

WE THE PEOPLE

SHORTER
SIXTH EDITION

AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS



Benjamin Ginsberg



Theodore J. Lowi



Margaret Weir



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THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY



W. W. NORTON & COMPANY
NEW YORK ★ LONDON

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Book and cover design: Rubina Yeh

Figures: John McAusland

Managing editor, College: Marian Johnson

Composition: TSI Graphics

Manufacturing: R. R. Donnelley & Sons—Willard Division

Cover illustration: Mick Wiggins

Photo research: Neil Ryder Hoos

E-media editor: Matthew Arnold

ISBN 13: 978-0-393-92956-0 (pbk.)

ISBN 10: 0-393-92956-6 (pbk.)

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110
www.wwnorton.com

W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., Castle House, 75/76 Wells Street, London W1T 3QT

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0



TO

SANDY, CINDY, AND ALEX GINSBERG

ANGELE, ANNA, AND JASON LOWI

NICHOLAS ZIEGLER

This book has been and continues to be dedicated to developing a satisfactory response to the question more and more Americans are asking: Why should we be engaged with government and politics? Through the first five editions, we sought to answer this question by making the text directly relevant to the lives of the students who would be reading it. As a result, we tried to make politics interesting by demonstrating that students' interests are at stake and that they therefore need to take a personal, even selfish, interest in the outcomes of government. At the same time, we realized that students needed guidance in how to become politically engaged. Beyond providing students with a core of political knowledge, we needed to show them how they could apply that knowledge as participants in the political process. The "Get Involved: What You Can Do" sections in each chapter helped achieve that goal.

This sixth edition retains the same goals and methods as earlier editions, but also goes beyond them. As events from the last several years have reminded us, "what government does" can be a matter of life and death. Recent events have reinforced the centrality of government in citizens' lives. The U.S. government has fought a war abroad, while claiming sweeping new powers at home that could compromise the liberties of its citizens. The administration has adopted policies that have further polarized Democrats and Republicans and exacerbated the economic inequality in this country. These events have prompted more critical attention to the Bush administration specifically and to the practices of American government more broadly. America's role in the world is discussed daily both inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, students and younger Americans have become more aware of and involved in politics, as the 2004 and 2006 elections illustrated. Reflecting all of these trends, this new sixth edition shows more than any other book on the market (1) how students are connected to government; (2) how American government is connected to the world; and (3) why students should think critically about government and politics. These themes are incorporated in the following ways:

- **New "Politics and Popular Culture" boxes connect politics to topics students are interested in.** In each chapter "Politics and Popular Culture" boxes ask students to look critically at how politics intersects with television, film, music, cartoons, and the Internet. Drawing on a range of social science research, these boxes engage students in questions such as "Do non-news TV shows that include political content, like *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, *The Simpsons*, or *The West Wing* have an effect on political knowledge?" "Is there a culture war?" and "Why do candidates sometimes prefer to be interviewed on talk shows rather than traditional news programs?"
- **"America in the World" boxes show students how American government is connected to the world.** These one-page boxes in every chapter illustrate the important political role the United States plays abroad. Topics include "Should America Export Democracy?" "The American Constitution: A Model for the

World?” “Participation and Democracy in Iraq,” and “What Is Congress’s Role in Foreign Policy?” These boxes exemplify the critical-analytical approach that characterizes the text and include “For Critical Analysis” questions.

- **Chapter introductions focus on “What Government Does and Why It Matters.”** In recent decades, cynicism about “big government” has dominated the political zeitgeist. But critics of government often forget that governments do a great deal for citizens. Every year, Americans are the beneficiaries of billions of dollars of goods and services from government programs. Government “does” a lot, and what it does matters a great deal to everyone, including college students. At the start of each chapter, this theme is introduced and applied to the chapter’s topic. The goal is to show students that government and politics mean something to their daily lives.
- **“Get Involved: What You Can Do” sections and “Interactive Politics” exercises at the end of every chapter show students why political participation matters and how they can participate.** The “Get Involved” sections offer specific instructions and guidance on how college students can become involved in their own communities, as well as at the state and national level. The “Interactive Politics” sections provide specific role-playing scenarios that encourage students to think about the many forms of political participation.
- **“Previewing Liberty, Equality, and Democracy” and “Thinking Critically about . . . ” content highlights the critical-analytical approach.** American history reveals large gaps between the principles of liberty, equality, and democracy and the practice of American politics. Every chapter begins with a “Previewing Liberty, Equality, and Democracy” section that sets the stage for how liberty, equality, and democracy apply to the chapter’s topic, identifies the gap between those principles and actual government practice, and explores the potential conflict between those three principles. “Thinking Critically about . . . ” sections later in the chapter show students how to apply a critical perspective to these issues.

- **Enhanced data figures encourage students to engage actively with numerical data.** Recognizing that up-to-date numerical data play an important role in many American government courses, special attention has been given to the data tables and figures in the text. Two new pedagogical components ensure that students engage with the data, rather than simply glancing at the figure and moving on: (1) balloon captions in many figures direct students to key points in the graph; and (2) general captions for all data tables and figures ask students to consider the significance of the data and to think critically about the implications.
- **“For Critical Analysis” questions are incorporated in the “Politics and Popular Culture,” “America in the World,” and “Policy Debate” boxes and appear throughout the chapter to prompt students’ own critical thinking.** The “America in the World” boxes demonstrate the important role the United States plays in the world. The two “For Critical Analysis” questions that conclude each box get students to think critically about that role. For example, the Chapter 1 box “Should America Export Democracy?” describes U.S. attempts to export democracy to countries such as Iraq. The “For Critical Analysis” questions that conclude the box ask students to think about whether it is appropriate for America to try to shape the governmental institutions and political arrangements of other countries in the first place. “Policy Debate” boxes describe the various issues surrounding a policy conflict. For example, the box in Chapter 3 explores the debate on the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act. The “For Critical Analysis” questions that conclude the box ask students to consider “Why might the federal government be better able than state and local governments to ensure that low-income students receive a high-quality education?” and “Why do critics call this act an unfunded mandate that will harm low-income students?”

We continue to hope that our book will itself be accepted as a form of enlightened political action. This sixth edition is another chance. It is an advancement toward our goal. We promise to keep trying.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our students at Cornell, Johns Hopkins, Harvard, and Berkeley have been an essential factor in the writings 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 endnotes 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 did 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 it, our job would have been impossible.

We are especially pleased to acknowledge our debt to the many colleagues who had a direct and active role in criticism and preparation of the manuscript. Our thanks go to:

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Robert Wood, University of North Dakota

We also must pay thanks to the many collaborators we have had on this project: Robert J. Spitzer of the State University of New York at Cortland; Mark Kann and Marcella Marlowe of the University of Southern California; and, most recently, Dannagal Young of the University of Delaware, who contributed the “Politics and Popular Culture” boxes.

We are also grateful for the talents and hard work of several research assistants, whose contributions can never be adequately compensated. In particular, Mingus Mapps, Doug Harris, and Ben Bowyer put an enormous amount of thought and time into the figures, tables, and study aids that appear in the text. Israel Waismel-Manor also kept a close eye on keeping the book as up-to-date as possible.

We would like to give special thanks to Jacqueline Pastore at Cornell University, who not only prepared portions of the manuscript but also helped to hold the entire project together. We especially thank her for her hard work and dedication.

Perhaps above all, we wish to thank those at W. W. Norton. For its first five editions, editor Steve Dunn helped us shape the book in countless ways. Our current editor, Ann Shin, has carried on the Norton tradition of splendid editorial work. We thank Neil Ryder Hoos for devoting an enormous amount of time to finding new photos. For our interactive Web site for the book, Matthew Arnold has been an energetic and visionary editor. Barbara Gerr copyedited the manu-

script with Marian Johnson's superb direction, and project editor Carla Talmadge devoted countless hours keeping on top of myriad details. Ben Reynolds has been dedicated in managing production. Finally, we wish to thank Roby Harrington, the head of Norton's college department.

We are more than happy, however, to absolve all these contributors from any flaws, errors, and misjudgments that will inevitably be discovered. We wish the book 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 ef-

fective book, a book that cannot be taken lightly. Our goal was not to make every reader a political scientist or a political activist. Our goal was to restore politics as a subject matter of vigorous and enjoyable discourse, recapturing 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 a public policy. We would be very proud if our book contributes in a small way to the restoration of the ancient art of political controversy.

BENJAMIN GINSBERG

THEODORE J. LOWI

MARGARET WEIR

November 2006

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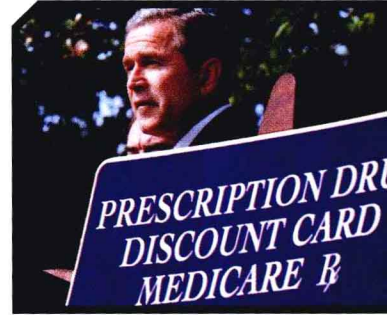
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