associates who have helped in very important ways. At Texas A&M, I am especially indebted to my colleagues John Robertson, Roberto Vichot, Charles Wiggins, Jon Bond, and Samuel Wu; and to my graduate assistants, Kevin O'Neill and Rachel Gibson. And at St. Martin's, Don Reisman has been an exceptionally encouraging, thoughtful, and helpful editor.

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Finally, I want to express my thanks to the students of Political Science 206 at Texas A&M, who have been the inspiration for this book.

*Robert Harmel*



**Note to Instructors**

We would like to note the availability of an instructor's manual that contains approximately 600 test questions, including multiple choice and essay/discussion items. For more information, please write St. Martin's Press, College Desk, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010; or contact your local St. Martin's sales representative.

# American Government

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# Introduction

For approximately two centuries, Americans have lived under the same governmental system that was outlined by fifty-five men in Philadelphia in 1787. During the same time span, Denmark has had three different political systems, Russia six, Austria seven, France nine, and Greece twelve.\* Of the political systems existing today, only the United Kingdom's is older. There is no denying the fact that America's basic political system has had remarkable "staying power." But that, in turn, is not to deny the equally important fact that *within* the basic arrangement, there has been much change.

The story of change in American government and politics must begin with the writing of the Constitution itself, which was, first and foremost, a document *of change*. The framers were sent to Philadelphia to *change* the Articles of Confederation, which had served for six years as the structure for a loose collection of sovereign states, much as the United Nations structures a collection of sovereign nations today. National government under the Articles consisted only of a one-house Congress; it was intended to be "small" government. Passage of any law required agreement of nine of the thirteen states; it was intended to be a weak and nearly powerless national government. The framework provided by the Articles of Confederation had served an important function for the first few years of independence, allowing time to mold a national identity from thirteen separate, colonial states. But it had not served well the needs for security and efficient commerce. So the framers met to *amend* the Articles, but soon arrived at the conclusion that the necessary changes were so many and so fundamental that it would be preferable to *replace* the Articles with a completely new document.

Some things were carried over, including preservation of important policy areas in which the states could exercise independent action, continuation of an important role for Congress within the national government, and most importantly, continued rejection of monarchy in favor of republican government. But now, states would no longer be the only powerful governmental actor. Congress would be joined by a separate executive and an independent judiciary, and "government by the people" would be extended (through popular election of the House of Representatives) to the national level.

The Constitution that was written in Philadelphia has proven to be abnormally durable. But the primary reason for the persistence of this document *of change* is that it allowed so much room *for change*. In other words, the key to its longevity has been its *adaptability*.

\*Based on the editor's analysis of data collected by Ted Robert Gurr for his study of Polity Persistence and Change (data available from the Inter-university Consortium for Political Research, study #5010).—Editor's Note.