
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

INSTITUTIONS AND POLICIES

Fourth Edition

James Q. Wilson

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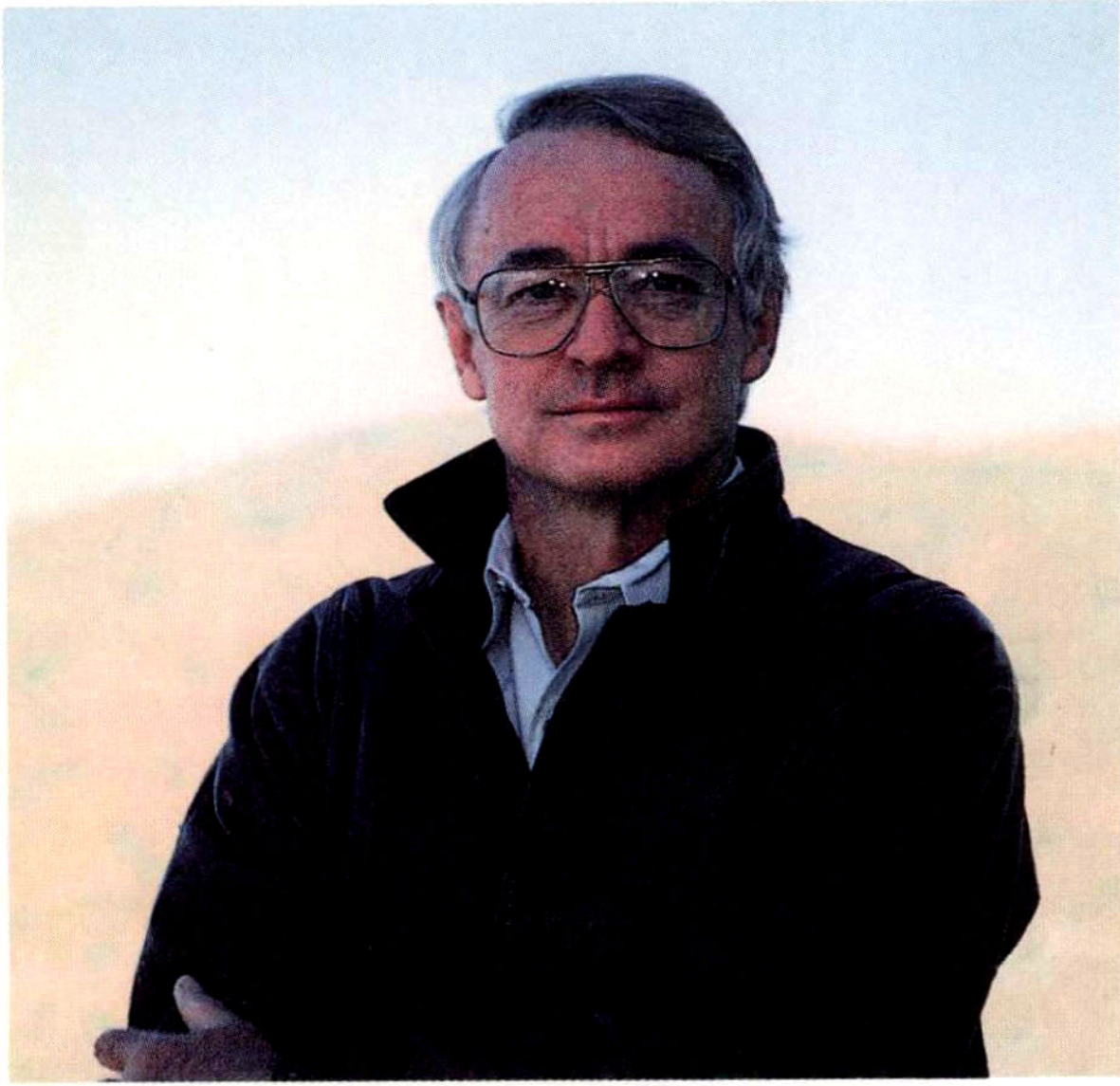
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AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

*For Roberta, Matthew, Rebecca, Annie, and Bob.
And, of course, Annabelle.*



James Q. Wilson is the Collins Professor of Management and Political Science at the University of California, Los Angeles. He was previously the Shattuck Professor of Government at Harvard University. Raised in California, Wilson received a B.A. degree from the University of Redlands and a Ph.D. degree from the University of Chicago. He is the author or coauthor of ten books, including *Negro Politics*, *The Amateur Democrat*, *City Politics* (with Edward C. Banfield), *Varieties of Police Behavior*, *Political Organizations*, *Thinking about Crime*, *The Investigators*, *Watching Fishes: Life and Behavior on Coral Reefs* (with Roberta Wilson), and *Crime and Human Nature* (with Richard J. Herrnstein).

Wilson has served in a number of advisory posts in the federal government. He was chairman of the White House Task Force on Crime in 1967, chairman of the National Advisory Council on Drug Abuse Prevention in 1972–1973, and a member of the Attorney General's Task Force on Violent Crime in 1981. Since 1986 he has served on the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

In 1977 the American Political Science Association conferred on him the Charles E. Merriam Award for advancing the art of government through the application of social science knowledge.

He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a member of the American Philosophical Society. When not writing, teaching, or advising, he goes scuba diving. He says that it clears the brain.

Preface

I wrote this text in the conviction that students want to know not only who governs but also what difference it makes who governs. In teaching an introductory course in American government, I have found that student interest is most fully engaged when the instructor can show how our government institutions and political processes help explain why some policies, and not others, are adopted.

Explaining both who governs, and to what ends, cannot be done without treating the politics of policy-making in some detail. For this reason I have examined several policy areas in the light of a simple—but I think useful—conceptual scheme that helps students understand why some groups or individuals exert more power on certain issues than on others. Unless the instructor links institutions and policies in a systematic way, the student is likely to judge the worth or power of the institutions by resorting to such familiar but misleading catch phrases as the “imperial presidency,” a “do-nothing Congress,” or the “biased media.”

Perspectives

Merely attending to politics and policies is not enough, however. Many students, understandably, have very little historical perspective, know next to nothing about how other democratic governments behave, and believe that the Constitution is largely of antiquarian interest. To impress upon students what is distinctive about our government, I have tried to write each chapter with three perspectives in mind. First, contemporary American politics has been profoundly shaped by historical forces. Some important aspects of politics are of recent origin, but others—I think most—are the result of long-standing

arrangements and past experiences. Second, the Constitution is one of those arrangements that color almost every aspect of politics and the underlying political culture. I try to give special attention to the way in which the Founding created a distinctive regime. Third, that regime differs from the governing arrangements of most other democratic nations. If we want to know why things happen as they do here, it is often helpful to know how they might happen if we were in Britain, France, or Sweden. Because of these beliefs, I try to set the institutions and policies of American government into the context of historical change, constitutional procedures, and comparative perspectives.

The Fourth Edition

This is the most extensively revised edition of the text yet to appear. An entirely new chapter on state and local government has been added. The material on public opinion and elections, once presented in two chapters, has been expanded to three chapters (on opinion, political participation, and elections) so as to permit a more orderly, systematic treatment of a rapidly developing field of knowledge. I have rewritten these three chapters almost entirely.

The chapter on political culture has been rewritten to show the different ways in which people evaluate the economic and political systems. The material on the presidency has been expanded to include a discussion of presidential personality and character.

The chapters on economic policy, foreign policy, and military policy have been completely rewritten to clarify and update the treatment of these important subjects. The chapters on civil liberties and civil rights have been greatly revised

in order to abbreviate a bit the long historical sections and focus attention more clearly on contemporary issues.

Throughout I have tried to make the writing brisker, clearer, and more direct. It was always my conceit that the book was pretty well written to begin with, but when readers pointed out countless ways in which the writing could be improved, I listened and learned.

The fourth edition is current through the 1988 elections.

Instructor's Options for Using This Book

This text can be used in a variety of ways. It can be assigned to be read in its present sequence. Or one can assign a chapter on a particular institution (say, Congress) and then follow that immediately with a chapter about a policy with which that institution has been extensively involved (say, civil rights). In the same way, the chapter on the presidency could be followed by the chapter on foreign policy, and the chapter on the judiciary by the one on civil liberties. Alternatively, the chapters on civil liberties and civil rights could be assigned immediately after the chapter on the Constitution.

Most instructors will want to assign all the chapters in Part 1 (The American System), Part 2 (Opinions, Interests, and Organizations), and Part 3 (Institutions of Government). If they wish their students to be familiar with the politics of policy-making, they should assign at least Chapter 15 of Part 4 (The Politics of Public Policy). Additional policy chapters can be used as the instructor's preferences suggest. In any case, the main themes of Part 4 are summarized in Chapter 22.

Illustrative and Reference Material

I have added several features to the book that will, I hope, stimulate thinking about political issues. The first is a series of boxes headed "What would you do?" These pose hypothetical problems confronting a decision maker, such as a

candidate, a president, a senator, or a Supreme Court justice. Should we send in troops? Take money from a political-action committee? Vote for or against the constitutionality of a state law banning contraception? Each dilemma comes in the form of a brief memo, similar to ones that presidents and others actually receive. The issues on both sides are summarized, and the student is asked to come to a decision as if he or she were the decision maker. These boxes can be used for class discussions, as a springboard for class debates, or as the basis of student papers.

The "Politically Speaking" boxes constitute another new feature. Two dozen or so bits of political jargon—including *litmus test*, *logrolling*, *lame duck*, *muckraker*, *coattails*, *boycott*, *Third World*—are defined, and the history of these terms is briefly stated. Politics is about words and symbols, and I have found that when students know how some of these words came into political use, they remember not only the words, but the meaning, context, and issues.

The lists of political trivia and of the popular maxims of politics have been retained, as has been the box containing some Supreme Court cases that the student is asked to decide.

Since I believe that politics is fascinating and ought to be memorable, I hope that these materials not only will provide a refreshing pause in the text but also will help fix certain events in the reader's mind.

At the end of the book the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and *Federalist* papers 10 and 51 are included, along with a complete listing of presidents and Congresses showing the partisan composition of each.

Personal Views

The study of politics is not a value-free science, but admitting that point ought not to entitle an author to pontificate at will. The author of a textbook is under a special obligation to handle matters of evidence and inference in a systematic and evenhanded manner. Major controversies ought to be clearly described and the opposing positions fairly presented. I have tried to avoid making snap judgments, using loaded

language, and describing politics as a struggle between good and bad guys. I do not claim that I have succeeded or that I am “objective”—I doubt that any writer can ever be—but I have labored mightily to avoid sloganeering or indoctrination. I hope that colleagues will not hesitate to point out where I have failed.

Supplements

An outstanding supplementary program is offered in connection with the fourth edition, including the *Student Handbook*, the *Instructor's Guide*, a *Computerized Testing Program* by Engineering Software Associates, Inc., the *Test Item File*, and, new to this edition, full-color overhead transparencies.

The *Student Handbook* is designed to help the student master the text as well as prepare for examinations. Each *Handbook* chapter offers a “Chapter Focus,” illuminating the chapter's main points and listing learning objectives for the student; a “Study Outline” of the major topical areas covered; “Key Terms” to understand, including the significant names and concepts introduced; a “Did You Think That . . . ?” section, treating some of the possible misconceptions about material in the chapter; a “Data Check” section, clarifying the points made in the chapter's quantitative tables, graphs, and diagrams; a “Practicing for Exams” section, with sample true/false, multiple-choice, and essay questions; and “Applying What You've Learned,” detailing special projects to help develop mastery of key text concepts. An all-new *Handbook* feature is a selection of primary-source readings—“Classic Statements”—providing provocative excerpts from significant documents in American government.

The *Instructor's Guide* offers a wealth of valuable resources designed to help instructors plan their course and to prepare for and implement lectures and discussions. Featured as introductory materials are “Resources and References in American Government,” a comprehensive bibliography; a Film Guide; and, new to this edition, a Videotape Guide. A “What's New Here, and Why?” section for the six parts of the text

spells out the major changes in the fourth edition of *American Government*; this unique feature greatly streamlines the transition from the third to the fourth edition. Each *Instructor's Guide* chapter furnishes an “Overview and Objectives” outline; a “Lecture Outline with Keyed-in Resources”; a list of “New Terms” introduced; and a “Themes” section, focusing on the general themes or topics around which the *Guide's* resource materials are organized. Then follow the resources themselves: a descriptive “Summary” of the theme; “Discussion Questions”; “Data and Perspectives for Analysis,” offering exercises that center on investigation of data, events, and theoretical perspectives; an “Abstracts” section, synthesizing an article or book relevant to the theme; an “Additional Lecture Topics” section for many of the themes selected; and listings of “Suggested Student Reading.”

The greatly expanded *Computerized Testing Program* and the *Test Item File* now offer about 3500 true/false, multiple-choice, and essay questions. Quizzes and examinations may be constructed from either the *Computerized Testing Program* or the *Test Item File*. The *Computerized Program* provides access to all questions in the *Test Item File* and allows instructors to tailor tests for their own classes. Instructors may also use software to delete, add, or even change questions, as well as to print an answer key with page references for each question.

Finally, to help the instructor improve students' analytical skills, we have produced a package of full-color overhead transparencies. The text's key maps, graphs, and diagrams are included, and text-page references are provided to facilitate use.

Instructors may wish to take full advantage of these valuable teaching and learning resources in planning their courses.

The Help of Others—Now and in the Future

I have drawn on the help of scores of people in writing this book. I would particularly like to thank those who wrote me on their own initiative with suggestions and criticisms, including

Professors Peter M. Buzanski, Richard Henry Foster, Brett Hawkins, Roberta Ann Johnson, Steve J. Mazurana, Richard H. Reeb, Jr., Alexis Samryk, and Nancy Paige Smith. I hope that others will follow their example whenever they find ways in which the text can be improved.

As I was preparing the fourth edition, I asked for help from scholars in the field who graciously responded with careful and valuable reviews of various chapters. They were: Richard J. Collings of Southeast Missouri State University, John DiIulio of Princeton University, Ann Elder of Illinois State University, Mark Greer of Laramie County Community College, Thomas Keating

of Arizona State University, William Lasser of Clemson University, Sue Lee of the Dallas County Community College District, Fred Mabbutt of Rancho Santiago College, Pietro Nivola of the University of Vermont, Kathleen Staudt of the University of Texas of El Paso, Oliver Walter of the University of Wyoming, Edward Wright of the U.S. Air Force Academy, and John Zaller of UCLA.

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AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

PART ONE

The American System

*“In framing a government which is to be administered
by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this:
You must first enable the government to control the governed;
and in the next place oblige it to control itself.”*

FEDERALIST NO. 51

Congress Voting Independence, by Pine and Savage.