

We The People



A CONCISE INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

3RD EDITION

THOMAS E. PATTERSON

WE THE PEOPLE

A CONCISE INTRODUCTION
TO AMERICAN POLITICS

Third Edition

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WE THE PEOPLE, A CONCISE INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS,
THIRD EDITION

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3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 DOC/DOC 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

ISBN 0-07-229506-6

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Compositor: *GAC-Indianapolis*

Typeface: *10.5/13.5 Janson*

Printer: *R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company/Crawfordsville, IN*

Cover image and photograph: © *Ken Reid/FPG International*

Photo research: *Barbara Salz*

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Patterson, Thomas E.

We the people: a concise introduction to American politics /

Thomas E. Patterson. — 3rd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-07-229506-6

1. United States—Politics and government. I. Title.

JK274.P36 2000

320.473—dc21

99-14483

CIP

Preface



ANYONE WHO WRITES an introductory American government text faces the challenge of describing and explaining a vast amount of scholarship. One way is to pile fact upon fact and list upon list. It's a common enough approach but it turns politics into a pretty dry subject. Politics doesn't have to be dry, and it certainly doesn't have to be dull. Politics has all the elements of drama, and the added feature of affecting the everyday lives of real people.

The late twentieth century has been a period of extraordinary change in America, which has raised new challenges to the practice of government. New people in the millions from Asia and Latin America have joined the American community, bringing with them cultural traditions that have made our society richer and fuller, but also more fragmented and contentious. Traditional institutions, from political parties to families, have weakened dramatically, straining the fabric of our politics but also creating the possibility of adaptive new arrangements. Minorities and women, long denied access to political and economic power, are seeking a fairer share, and sometimes getting it. America's workers and firms have built a highly productive economy but are now facing the risks and opportunities of the global marketplace. The cold war that dominated our attention in foreign policy for decades has been replaced by ethnic rivalries and localized conflicts that raise troubling new issues of world insecurity that, so far, have defied tidy solutions.

Scholars are trying to keep pace with these changes. Never before has scholarship been so closely tied to the real world. If much of what political scientists study is arcane, we have increasingly connected our work and our thinking to the everyday realities of politics. The result is a clearer and more nuanced understanding of how American government operates. I have tried in this book to convey this advancement in knowledge in an accurate and interesting way.

REACHING OUT TO THE STUDENT

This is a narrative-based text. It is the opposite of a text that piles list upon list and divides its material into narrow compartments. A narrative text provides plenty of information, but it is always part of a larger discussion.

Research indicates that the narrative form is a superior method for teaching students a “soft” science such as political science. They learn more readily because a narrative makes the subject more readable, more accessible, and more compelling. Studies also indicate that students can read attentively for a longer period of time when a text is narrative in form.

A narrative text weaves together theory, information, and examples in order to bring out key facts and ideas. The goal is to draw the students into the subject, give them a contextual understanding of major concepts and issues, and encourage them to think about the implications for themselves and society. To quicken this process, I begin each chapter by describing a situation that addresses a basic issue. The chapter on civil liberties, for example, begins with the case of the Crichton family, whose home was raided in the middle of the night by gun-toting FBI agents who suspected they were harboring a relative who was suspected of bank robbery. The suspect was not found, and the Crichtons, who were badly frightened by the intrusion, sued the FBI for wrongful search. Did the FBI have sufficient cause for a warrantless search? Or did the FBI violate the Crichtons’ constitutional rights? Where should society draw the line between its public safety needs and the rights of the individual? Such questions in the context of a real-life situation immediately plunge students into the chapter’s subject and into the process of thinking about its importance.

This approach is part of a second pedagogical goal of this text: helping students to think critically. Critical thinking is, I believe, the most important skill that a student can acquire from a social science education. Students do not learn to think critically by engaging in rote memorization. They acquire the skill by reflecting on what they read, by resolving challenges to their customary ways of thinking, and by confronting difficult issues. Throughout the book, I have attempted to structure the discussion in ways that ask students to think more deeply and systematically about politics. In the first chapter, for example, I discuss the inexact meanings, conflicting implications, and unfilled promise of Americans’ most cherished ideals, including liberty and equality. The discussion includes the “Chinese Exclusion,” a grotesque and not-well-known chapter in our history that should lead students to think about what it means to be an American.

Finally, I have attempted in this book to present American government through the analytical lens of political science but in a way that captures the vivid world of real-life politics. I tried to regularly remind myself during the writing of this book that only a tiny percentage of the students in the introductory course are interested in an academic political science career. Most students take the course because of their interest in politics. I have sought to preserve, even heighten, this interest while also giving students the systematic understanding that a science of politics can provide. I had a model in mind for the type of book I wanted to write. It was V. O. Key's absorbing *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups*, which I had read many years earlier as an undergraduate. The late Professor Key was a masterful scholar who had a deep love of politics and who gently chided colleagues whose interest in political science seemed to stop with the "science" part.

Few scholars can match Key's brilliance, but, thankfully, most political scientists share his fascination with politics. The result of their combined efforts is a body of knowledge about American government that is both precise and politically astute. This scholarship gives the text its unifying core. Political scientists have identified several major tendencies in the American political system that are a basis for a systematic understanding of how it operates, namely:

- Enduring ideals that are the basis of Americans' political identity and culture and that are a source of many of their beliefs, aspirations, and conflicts
- Extreme fragmentation of governing authority that is based on an elaborate system of checks and balances, which serves to protect against abuses of political power but also makes it difficult for political majorities to assert power when confronting an entrenched or intense political minority
- Many competing groups, which are a result of the nation's great size, population diversity, and economic complexity, and which, separately, have considerable power over narrow areas of public policy
- Strong emphasis on individual rights, which is a consequence of the nation's political traditions and which results in substantial benefits to the individual and places substantial claims on the community

- Preference for the marketplace as a means of allocating resources, which has the effect of placing many economic issues beyond the reach of popular majorities

These tendencies are introduced in the first chapter and discussed frequently in subsequent chapters. If students forget many of the points made in this book, they may at least take away from the course a knowledge of the deep underpinnings of the American political system.

CHANGES FOR THIS EDITION

The response to the first two editions of *We the People* was gratifying. The text and its full-size hardcover version (*The American Democracy*) have been used at more than five hundred colleges and universities.

Nevertheless, I have chosen in this edition to tinker somewhat with the text's organization in order to bring it in line with the way most instructors organize the introductory course. In the first two editions, the chapter on federalism preceded the chapter on limited government. This placement reflected the order in which the writers of the Constitution addressed these issues at the Philadelphia convention of 1787. Federalism was the first and most contentious issue of the convention, and the resulting compromises shaped much of the rest of the Constitution and the ratifying debate that followed. But there is also good reason for addressing first the question of limited government, which was the pressing issue of the late colonial period, the Declaration of Independence, and the American Revolution. A survey we conducted of instructors indicated that the large majority prefer to start their discussion of the Constitution in the context of its larger history rather than its more immediate history. I have responded to this preference: the chapter on limited government now precedes the chapter on federalism.

All other changes are modest by comparison, but the text has been fully updated in its scholarship, tables and figures, and references to recent developments (such as the Kosovo conflict, the Lewinsky scandal, and global economic problems). Other new material includes, for example, a full section on the environment in the economic policy chapter and references throughout the book to the Internet and its expanding role in American politics.

The text's boxes have also been updated. Each chapter has a "How the United States Compares" box and a "States in the Nation" box. The United States in many ways has the world's preeminent democracy, but it also has

distinctive policies and practices. The American states, too, are quite different in their politics and policies, despite belonging to the same union. American students invariably gain a deeper understanding of their own communities when they recognize the ways in which their nation or state differs from others.

A novel feature of *We the People* is its selected readings; each chapter is followed by a reading that develops a major point of the chapter. These readings are intended to deepen the student's understanding of American politics and to add flexibility to the instructor's use of the material. For an instructor who prefers to supplement the course text with a book of readings, this text offers both. On the other hand, the instructor who wants to limit reading assignments to the text itself can simply skip the end-of-chapter readings or recommend them as optional items for students who have the time and interest. The readings, with the exception of James Madison's *Federalist* No. 10, are contemporary ones. The authors are distinguished scholars and public servants.

YOUR SUGGESTIONS ARE INVITED

I invite from instructors and students any comments and criticisms that might guide future editions of the text. The strengths and weaknesses of a text are best discovered in its use, and I hope you will share your thoughts with me. I promise a response, including a text revision if appropriate. Students in Professor Henry Pratt's course at Wayne State University, for example, proposed a topic that I have added to the chapter on public opinion and political socialization. You can contact me at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138 or by e-mail: thomas_patterson@harvard.edu.

Thomas E. Patterson

SUPPLEMENTS PACKAGE

*For Students***Study Guide****0-07-229514-7**

by Willoughby Jarrell of Kennesaw State University

Each chapter includes: learning objectives, focus and main points (to help direct students' attention to most critical points), chapter summary, major concepts (listed and defined), annotated Internet resources, analytical thinking exercises, and test review questions—approximately 10 true/false, 15 multiple choice, and 5 essay topics. The answers are provided at the end of each chapter.

Interactive Study Guide CD ROM**0-07-229516-3**

This CD-ROM is a collection of multimedia and interactive tools for the student using *WE THE PEOPLE 3/e*. It will include all of the material included in the printed Student Study Guide, as well as feedback for questions, crossword puzzles, interactive graphics, and simulations. There will also be links to historical documents, audio speeches, a photo gallery, and video clips from the newly developed McGraw-Hill American Government Video Library.

1998 Mid-Term Elections Update**0-07-230061-2**

by Richard Semiati of American University

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For Instructors

Instructor's Manual/Test Bank

0-07-229512-0

by Willoughby Jarrell of Kennesaw State University

For each chapter, the instructor's manual will include: learning objectives, focus points and main points, a chapter summary, a list of major concepts, a lecture outline, alternative lecture objectives, class discussion topics, and a list of Internet resources. The test bank consists of approximately 20-25 multiple choice questions per chapter, 15-20 true/false questions, and 5 suggested essay topics per chapter, with answers given alongside the questions, and page references provided.

Computerized Test Bank

Windows 0-07-229513-9

Mac 0-07-234424-5

Computerized test bank drawing on questions from IM/TB to assist professors in generating tests is available in Windows and for the Mac.

Presentation Manager

0-07-229515-5

Tailored to the table of contents and format of the third edition, this CD integrates instructor resources available in the Instructor's Manual/Test Bank with multimedia components, such as PowerPoint presentation, photographs, maps, and charts.

McGraw-Hill American Government Video Library

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0-07-229517-1

Video #3: *Media and Politics*

0-07-234442-3

For Students and Instructors

On-Line Learning Center

This web site contains distinct instructor and student areas, each password-protected. The instructor side contains the content of the Presentation Manager, while the student side hosts the content of the Interactive Study Guide CD-ROM.

Web Site

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