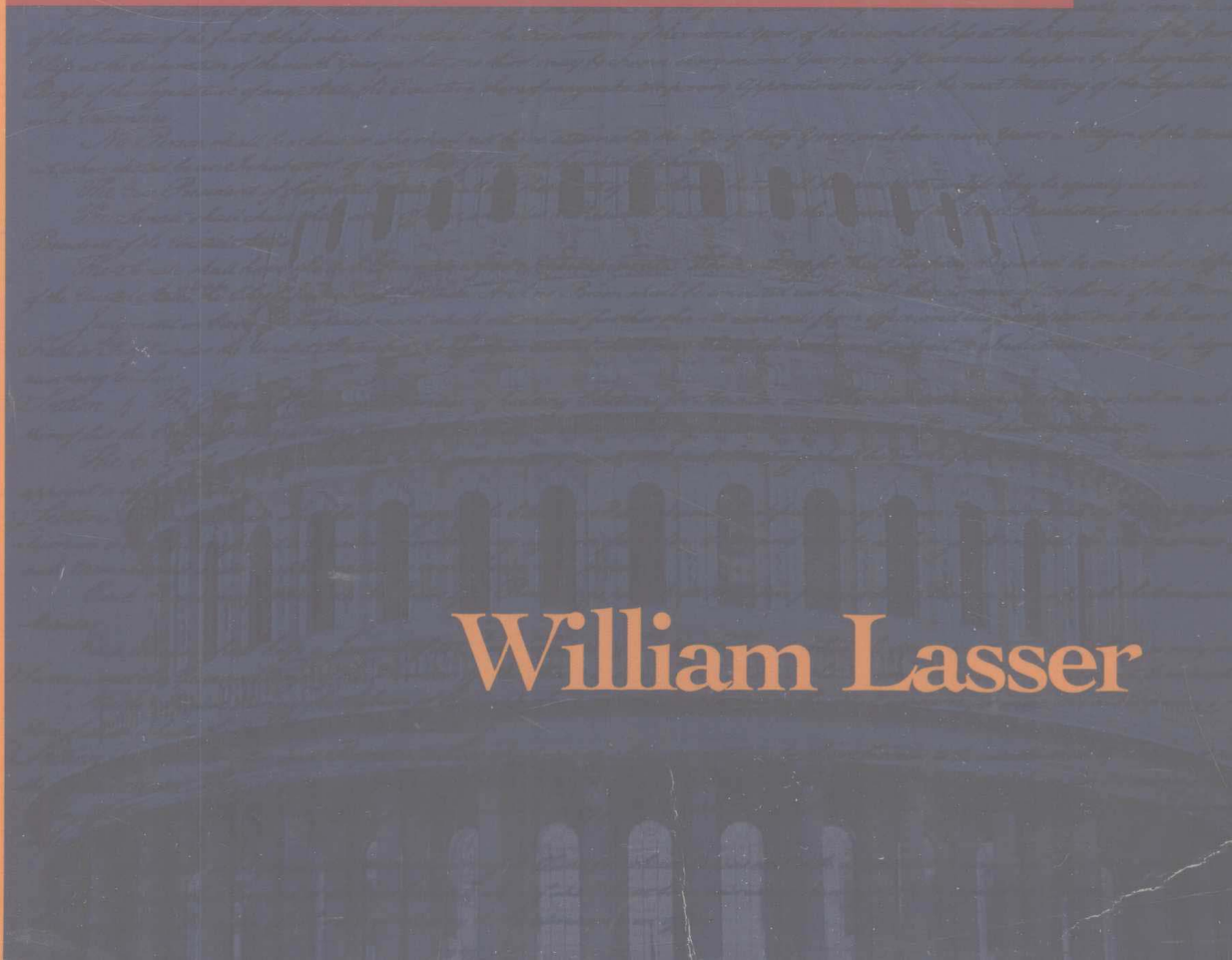




American Politics

The Enduring Constitution



SECOND
EDITION

William Lasser

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William Lasser

Clemson University

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Preface

American politics has changed greatly over the past decade, as it has countless times over the two centuries since the creation of the Republic. In 1989, American foreign policy was still defined by the Cold War conflict with the Soviet Union. As late as 1991, the conventional wisdom held that the Republican Party had a stranglehold on the presidency. Before 1994, the same pundits and analysts believed that a Republican takeover of the Congress was as likely as the early arrival of Haley's Comet. Even three years ago, when the first edition of *American Politics* was published, economists, political scientists, and politicians all agreed that the United States government was destined to run multibillion dollar budget deficits as far into the future as anyone could imagine.

All of this, of course, is history: today, the Cold War is over; the Republicans control Congress while a Democrat sits in the White House; and politicians argue not about how to reduce the deficit but how to spend the surplus. Yet even as we adjust to these new realities, more change is on the way. In the next decade alone, citizens and public officials alike will have to come to grips with new technologies, an aging population base, an increasingly global economy, and a great deal more—including much that we can barely see on the horizon, much less predict with confidence and accuracy.

Change, of course, is nothing new. Prior generations of Americans watched, coped, and flourished as the national economy grew from its agricultural origins into an industrial powerhouse; as the nation evolved from a minor player in world affairs into a global superpower; as a weak national government took on an increasingly significant role in economic and social regulation; and as women, blacks, and other minorities struggled to assert their civil and political rights. The pace of change may be faster than ever before, but change itself has been an American fact of life for over two hundred years.

In the ever-changing environment of American politics—through economic depressions, a civil war, two world wars, the struggles for equal rights and for the protection of civil liberties—the Constitution of the United States has endured. Although changed twenty-seven times by formal amendment and many more times by judicial interpretation, the basic governmental structures set up by the Constitution of 1787 and the fundamental principles embodied in its seven articles remain constant. If the Framers of the Constitution could come back today, they would be surprised by the broad extension of freedom to all citizens, regardless of race, color, or gender; by the growth of America's influence and involvement in world affairs and the parallel growth in presidential power; by the expansion of federal protection for rights and liberties; and by the enormous increase in the federal government's role in regulating and managing the national economy. But they would surely recognize the separation of powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, the division of power between the national government and the states, the essential principles of freedom of speech, press, and religion, and, above all, the nation's continuing commitment to the ideal and reality of government by the people.

To allow students to understand the dynamic realities of present-day American politics against the ever-present backdrop of the enduring Constitution is the purpose of *American Politics*. Throughout the text, students are presented first with the theoretical foundations of the American constitutional system, and then with descriptions and analyses of American politics as it now exists.

Armed with these two perspectives, students can then draw their own conclusions about what works and what does not in today's political environment, and why.

"If you don't like the weather in New England," Mark Twain once said, "just wait a few minutes." When it comes to politics, however, we are not so lucky. Change, though inevitable, need not progress in the direction we might hope for. Only by understanding past and present, theory and practice, and ideal and reality will students of American politics be equipped to participate intelligently and thoughtfully in the debates that will shape the future.

Second Edition Updates

The second edition of *American Politics* is fully revised and updated, with information on the most current issues and themes in American politics. Features favored by users of the first edition—for example, the "Debating the Constitution" boxes—have been expanded and tied more closely to the theme of the book. Other features have been streamlined or eliminated in order to focus students' attention on the most important themes and issues. The "Enduring Constitution" theme has been strengthened and clarified, and given more prominence throughout. Taken together, these changes and improvements build on and enhance the first edition while retaining its strengths.

Key updates in the second edition include:

- *The 1996 election.* Coverage includes a reassessment of the so-called "realignment of the 1990s" (Chapter 9); an analysis of campaign finance uses and abuses (Chapter 10); and updates on the political behavior of the American electorate (Chapter 7).
- *President Clinton's second term.* The second edition covers the legal and political troubles of the Clinton presidency—examining, for example, the role of the "new media" in the Monica Lewinsky affair (Chapter 11) and the continued decline of the moral authority of the presidency (Chapter 13).
- *The politics of the "disappearing budget deficit."* The rapid disappearance of the federal budget deficit has created a new era of fiscal politics, with implications for many aspects of American government. From a revised discussion of congressional budget politics in the chapter on Congress (Chapter 12) to a new chapter opener in the domestic policy chapter (Chapter 16)), the second edition fully addresses these changing realities.
- *Critical Supreme Court decisions.* Updates include coverage of the Court's recent decisions on affirmative action and sexual harassment (Chapter 5), free speech on the Internet (Chapter 4), federalism (Chapter 3), and presidential immunity (Chapter 13).

Features of the Second Edition

American Politics: The Enduring Constitution contains a number of features that make the text more interesting for the student, easier to teach with for the instructor, and richer and more rewarding for both. Among the features designed to enhance the text are these:

Innovative and consistent chapter structure. The chapters all follow a consistent format. Such consistency makes it easier for students to approach the text and simplifies the professor's task of choosing which material to emphasize most specifically. This structure is also designed to make it easier

for students to recognize the key themes of each chapter, and to provide students with necessary background material before introducing them to more complex and difficult issues. The pattern of the chapters is as follows:

- I. *A brief, captivating introduction* designed to grab the students attention and provide a focal point for the introduction of the major themes of the chapter. These teasers remind students of the “Enduring Constitution” theme by raising key constitutional questions, often in a very contemporary framework. Each introductory vignette is followed by a statement of the key themes of the chapter.
- II. *Questions to keep in mind*, making the themes and goals of the chapter explicit, making review easier, and fostering students’ critical thinking skills.
- III. *Basic Concepts*, a sort of “core text within a text” that provides the student with the essential background needed to understand the thematic sections that follow. The “Basic Concepts” section typically includes a discussion of the Constitutional context of the material covered in the chapter, including coverage of the Framers’ political philosophy.
- IV. *Chapter summary, review questions, Internet resources, and suggestions for further reading* giving students the opportunity to consolidate what they have learned and explore further material.

Additional features include:

- “*Debating the Constitution*” boxes. Contemporary controversial issues, linked directly or indirectly to constitutional themes, are presented in debate boxes, which provide arguments on both sides of the question and encourage students to challenge their existing viewpoints. Debate boxes are particularly suited for stimulating formal or informal class discussions. Topics examined in these boxes include congressional term limits (Chapter 12), free press vs. fair trial (Chapter 11), and the president’s authority to make war without congressional approval (Chapter 17).
- “*Global Perspectives*” boxes. Boxed material providing comparisons between the United States and other cultures and countries encourages students to think globally and to see American politics from new perspectives and with new insight. Box topics include presidential vs. parliamentary systems of government (Chapter 13) and elections in other democracies (Chapter 10).
- “*Economics and Politics*” boxes. The relationship between economics and politics is highlighted in these boxed features, which include such topics as an examination of the economic origins of the Constitution (Chapter 2) and a discussion of the racial income gap (Chapter 5).
- *Humor and human interest*. Boxes, quotes, sidebars, and photographs capture the many faces of American politics, from the humorous to the poignant. “Politics Light” boxes are aimed at entertaining students as well as giving them a new point of view.

Ancillary Package

A comprehensive supplements package accompanies this text:

- **Instructor’s Resource Manual with Test Items.** Written by Laura Olson of Clemson University, this manual includes suggested lecture and discussion topics; in-class activities; and lists of supplementary readings, films, videos, and other multimedia resources, including chapter-relevant World Wide Web sites. The Test Items portion of this manual includes over 1,000 multiple-choice, True/False, and essay questions.

- **Computerized Test Bank.** A computerized version of the test items is available in a Windows format.
- **Transparencies.** The transparencies package for *American Politics*, Second Edition, contains approximately 30 transparencies drawn from the text's illustration program.
- **Study Guide.** This guide, written and completely updated by award-winning teachers Peter Galdarisi and Michael Lyons of Utah State University, provides the students with chapter summaries, learning objectives, and multiple-choice and True/False questions to help students in reviewing key points and themes of the book. Included in the Study Guide to accompany the Second Edition is a new section discussing how students can explore and use the Internet for political science research.
- **Lasser American Politics Web Site.** Accessible through the Houghton Mifflin home page (www.hmco.com/college), this web site provides free, text-specific resources to both instructors and students, including chapter overviews, student self-tests, and updates written by the author.
- **American Government Web Site.** Accessible through the Houghton Mifflin home page (www.hmco.com/college), the Houghton Mifflin American Government Web Site features a Documents Collection of primary source materials relevant to American Government. Exercises keyed to major topics in American Government ask students to explore and critically evaluate primary documents as well as political web sites. Answers to the exercises can be submitted to instructors via e-mail or printed out. Links to key political web sites are also included.

Acknowledgments

It is a cliché to suggest that a book could not have been completed without the help and support of one's editors, colleagues, students, friends, and family. But some clichés are true, and none more so than this one.

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W. L.



PHOTO CREDIT: Ellska Morsel Greenspoon

About the Author

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American Politics

Introduction

POLITICS THEN AND NOW

UNDERSTANDING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

- Defining Politics • Defining Democracy • Democracy and the Public Interest •

FOUR MODELS OF DEMOCRACY

- The Pure (or Direct) Democracy Model • The Representative Democracy Model • The Pluralist Model • The Elite Model •

THE CHALLENGES OF AMERICAN POLITICS

- Winning the Right to Govern • Harnessing the Power of Government • Controlling the Majority and the Government • The Fragmentation of Popular Authority • The Challenges of Modern Democracy •

STUDYING AMERICAN POLITICS

A FINAL WORD

When representatives of the original thirteen states met in 1787 to draft the Constitution of the United States, they faced a daunting set of questions. Were human beings even capable of governing themselves? Could the Constitutional Convention devise a system of government that would serve the interests of the public, protect and promote the rights of the people, and ensure the nation's prosperity and well-being? Above all, could the founding generation devise a constitutional system that would endure throughout the ages, serving not only its own needs but those of countless generations to come?

The answers to these questions did not come easily. The Constitution was the nation's second attempt to form a government; the first one, known as the Articles of Confederation, was widely regarded as a failure. Moreover, the founding generation was deeply divided over even the most basic issues that lay before them. Some delegates opposed the very idea of a Constitution, preferring instead to make only minor changes to the Articles of Confederation. Others viewed the effort to create a new government as a thinly disguised program to benefit a wealthy and elite minority at the expense of the public. Still others—though very few—challenged any effort to go forward with a national experiment in democracy as long as the United States continued to permit the existence of a brutal system of slavery, in which human beings were treated as moveable property, to be bought and sold at will.

That the United States still exists and is still operating under the basic outline of the Constitution of 1787 might seem to suggest that the Framers were successful in meeting the challenges they faced. American democracy has survived a vicious civil war, numerous economic depressions, and two world wars. The United States has endured staggering changes in size



An early advocate of women's rights urges women to take advantage of their right to vote, newly acquired in 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

and population and dramatic revolutions in industry and technology. In recent decades, America has successfully exported democracy across the world and stands as a living symbol of what human beings can achieve when left to govern themselves.

Yet American democracy remains an unfinished experiment. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution promised more than they were willing or able to deliver. Although it was grounded on principles of equality and justice, the Constitution sanctioned