

Theodore J. Lowi ★ Benjamin Ginsberg ★ Kenneth A. Shepsle

AMERICAN



GOVERNMENT

CORE NINTH EDITION

American Government

Power and Purpose

CORE
NINTH
EDITION

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FOR OUR FAMILIES:

Angele, Anna, and Jason Lowi
Sandy, Cindy, and Alex Ginsberg
Rise, Nilsa, and Seth Shepsle

Preface

Someone once asked if it is difficult for scholars to “write down” to introductory students. No. It is difficult to “write up” to them. Introductory students, of whatever age or reading level, need more, require more, and expect more of a book. A good teaching book, like a good novel or play, is written on two levels. One is the level of the narrative, the story line, the characters in action. The second is the level of character development, of the argument of the book or play. We would not be the first to assert that theater is an aspect of politics, but our book may be unusual to the extent that we took that assertion as a guide. We have packed it full of narrative—with characters and with the facts about the complex situations in which they find themselves. We have at the same time been determined not to lose sight of the second level, yet we have tried to avoid making the second level so prominent as to define us as preachers rather than teachers.

Our collective one-hundred-plus years of teaching have taught us not to underestimate students. Their raw intelligence is not satisfied until a second level provides a logic linking the disparate parts of what we were asserting was a single system of government. And these linkages have to be made in ordinary language. We hope we brought this to the book.

We hope also that we brought over from our teaching experience a full measure of sympathy for all who teach the introductory course, most particularly those who teach the course from departmental necessity rather than voluntarily as a desired part of their career. We hope our book will help them appreciate the course as we do—as an opportunity to make sense of a whole political system, usually one’s own, and one of the largest, most durable, and most consequential ever. Much can be learned about the system from a reexamination of the innumerable familiar facts under the still more challenging condition that the facts be somehow interesting, significant, and, above all, linked.

All Americans are to a great extent familiar with the politics and government of their own country. No fact is intrinsically difficult to grasp, and in such an open society, facts abound. In America, many facts are commonplace that are suppressed elsewhere. The ubiquity of political commonplaces is a problem, but it can be turned into a virtue. These very commonplaces give us a vocabulary that is widely shared, and such a vocabulary enables us to communicate effectively at the first level of the book, avoiding abstract concepts and professional language (jargon). Reaching beyond the commonplaces to the second level also identifies what is to us the single most important task of the teacher of political

science—to confront the million commonplaces and to choose from among them the small number of really significant concepts. Students give us proportion; we must in turn give the students priorities. Virtually everything we need to know about the institutions and processes of government and politics is readily at hand. But to choose a few commonplaces from the millions—there’s the rub.

THE APPROACH OF THE BOOK

This book was written for faculty and students who are looking for a little more than just “nuts and bolts” and who are drawn to an analytical perspective. Although we don’t specifically address political-science methodology, the book serves as an integration of the historical-institutional and rational-choice perspectives and as a set of tools (the “Five Principles of Politics”) that students can use to think analytically about politics. The feedback we have received thus far from students and fellow professors gives us confidence that the most appealing feature of the book is the analytical framework based on the principles of politics. With this Ninth Edition, we hope to broaden our appeal among political scientists and their students by incorporating new applications of the principles of politics in action and new pedagogy that keeps students focused on the main points of each chapter. The book is based on the idea that the best way to teach students is to expose them to repeated applications of a small number of the core ideas of the discipline in a presentation devoid of the usual clutter. We hope that students will get from this book more than just a bunch of facts about American government; we hope that they will develop a way of thinking about and analyzing politics.

The book’s analytical approach is incorporated in the following ways:

Emphasis on five fundamental, underlying principles of politics provides students with the “tools” for analysis. Politics is messy, complex, and contentious. How do we make sense of what seems too large and impossible to explain? In answering this question throughout each chapter, we repeatedly draw on five fundamental principles of politics:



All political behavior has a purpose.



All politics is collective action.



Institutions routinely solve collective-action problems.



Political outcomes are the products of individual preferences and institutional procedures.



History matters.

The application of the five principles to each chapter's topic is first introduced in a **"Previewing the Principles" box** at the beginning of the chapter. Each time one of these principles is used in the analysis, a marginal icon appears, reminding students of the core principle. These principles are also summarized in a **"Principles of Politics in Review" box** toward the conclusion of every chapter. Our goal is to equip students with the tools to evaluate the political world that they observe around them.

Four new applications of the "Five Principles of Politics." Merely knowing a principle is different from understanding it. For students to analyze politics, they need a framework (the five principles) and models of how to use the framework. Students also need to be prompted to use the framework on their own. In the Ninth Edition, four applications show students how to apply the framework and then use it on their own in in-class simulations and Web-based exercises.

1. **"Applying the Five Principles of Politics" boxed case studies** (one per chapter). These case studies go beyond the text and apply one or more of the five principles to a central topic such as Bush's veto-less presidency, or whether the two Americas—red and blue—actually exist.
2. **"Politics in the News: Reading between the Lines"** (one per chapter). These two-page spreads show students how to use the five principles to better understand political situations reported in the news, such as FEMA and the response to Hurricane Katrina or the nomination of John Roberts to the Supreme Court. This feature consists of an excerpt from a *New York Times* article, a bulleted summary of the article's central issues, and a bulleted "political analysis" using the five principles.
3. **Playing Politics game theory-based simulations workbook** (by Tobin Grant, Southern Illinois University—Carbondale). Active involvement is an essential part of effective learning. These role-playing simulations will allow students to put themselves in the shoes of strategic political actors responding to a wide range of political situations. The simulations are designed to take from 30 to 45 minutes in class and include an out-of-class written analysis by students. They are a perfect supplement for discussion sections.
4. **Web-site exercises based on "Applying the Five Principles of Politics" and "Politics in the News."** Another "active learning" component, these exercises help students build their analytical skills and demonstrate that the principles of politics can be used to interpret current political events. To preview these exercises, go to wwnorton.com/lowi.

An "analytic narrative" that ties the five principles together. As teachers and scholars, we believe that it is easiest to understand the system of American government by looking at political institutions (Principle 3). In every chapter, we

look at an institution's source and its historical development (Principle 5). Along the way, we offer accounts of important historical events and analysis of the individual decisions and choices by political actors (Principle 1). Throughout, we analyze political conflict and compromise (Principle 2) and the outcomes of these conflicts and compromises (Principle 4). History gives each chapter a narrative flow, making the book engaging. The focus on individual decisions and choices and the conflicts between them explains not only political outcomes such as policy, but also how and why institutions develop and change. For example, in discussing the presidency, we evaluate how presidents have used the threat of a veto and "going public" to build power vis-à-vis Congress. By the time students get to the end of this chapter, they will understand why some policies get adopted while others don't. And they will also have a richer sense of why today's institutions function as they do and how they interact with each other.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book is divided into three parts, reflecting the historical process by which Americans have used governmental power. Part 1, "Foundations," comprises the chapters concerned with the bases of political analysis and the writing of the rules of the "game." The founding of 1787–89 put it all together, but that was actually a second effort after a first failure. The original contract, the Articles of Confederation, did not achieve an acceptable balance—too much freedom and not enough power. The second founding, the Constitution ratified in 1789, was itself an imperfect effort to establish the rules, and within two years new terms were added—the first ten amendments, called the Bill of Rights. And for the next century and a half following the ratification of the Bill of Rights in 1791, the courts played umpire and translator in the struggle to interpret those terms. Chapter 1 introduces our five principles of politics. Chapter 2 concentrates on the founding itself. Chapters 3 and 4 chronicle the long struggle to establish what was meant by the three great principles of limited government: federalism, separation of powers, and individual liberties and rights.

Part 2, "Institutions," includes the chapters sometimes referred to as the "nuts and bolts." But none of these pieces of government means anything except in the larger context of the goals governments must meet and the limits, especially of procedure, that have been imposed upon them. Chapter 5 is an introduction to the fundamental problem of representative government as this has been institutionalized in the U.S. Congress. Congress, with all its problems, is the most creative legislative body in the world. But how well does Congress function as a meeting ground between consent and governing? How are society's demands taken into account in debates on the floor of Congress and deliberations by its committees? What interests are most effectively "represented" in Congress? What is the modern Congress's constituency?

Chapter 6 explores the same questions for the presidency. Although Article II of the Constitution provides that the president should see that the laws made by Congress are “faithfully executed,” the presidency was always part of our theory of representative government, and the modern presidency has increasingly become a law *maker* rather than merely a law implementer. What effect, then, does the strong presidency have on the conduct and the consequences of representative government? Chapter 7 treats the executive branch as an entity separate from the presidency, but one that ultimately has to be brought back into the general process of representative government. That, indeed, is the overwhelming problem of what we call “bureaucracy in a democracy.” After spelling out the organization and workings of “the bureaucracy” in detail, we then evaluate the role of Congress and the president in imposing some political accountability on an executive branch composed of roughly 5 million civilian and military personnel.

Chapter 8 on the judiciary should not be lost in the shuffle. Referred to by Hamilton as “the least dangerous branch,” the judiciary truly has become a co-equal branch to such an extent that if Hamilton were alive today, he would probably eat his words.

Part 3 we simply call “Politics” because politics encompasses all the efforts by any and all individuals and groups inside as well as outside the government to determine what government will do and on whose behalf it will be done. Our chapters take the order of our conception of how politics developed since the Age of Revolution and how politics works today: Chapter 9, “Public Opinion,” Chapter 10, “Elections,” Chapter 11, “Political Parties,” Chapter 12, “Groups and Interests,” and Chapter 13, “The Media.”

In the full edition, Part 4 is entitled “Governance.” These are chapters primarily about public policies, which are the most deliberate and goal-oriented aspects of the still-larger phenomenon of “government in action.” We begin Chapter 14, “Government in Action: Public Policy and the Economy,” by looking at policies that are concerned with the conduct of business, the obligations of employers, the rights and limits of workers to organize, and the general ability of the economy to operate without coming apart. Chapter 15, “Government and Society,” looks at policies that affect society at large, outside and beyond the economic marketplace. Since ours is a commercial society, many policies aimed at society have direct economic consequences. For example, many aspects of what we call the welfare system are social policies, but they have a profound effect on the economy because welfare, as we put it, changes the rules governing who shall be poor. Chapter 16, “Foreign Policy and Democracy,” turns to the international realm and America’s place in it. Our concern here is to understand American foreign policies and why we have adopted them. Given the traditional American fear of “the state” and the genuine danger of international involvements to domestic democracy, a chapter on foreign policy is essential to a book on American government and also reveals a great deal about America as a culture.

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Our students at Cornell, Johns Hopkins, and Harvard have already been identified as an essential factor in the writing of this book. They have been our most immediate intellectual community, a hospitable one indeed. Another part of our community, perhaps a large suburb, is the discipline of political science itself. Our debt to the scholarship of our colleagues is scientifically measurable, probably to several decimal points, in the footnotes of each chapter. Despite many complaints that the field is too scientific or not scientific enough, political science is alive and well in the United States. It is an aspect of democracy itself, and it has grown and changed in response to the developments in government and politics that we have chronicled in our book. If we created a time line on the history of political science, it would show a close association with developments in “the American state.” Sometimes the discipline has been out of phase and critical; at other times, it has been in phase and perhaps apologetic. But political science has never been at a loss for relevant literature, and without that literature, our job would have been impossible.

There have, of course, been individuals on whom we have relied in particular. Of all writers, living and dead, we find ourselves most in debt to two—James Madison and Alexis de Tocqueville. Many other great authors have shaped us as they have shaped all political scientists. But Madison and Tocqueville have stood for us not only as the bridge to all timeless political problems but also as representations of the ideal of political science itself—that political science must be steadfastly scientific in the search for what is, yet must keep alive a strong sense of what ought to be, recognizing that democracy is neither natural nor invariably good, and must be fiercely dedicated to constant critical analysis of all political institutions in order to contribute to the maintenance of a favorable balance between individual freedom and public power.

We are pleased to acknowledge our debt to the many colleagues who had a direct and active role in criticism and preparation of the manuscript. The First Edition was read and reviewed by Gary Bryner, Brigham Young University; James F. Herndon, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; James W. Riddlesperger, Jr., Texas Christian University; John Schwarz, University of Arizona; Toni-Michelle Travis, George Mason University; and Lois Vietri, University of Maryland. We also want to reiterate our thanks to the four colleagues who allowed us the privilege of testing a trial edition of our book by using it as the major text in their introductory American Government courses: Gary Bryner, Brigham Young University; Allan J. Cigler, University of Kansas; Burnet V. Davis, Albion College; and Erwin A. Jaffe, California State University—Stanislaus.

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We are more than happy, however, to absolve all these contributors from any flaws, errors, and misjudgments that this book contains. We wish it could be free of all production errors, grammatical errors, misspellings, misquotes, missed citations, etc. From that standpoint, a book ought to try to be perfect. But substantively we have not tried to write a flawless book; we have not tried to write a book to please everyone. We have again tried to write an effective book, a book

that cannot be taken lightly. Our goal was not to make every reader a political scientist. Our goal was to restore politics as a subject of vigorous and enjoyable discourse, releasing it from the bondage of the thirty-second sound bite and the thirty-page technical briefing. Every person can be knowledgeable because everything about politics is accessible. One does not have to be a television anchorperson to profit from political events. One does not have to be a philosopher to argue about the requisites of democracy, a lawyer to dispute constitutional interpretations, an economist to debate public policy. We will be very proud if our book contributes in a small way to the restoration of the ancient art of political controversy.

Theodore J. Lowi
Benjamin Ginsberg
Kenneth A. Shepsle
February 2006

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