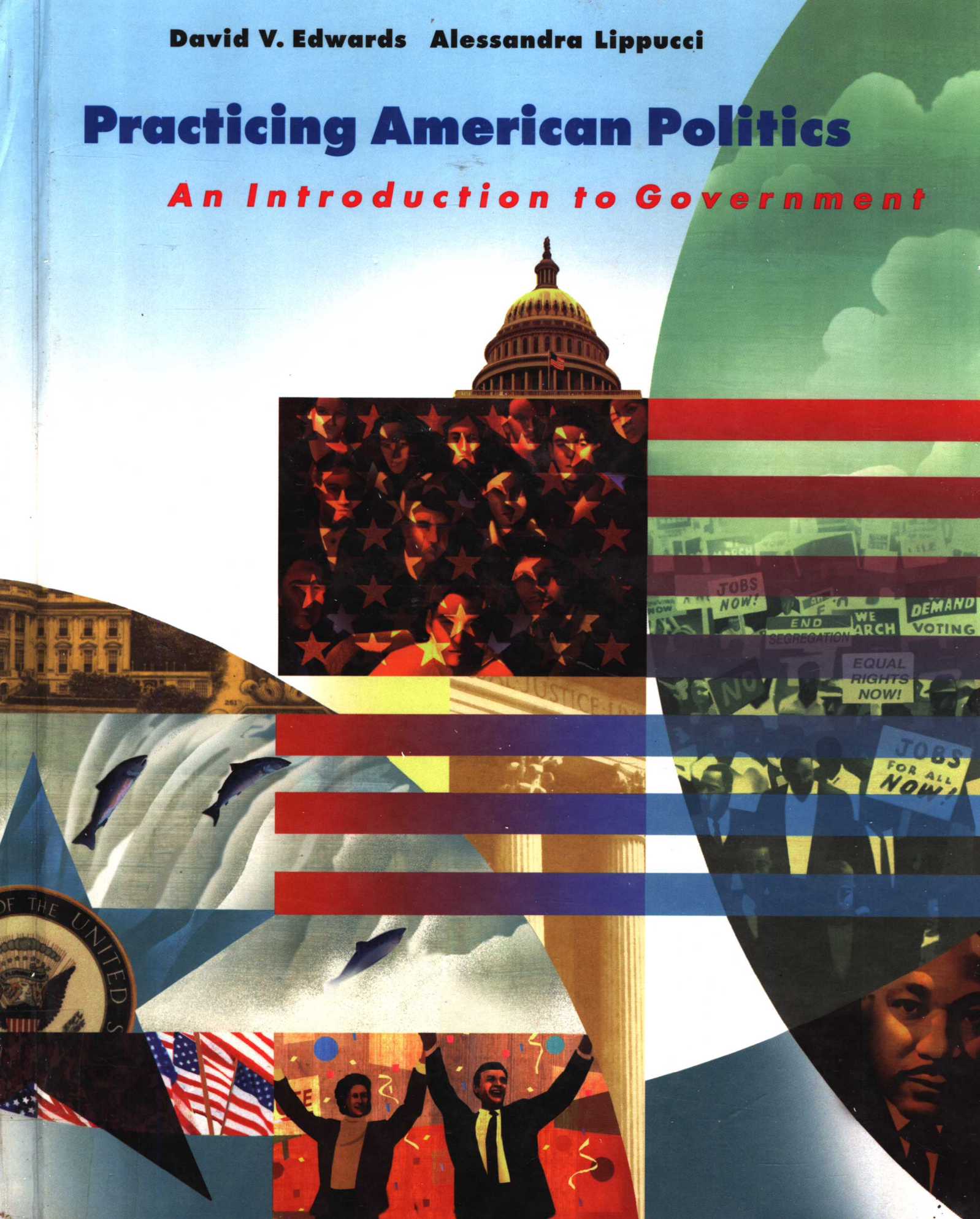


David V. Edwards Alessandra Lippucci

Practicing American Politics

An Introduction to Government



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David V. Edwards Alessandra Lippucci

University of Texas at Austin

Worth Publishers

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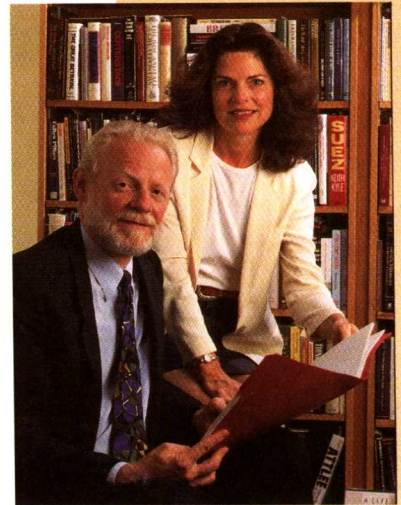
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We dedicate this book with love and gratitude to our parents

J. Earle Edwards, Marjorie V. Edwards, Fred H. Lippucci, Marion K. Lippucci

and to our children

John V. Edwards and Elisabeth M. Edwards

Preface

We have taught the American government course required of all undergraduates at the University of Texas at Austin to classes of 200 to 350 for decades. We had used *The American Political Experience*, which David Edwards had written, as it went through four editions in the late 1970s and 1980s. That book emphasized the importance of citizen participation and the situations of women and ethnic and other minorities.

By the 1990s, politics and policy challenges had changed, and so had our approach to teaching the course. We therefore felt it was time to write a completely new book—one that retained the strengths of *The American Political Experience* but was based on the pedagogical principles we had been developing in the classroom.

While we were revising the manuscript, we used several versions of it in our classes. We also used a major daily newspaper as a supplement so that students could see the connections between actual current events and what they were learning from the textbook. Their performance on tests and their comments in class indicated that the analytical tools and principles they were learning from the textbook enhanced their understanding of the political activities and events they were seeing in the daily news. And, because the textbook did the major work of describing and explaining the political dynamics we wanted our students to master, we were free to elaborate upon them in lectures, illustrate them with video clips and newspaper articles, and invite students to discuss and debate them during class. The feedback we got from students personally and in their course evaluations was gratifying. Students expressed greater interest in the course, and their test scores over the semester revealed steady improvement in their ability to analyze political problems and disputes thoughtfully and critically.

Our Approach to the Study of Politics

Throughout the book, we analyze politics in terms of three questions: *What is?* *What's right?* and *What works?* We believe that here we can best convey the purpose and pedagogical features of this book by using the same approach.

What Our Pedagogical Approach Is

We describe, explain, and evaluate the processes of American politics with the help of a strong, clear pedagogical framework that we introduce in Chapter 1 and use consistently throughout the book. The basis of this framework is our definition of politics:

Politics consists of disputes over claims to the authority to decide *what is*, *what's right*, and *what works*.

Through this definition, students are stimulated to address two key questions:

1. Which political actors are making conflicting claims to this authority?
2. How do they try to persuade others that they know *what is*, *what's right*, and *what works*? In other words, how do they make these claims to authority?

We encourage students to raise these questions with respect to every dispute they encounter—in this text, in current affairs, and in their daily lives.

Because our definition of politics focuses on disputes over claims to authority, we present as much of the subject matter as we can in the form of disputes. Some of these disputes—such as what the Constitution means or how a core American value (liberty, equality, the right to property) should be applied in a particular instance—have persisted throughout the nation's history, while other disputes (over education policy or welfare policy, for example) arose later but have persisted. Still other disputes (such as the dispute over slavery) have been resolved once and for all. As we present these disputes in this text, we point out gaps between political principles (*what's right*) and political practice (*what is*). Finally, we show that solutions to some political problems (*what works*) can, over time, become problems themselves, and that much of the problem solving in which political actors engage involves *learning by doing*.

Why We Believe Our Pedagogical Approach Is Right for a Basic American Government Course

As its title, *Practicing American Politics*, indicates, this book puts the basics of American politics into the normative as well as the descriptive context of political practice. We show that all people, groups, and institutions—including government—affect the political process, either by engaging in politics actively and intentionally or by leaving it to others, and that all are therefore responsible for the quality of American democracy.

The book encourages students to practice politics in ways that accord with their beliefs, values, talents, and expanding body of knowledge. It does so by equipping them with nonideological methods for understanding and evaluating political processes and issues and by giving them tools and information to help them practice politics in a variety of ways throughout their lives.

This practice-oriented approach was inspired by the realization that this text and this course may well be the only sustained encounter students will have with this subject in their lifetimes. The guiding purpose of this book, in brief, is

to encourage *good citizenship*—by which we mean an acceptance of the responsibility that each of us bears to strengthen democracy in a changing world, to protect it from “the tragedy of the commons” (situations in which individuals seek their own goals in ways that produce negative consequences for the whole), and to ensure that all of us continue to dedicate our individual gifts and aspirations to the common good, even as we debate what that good is or should be.

How Our Pedagogical Approach Works

When students examine a dispute and discover that its participants see the matter that divides them (*what is*) in terms of their differing needs and goals and their varying perspectives, students confront the fact that politics creates winners and losers among people who feel justified in their views. In asking which party should prevail, or what the outcome of the dispute should be (*what’s right*), students confront the ethical dimensions of the dispute and must consult their own consciences. In asking which solution would be the most efficient or affordable (*what works*), students confront the practical side of problems and the necessity of establishing priorities in situations that often involve scarcity, insufficient information, and the need to make painful tradeoffs as, for example, in formulating a policy that promotes cleaner air and public health without crippling auto manufacturers and other industries and causing serious unemployment. In confronting such problems, students discover that political solutions require a willingness to *learn by doing* and to make adjustments in response to that learning.

Although these three questions—*what is*, *what’s right*, and *what works*—are often intertwined in any dispute, asking them separately helps students to pinpoint areas of consensus and disagreement. In the case of welfare policy, for example, they will discover that some people agree that a welfare problem exists (*what is*) and may even agree on *what’s right* (that certain people should or should not receive a helping hand from the rest of society), but they may not agree on *what works* (what welfare reforms would best address the problem).

Chapter 1 also introduces students to *the politics of knowledge*—strategies of communication that rely on the manipulation of information, logic, and language, often in combination, to bolster a political actor’s claims about *what is*, *what’s right*, and *what works*. We then equip students with the basic analytical tools (practices of description, explanation, evaluation, and prescription) that allow them to recognize the politics of knowledge when actors employ these strategies and to analyze and evaluate political disputes (and any other kinds of disputes, for that matter). They discover that these analytical tools are often intertwined, and they learn how to use these tools themselves and to recognize when they are being used by others.

We were delighted when one of our students exclaimed enthusiastically at the end of a semester: “I have never liked politics because it all seemed such a mess. Now, when I pick up the newspaper, I automatically see an argument in terms of *what is*, *what’s right*, and *what works*. And I really understand what’s going on!”

Special Features

We've incorporated many special features in the book to reinforce student learning.

Introductory Case Studies in Each Chapter

Each chapter starts with an introductory case study that is designed to perform two important tasks. First, the case itself introduces the chapter's key points and concepts, as well as important actors. Second, as a chapter unfolds we often refer back to the case study and sometimes fill out more areas of the case study to reinforce student learning. In Chapter 1, for example, we introduce major political actors, political rules, and features of the political process in terms of the disputes over water scarcity in California. We do the same with other case studies, among them "lemon laws" protecting car buyers (Chapter 3), multicultural college courses (Chapter 4), Ross Perot's presidential campaigns (Chapter 7), the Rodney King affair (Chapter 9), and the implementation of Clean Air Act amendments (Chapter 13).

Critical Thinking Aids

Boxed features called the Politics of Knowledge, the Politics of Language, and Political Actors Disagree appear throughout the text. These boxes stimulate critical thinking and reinforce the pedagogical principles outlined in Chapter 1 by exposing the roots of political disputes so that students learn to analyze political questions critically and think about them constructively.

Participation Aids

Political Action Guides provide students with information on a variety of ways of practicing politics, from how to read the morning paper and watch the evening news to how to get in touch with many political parties.

Internet Aids

Practicing "electronic democracy" via the Internet is encouraged in every chapter. Web site addresses in marginal boxes tell students where they can reach political actors of all types, from government agencies to interest groups to political parties to major media. In addition, the case study in Chapter 6 shows how an ordinary citizen used an electronic bulletin board and e-mail to help solve a homeless problem in her community. And Chapter 9 provides useful information on the people's media.

Integration of Special Features in the Text

We have selected the textual and visual elements of each chapter to complement one another. What students read in the text is directly connected to the visuals they see on the page. Every box, marginal definition, table, figure, photograph, and cartoon has been carefully chosen to illustrate specific points we make in the text. Each chapter thus functions as a coordinated whole.

Coverage

Public Policy

We have integrated our discussions of particular policy issues throughout the book—especially where those issues highlight the politics of federalism and the politics that result from the separation of powers and from the system of checks and balances—to reinforce students’ understanding of those central dynamics which they will find in the news every day. For example, *environmental policy* is discussed in Chapter 1, Chapter 8 (Interest Groups), Chapter 11 (Congress), and Chapter 13 (Bureaucracy), among others. *Education policy* is covered in Chapter 1, Chapter 4 (Political Culture and Socialization), Chapter 5 (Public Opinion), Chapter 14 (The Courts and the Legal System), and Chapter 16 (Civil Rights). *Campaign finance* is discussed in Chapter 8 (Interest Groups) and Chapter 10 (Campaigns and Elections). *Economic policy* is treated in Chapter 4 and Chapter 12 (The Presidency).

Cultural Diversity

The changing racial and ethnic composition of our American Government classes, and the growing presence of international students and students with severe disabilities, have encouraged us to focus on the cultural and other differences that both enrich and challenge American democracy. We have integrated coverage of these differences throughout the chapters to foster civility and mutual respect. The pedagogical principles that we use in this book encourage students to view the circumstances of another person or a group from the perspective of that person or group as part of the process of deciding *what is*, *what’s right*, and *what works*.

Comparative Perspectives

Many of our chapters deal with the growing effects of globalization on American politics in such areas as the economy, human rights, scarcity of resources, and the environment. We also have boxed features with comparative coverage of differing political systems (such as federal structures and parliamentary systems) where we believe these differences are especially illuminating, and we integrate these discussions in the text itself wherever possible.

Impacts of Federalism

By encountering different aspects of federalism in virtually every chapter, students discover the many ways in which this form of government structures the behavior of political actors ranging from parties, campaigns, interest groups, and the media to local, state, and national governments. By the time they have finished the book, students will see federalism as a practical reality of political life.

Ethics and Reform

In addition to raising ethical questions (relating to the *what’s right* theme) throughout the book, each chapter ends with a section that focuses on the problems and

prospects for reform in areas related to that chapter. In these sections students discover that proposals for reform are often contested and thus constitute a central feature of political life.

Supplements to the Text

A talented team of authors has produced a number of supplements to help students master the principles and political dynamics described and explained in our book. Instructors will benefit from a number of supplements designed to enhance lectures, lessons, and the teaching experience.

Student Learning Guide Marilyn Davis, Spelman College. The Student Learning Guide helps students focus on chapter material with features such as chapter summaries, guided study, definitions of key terms, and practice test questions, which include the matching of key terms and multiple choice and essay questions. Correct answers with page references are listed at the end of each chapter.

Instructor's Resources Manual Brian Fife, Indiana University—Purdue University at Fort Wayne. Instructors will find this an invaluable resource. Each chapter contains a chapter overview and outline, a condensation of chapter themes, definitions of key terms (organized by the chapter's main heads), lecture suggestions, classroom activities, Internet addresses, and additional readings.

Test Bank Jim Henson, Northeast Louisiana University. More than 1,500 multiple choice, fill-in, true-false, and essay questions accompany the textbook. The computerized test system allows instructors to edit questions, import questions, create multiple versions of tests, print in a variety of fonts, and even test students online.

Documents Collection Brian Fife, Indiana University—Purdue University at Fort Wayne. A comprehensive collection of more than 50 primary source documents keyed to chapters in the textbook. Each document is preceded by a short description of its context and background.

Transparencies The transparency set includes approximately 70 full-color acetates of illustrations, charts, figures, graphs, and maps from the text.

The St. Martin's Resource Library in Political Science By special arrangement with St. Martin's Press, we are offering three brief, supplementary books on a range of topics:

Ralph Nader's Practicing Democracy, 1997: A Guide to Student Action, 2nd ed.—Katherine Isaac, Center for the Study of Responsive Law. This valuable resource contains biographical and contact information for over 400 political action groups. It empowers students to become politically active at the local, state, and federal level.

Big Ideas: An Introduction to Ideologies in American Politics—R. Mark Tiller, Houston Community College. This book presents an overview of political, social, and economic ideologies and their connection to politics and policy disputes.

The Real Thing: Contemporary Documents in American Government—Fenyan Shi, Georgetown University. This anthology contains the texts of laws, letters, memos, grants, court opinions, and other documents that can be used for critical analysis.

Acknowledgments

Our greatest debt by far is to each other for the love and familial and intellectual companionship that we have shared for two and a half decades, especially during the seven years of intense partnership in working on this book.

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Over the seven years between signing our contract with Worth and completing the final draft of this book, we have worked with dozens of highly competent professionals. Bob Worth and Tom Gay saw the promise of this project and signed it. Our development editors and copy editors—the most demanding we have ever had the challenge and pleasure to work with—began with Jane Tufts and included Susan Seuling, Ann Hofstra Grogg, and Nancy Fleming; their contributions have improved every page. Editorial assistant Howard Unger exceeded his portfolio by being a sympathetic soundingboard and an exceptional resource on the Vietnam period. The versatile Deanna Krickus and Donna MacIver (editorial assistants) facilitated the project's progress in many and varied ways. Margaret Comaskey and Cecilia Gardner (senior project editors) and Suzanne Thibodeau (managing editor), were the ones who energetically tugged, pulled, and finally yanked this project through the production process with unfailing and supportive good spirits. George Touloumes (art director) applied his legendary artistic skills working with Malcolm Grear Designers to create yet another beautiful Worth book. We also wish to thank Barbara Seixas (production

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David V. Edwards
Alessandra Lippucci

Reviewers

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