CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING GOVERNMENT IN AMERICA

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Introduction: Politics and Government Matter (pp. 3–8)
   A. Many Americans are apathetic about politics and government.
   B. Political knowledge fosters civic virtues, educates citizens on policy, and promotes participation.
   C. Voter turnout among the youth is lower than any other group.

II. Government (pp. 8–9)
   A. The institutions that make authoritative decisions for any given society are collectively known as government.
   B. Two fundamental questions about governing serve as themes of this book.
      1. How should we govern?
      2. What should government do?
   C. All national governments have certain functions in common:
      1. Governments maintain national defense.
      2. Governments provide public services called public goods.
      3. Governments preserve order.
      4. Governments socialize the young.
      5. Governments collect taxes.

III. Politics (pp. 9–10)
   A. Politics determines whom we select as our governmental leaders and what policies they pursue.
   B. The ways in which people get involved in politics make up their political participation.
   C. Single-issue groups are so concerned with one issue that their members will cast their votes on the basis of that issue only.

IV. The Policymaking System (pp. 10–13)
   A. People Shape Policy
      1. The policymaking system is the process by which policy comes into being and evolves over time. (See Figure 1.4)
      2. Political parties, elections, interest groups, and the media are key linkage institutions that transmit the preferences of Americans to the policymakers in government.
      3. The policy agenda consists of the issues that attract the serious attention of public officials and other people actively involved in politics at a given time.
      4. A political issue arises when people disagree about a problem or about a public policy choice made to fix a problem.
5. Policymakers work within the three **policymaking institutions** (the Congress, the presidency, and the courts as established by the U.S. Constitution).

B. Policies Impact People
1. Every decision that government makes—a law it passes, a budget it establishes, and even a decision not to act on an issue—is **public policy**. (See Table 1.1)
2. **Policy impacts** are the effects that a policy has on people and on society’s problems.

V. Democracy (pp. 13–23)
A. Defining Democracy
1. **Democracy** is a means of selecting policymakers and of organizing government so that policy reflects citizens’ preferences.

B. Traditional Democratic Theory
1. Equality in voting
2. Effective participation
3. Enlightened understanding
4. Citizen control of the agenda
5. Inclusion
6. Democracies must practice **majority rule** and preserve **minority rights**.
7. The relationship between the few leaders and the many followers is one of **representation**.

C. Three Contemporary Theories of American Democracy
1. **Pluralist theory** states that groups with shared interests influence public policy by pressing their concerns through organized efforts.
2. **Elite and class theory** contends that societies are divided along class lines, and that an upper-class elite pulls the strings of government.
3. **Hyperpluralism** contends that many groups are so strong that government is unable to act.

D. Challenges to Democracy
1. Increased Technical Expertise
2. Limited Participation in Government
3. Escalating Campaign Costs
4. Diverse Political Interests (**policy gridlock**)

E. American Political Culture and Democracy
1. **Political culture** consists of the overall set of values widely shared within a society.
2. Liberty
3. Egalitarianism
4. Individualism
5. Laissez-faire
6. Populism

F. A Culture War? (Is America polarized into rival political camps with different political cultures?)

G. Preview Questions about Democracy
VI. The Scope of Government in America (pp. 23–26)
   A. How Active Is American Government?
   B. Preview Questions about the Scope of Government

VII. Summary (p. 26)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying Chapter 1, you should be able to:

1. Describe what government is and what governments do.
2. Understand how politics is the struggle over "who gets what, when, and how."
3. Identify the important features of the policymaking system and explain how public policies are the choices that government makes—and declines to make—in response to political issues.
4. Understand the nature of democratic government and traditional democratic theory, and the key questions concerning democracy.
5. Distinguish among the three contemporary theories of American democracy and politics (pluralist, elite and class, and hyperpluralist) and identify some of their strengths and weaknesses.
6. Understand the nature of American political culture and identify the elements of the American creed.
7. Understand the nature of the scope of government in America and the key questions concerning the scope of government.

The following exercises will help you meet these objectives:

Objective 1: Describe what government is and what governments do.

1. Define the term "government."
2. What are the two fundamental questions about governing that serve as themes throughout the textbook?
   1. 
   2. 

3. List the five functions that all national governments perform.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 
   4. 
   5. 

Objective 2: Understand that politics is the struggle over "who gets what, when, and how."

   1. Define the term “politics.”
      1. Who:
      2. What:
      3. When:
      4. How:

Objective 3: Identify the important features of the policy system and explain how public policies are the choices that government makes, and declines to make, in response to political issues.

   1. Draw a diagram of how a policy system works.
2. List four key linkage institutions in a democratic society.
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.

3. Define the term "policy agenda."

4. How does a government's policy agenda change?

5. List the four major policymaking institutions in the United States.
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.

6. Define the term "policy impacts."

Objective 4: Understand the nature of democratic government, traditional democratic theory, and the key questions concerning democracy.

1. Define the term "democracy" as used in this text.
2. List the five cornerstones of an ideal democracy.

   1. 
   2. 
   3. 
   4. 
   5. 

3. Explain the principles of majority rule and minority rights.

Objective 5: Distinguish among the three contemporary theories of American democracy and politics (pluralist, elite and class, and hyperpluralist) and identify some of their strengths and weaknesses.

1. Complete the following table comparing pluralist, elite and class, and hyperpluralist theories according to who holds the power and how policy is made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Who Holds Power</th>
<th>How Policy is Made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pluralist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite and Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperpluralist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. List the major challenges facing American democracy.

   1.

   2.

   3.

   4.

Objective 6: Understand the nature of American political culture and identify the elements of the American creed.

1. What is 'political culture' and why is it crucial to understanding American government?

2. List and give an example of the five elements of the American creed according to Seymour Martin Lipset.

   1.

   2.

   3.

   4.

   5.

3. List three ways in which America might be experiencing a crisis of cultural values.

   1.

   2.

   3.
Objective 7: Understand the nature of the scope of government in America and the key questions concerning the scope of government.

1. Make a list of items that illustrate the scope of American government.

2. What is gross domestic product and how does the term illustrate the scope of American government?

KEY TERMS

*Identify and describe:*

- government
- public goods
- politics
- political participation
- single-issue groups
- policymaking system
- linkage institutions
- policy agenda
political issue

policymaking institutions

public policy

policy impacts

democracy

majority rule

minority rights

representation

pluralist theory

elite and class theory

hyperpluralism

policy gridlock

political culture
Compare and contrast:

government and politics

policy agenda and public policy

policymaking system and linkage institutions

policymaking system and political issue

democracy and traditional democratic theory

majority rule and minority rights

democracy and representation

pluralist theory, elite and class theory, and hyperpluralism
Name that term:

1. Something in which any member of society can share without diminishing the supply to any other member of society.

_________________________

2. It consists of subjects and problems getting the attention of government officials and their associates.

_________________________

3. This is a choice that government makes in response to an issue on its agenda.

_________________________

4. This arises when people disagree about a problem or about public policy choices made to combat a problem.

_________________________

5. Political parties, elections, and interest groups are the main ones in the United States.

_________________________

6. The effects a policy has on people and on society's problems.

_________________________

7. The most fundamental aspect of democratic theory.

_________________________

8. According to this theory of American government, many groups are so strong and numerous that the government is unable to act.

_________________________

9. This problem is magnified when voters choose a president from one party and congressional majorities from the other party.

_________________________
10. A key factor that holds American democracy together.

_________________________

11. The total value of all goods and services produced annually by the United States.

_________________________

USING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Identify and discuss, in your own words, the important features of the policymaking system. Take a problem (such as AIDS, racial discrimination, or crime) and describe how it might be dealt with in this system, from how it becomes a political issue to the policies that could be made in response to it and their impact on people. Discuss different ways in which the problem could be dealt with based on beliefs about the appropriate role of government. State your own view as well.

2. Collect some current examples of politics and policymaking that illustrate, support, or refute aspects of the three theories of American democracy. Use Internet news sources, newspapers, and/or news magazines in your search. Briefly describe what you discover. Based on your understanding of the three theories and the evidence you have collected make an initial judgment of the applicability of each theory to political and policy realities in America. As you continue to learn about American politics and policymaking, see how your perceptions change.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the correct answer:

1. Which of the following statements is TRUE?
   a. There is no relationship between political knowledge and age.
   b. In the mid-1960s, there was virtually no relationship between political knowledge and age; now, in the early twenty-first century, political knowledge increases with age.
   c. In the mid-1960s, there was virtually no relationship between political knowledge and age; now, in the early twenty-first century, political knowledge decreases with age.
   d. Today, in the early twenty-first century, there is virtually no relationship between political knowledge and age; in the mid-1960s, political knowledge increased with age.
   e. Today, in the early twenty-first century, there is virtually no relationship between political knowledge and age; in the mid-1960s, political knowledge decreased with age.
2. Political scientists argue that higher levels of political knowledge
   a. foster tolerance.
   b. foster intolerance.
   c. promote partisanship.
   d. promote bipartisanship.
   e. increase wealth.

3. Despite their differences, all governments
   a. provide public services.
   b. maintain a national defense.
   c. collect taxes.
   d. All of the above
   e. C only

4. Which of the following is an example of a public good?
   a. Libraries
   b. Parks
   c. College education
   d. All of the above
   e. Both a and b

5. Single-issue groups
   a. aid effective policymaking for the public interest.
   b. are concerned with a wide range of problems.
   c. have very little influence on voters or politicians.
   d. tend to have a narrow interest and to dislike compromise.
   e. view politics as a vocation, rather than as an avocation.

6. Which of the following is NOT a component of the policymaking system?
   a. People
   b. Linkage institutions
   c. Policy agenda
   d. Criminal justice institutions
   e. Policymaking institutions

7. Which of the following is TRUE of the policymaking system?
   a. Linkage institutions transmit people’s interests to government.
   b. Media investigate social problems and inform people about them.
   c. Elections enable Americans to make their opinions heard by choosing their public officials.
   d. People, linkage institutions, media, and elections all help to shape the policy agenda?
   e. All of the above
8. In a democratic society, parties, elections, interest groups, and the media are all examples of ____ between the preferences of citizens and the government’s policy agenda.
   a. cross-pollination
   b. inputs and outputs
   c. ideological bridges
   d. obstacles
   e. linkage institutions

9. Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels published
   a. *The Communist Manifesto*
   b. *A Theory of Democracy*
   c. *The Federalist Papers*
   d. *Poor Richard’s Almanac*
   e. *War and Peace*

10. Which of the following is NOT a type of public policy?
    a. Congressional statute
    b. Regulation
    c. Court decision
    d. Budgetary choices
    e. Mandate

11. The principle of “one person, one vote,” is an expression of the principle of
    a. equality in voting.
    b. effective participation.
    c. enlightened understanding.
    d. inclusion.
    e. citizen control of the agenda.

12. The principle of traditional democracy theory guaranteeing rights to those who do not belong to majorities and allows that they might join majorities through persuasion and reasoned argument is called the principle of
    a. majority rule.
    b. minority rights.
    c. representation.
    d. pluralism.
    e. enlightened understanding.

13. Pluralists
    a. believe that the public interest will prevail through bargaining and compromise.
    b. depend on fragmented, decentralized, and dispersed power in the policy process.
    c. oppose the principle of majority rule.
    d. compete through a system of “minority rule” for influence.
    e. All of the above
14. Who referred to the U.S. as a “nation of joiners”?
   a. Thomas Jefferson
   b. Alexis de Tocqueville
   c. Robert Putnam
   d. Ronald Reagan
   e. George H. W. Bush

15. Increased technical expertise poses a potential challenge to democracy because
   a. it is difficult to have an informed “nontechnical” public debate on technical issues.
   b. it goes against the tenets of pluralist political theory.
   c. it violates the notion of one man, one vote.
   d. elected officials find it hard to understand technical experts.
   e. interest groups have a difficult time securing technical expertise.

16. A condition that occurs when no coalition is strong enough to form a majority and establish policy is
   a. PAC.
   b. policy gridlock.
   c. policy failure.
   d. policy impact.
   e. hyperpluralist policy.

17. The overall set of values widely shared within a society is called the society’s
   a. political culture.
   b. public opinion.
   c. media influence.
   d. linkage institutions.
   e. popular culture.

18. America’s bountiful frontier provides a partial explanation for which element of the American creed?
   a. Egalitarianism
   b. Populism
   c. Individualism
   d. Opportunism
   e. Liberty

19. Which of the following is NOT a possible way that Americans may be experiencing a crisis of culture values, according to Wayne Baker?
   a. A loss of traditional values, such as religion and family life
   b. An unfavorable comparison with citizens of other countries in terms of patriotism and/or support for moral principles
   c. The division of society into opposed groups with irreconcilable moral differences
   d. A decline in citizens’ commitment to equal opportunity
   e. None of the above
20. Which of the following statements is TRUE?
   a. When expenditures grow, tax revenues must grow to pay the additional costs.
   b. When taxes do not grow as fast as spending, a budget deficit results.
   c. In 2009, the federal deficit was more than $400 billion.
   d. The national debt is more than $9 trillion.
   e. All of the above

TRUE FALSE QUESTIONS

Circle the correct answer:

1. The voter turnout rate among young Americans is consistently higher than among older Americans. T / F

2. Emergent communication technologies and the proliferation of television channels make it easier to avoid information about politics. T / F

3. All governments protect national sovereignty, frequently by maintaining a national defense and armed forces. T / F

4. The daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools is a tool of political socialization used to instill national values among the young. T / F

5. The courts are an example of a linkage institution. T / F

6. The policy agenda responds more to societal failures than it responds to societal successes. T / F

7. Most people around the world believe that democracy is the best form of government. T / F

8. Over one-third of the nation’s wealth is held by just 1 percent of the population. T / F

9. The tax burden on Americans is small compared to other democratic nations. T / F

10. Lincoln’s famous phrase, “government of the people, for the people, and by the people,” is a classic expression of laissez-faire. T / F

SHORT ANSWER/ SHORT ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Define and provide an example of a public good. How do public goods create circumstances that government must address?

2. What are the key linkage institutions in the United States and what roles do these institutions play in politics and policymaking?
3. What is meant by “representation”? How and why is representation vital to modern democracy?

4. When people talk about a culture war, what do they mean?

5. What tools and techniques does the U.S. government use to socialize the young?

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. What is the relationship between age, on one hand, and political interest and knowledge on the other? Which age groups are most likely to be interested in and knowledgeable about politics? Which are most likely to be least interested and least knowledgeable? What kinds of explanations have political scientists offered to explain these relationships?

2. Thomas Jefferson believed that a politically ignorant people could never be free. What do you think Jefferson meant? How might Jefferson react to historically low levels of political knowledge among young Americans in the early twenty-first century?

3. What is the role of interest groups in the policymaking process? How is this role different from that played by political parties?

4. Define government and identify the functions that government performs. In this context, what is politics?

5. Compare, contrast, and critically evaluate the three theories of American democracy discussed in Chapter 1: pluralism, elite theory, and hyperpluralism. Which do you think most accurately depicts the reality of contemporary politics in the United States?