

# American Government

MYTHS AND REALITIES

2016 ELECTION EDITION



Alan R. Gitelson | Robert L. Dudley | Melvin J. Dubnick

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# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT



The top half of the cover features a stylized American flag with a dark blue field containing white stars and horizontal stripes in various shades of blue. The title is centered over this background.

# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

## MYTHS AND REALITIES

2016 Election Edition

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To Idy . . . for everything.

**A. R. G.**

As always, to Judy, Michael, Patrick, and Catherine.

**R. L. D.**

To Randi, Heather, and PD.

**M. J. D.**



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# Preface

It would be an understatement to say that we live in interesting times because it is likely that every American has been touched in some way by the major economic, social, and political upheavals of the past quarter-century.

When we began work on the first edition of *American Government* in 1986, Ronald Reagan was president and the economy was growing at a moderate rate, continuing a recovery from the downturn attributed to “stagflation” of the late 1970s. Internationally, the Cold War continued to be waged with the Soviet Union. At home, desktop computers using “floppy disks” were starting to replace typewriters in offices and movie theaters featured *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off* and *Top Gun*.

Writing this edition, we three authors cannot help but reflect on how much things have changed. Barack Obama was elected the first African American president of the United States, serving from 2009 until 2017. Many Americans emerged from the 2008 Great Recession, although some are still in recovery mode. The Cold War came to an end with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, but relationships are at times as tense between Russia and the United States today as they were in the 1980s, although the issues are more often about Moscow’s influence over neighboring states than the spread of Soviet Communism. Floppy disks have been replaced by Internet-based “cloud computing” and desktops by tablets and smart phones with considerably more power than the larger computers they replaced. As for *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off* and *Top Gun*, they are now “classics” that can be “streamed” at any time—and in any place—you can access your Netflix or Amazon account. The one thing that has been constant over the years has been change.

Each edition of our textbook that followed that first publication reflected the events that altered the political landscape of the time. Throughout, however, we remained committed to providing a resource that helped students make sense of their government in light of constantly evolving myths and realities. As will be evident to those instructors who assigned

any of those previous editions, that commitment remains strong and continues to provide the anchor for this edition.

However, we began the current revision well aware that a good deal of the conventional “textbook” wisdom about American government and politics is undergoing a major transformation even as students read this latest edition. The political and constitutional landscape is constantly changing, often in ways that are difficult to predict. Moreover, some of the changes raise questions about the effectiveness and long-term stability of the U.S. political system. Two widely respected observers of American politics, Thomas E. Mann of the Brookings Institution and Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute, captured the state of affairs in the title of their 2012 book, *It’s Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*. Other analysts have wondered whether the “new normal” for American government is to operate from crisis to crisis, striking short-term bargains that satisfy no one and make potential long-term solutions more costly—and less probable.

Faced with these changes and challenges to the operations of American government, the role of myths, ideologies, and beliefs described in Chapter 1 seems even more significant than in the past. These intellectual devices for “making sense” of American government and politics are playing a central role in how Americans frame their political world and, in the process, they alter the realities of political life. In response to the myth of party irrelevance (Chapter 7), for example, political scientists in the past would note that the very real differences between the parties were often covered over by the search for middle ground in efforts to win elections by appealing to the “median voter.” Today, however, political scientists are focused on the role those differences play in exacerbating the “partisan polarization” that has characterized policy gridlock during the Obama administration. And although the political implications of judicial decisions

have become even more evident in recent years with decisions on a range of issues from same-sex marriage to campaign finance reform, the myth that emphasizes the Court's role as the ultimate "objective" authority regarding what is (or is not) constitutional (Chapter 14) remains a powerful force in shaping the public's view of how our government ought to operate.

Although it remains focused on the myths and realities of American government, this edition differs from earlier versions in several key ways. We are pleased that *American Government: Myths and Realities* is now published by Oxford University Press (OUP). Our move to OUP, starting with the 2014 election edition of this textbook, has provided us an opportunity to rethink the traditional structure of the typical American government textbook and to work with new approaches to content and pedagogy reflecting the needs and demands of today's students. Additionally, in an era where prices of textbooks are skyrocketing, we are extremely pleased to be working with a publisher that is committed to producing quality scholarship at the best possible price.

## What Students Tell Us

Students tell us they want a textbook that reflects the way they actually learn and to study at a price they can afford. *American Government: Myths and Realities* meets students' primary goals: it is a price-conscious text presented in a way that makes the learning process more interesting. We know that different students learn in different ways. Some learn best by reading, whereas others are more visually oriented. The ideal textbook gets to the point quickly, is easy to understand, has shorter chapters, has pedagogical materials designed to reinforce key concepts, has strong supporting ancillaries for quizzing, testing, and assessment, and provides students with real value for their dollar.

*American Government: Myths and Realities* provides exactly what students want and need pedagogically in a textbook by doing the following:

- Being concise;
- Keeping material current;

- Highlighting and boldfacing key concepts and information;
- Incorporating review questions into each chapter for self-testing; and
- Providing students with a product that is price sensitive and therefore a true value.

## Bringing Currency to Your Classroom

Although we continue to make use of familiar historical narratives to introduce students to many of the basic concepts and institutions of American government, each chapter of *American Government: Myths and Realities* has been updated to provide coverage of major events that have shaped our nation in recent years, giving students a unique lens through which to examine the current state of American government and politics. The updates are also informed by the latest political science research on American government. Past users of *American Government: Myths and Realities* will also notice major changes in the text's organization. Key updates include the following:

- A new full-color design complete with updated photos and figures, which give further examples and emphasize student interest, at a great price point.
- Fourteen chapters rather than fifteen, a change that reflects the realities of the typical semester calendar.
- Two distinct chapters to cover civil liberties (Chapter 4) and civil rights (Chapter 5).
- Coverage of a range of policy topics has been integrated into the "Policy Connection" features that follow each chapter.
- The content covered in Chapter 14 (domestic policies) and Chapter 15 (foreign and defense policies) of previous editions have been moved to the text's companion website.
- Coverage of the 2016 presidential and congressional elections.

- Historical and contemporary coverage of major Supreme Court decisions.
- New data regarding PACs and super PACs and limits on contributions, including Supreme Court decisions that have impacted campaign financing.
- Updated coverage concerning media and politics and the impact of social media.
- Chapter opening vignettes and Asked & Answered feature content have been updated for currency.

## The Approach of This Book: Myths and Realities

As active classroom teachers committed as much to engaging students as to informing them, we have always found that highlighting and contrasting the complex myths and realities of American government facilitated student understanding and appreciation of the subject. Underpinning the attraction of the myths and realities theme was the intent of demonstrating to students that the myths surrounding our governmental and political life play an important role in how we make sense of the baffling and complex realities we hear and read about each day. We continue to believe that this is an effective approach to introducing students to the study and appreciation of American government. We are constantly reminded of the “broken branch myth” (Chapter 11) when we read about public opinion polls that show that congressional job approval is at only 20 percent, and Barack Obama learned early in his first term that, in reality, it is impossible to live up to expectations that come along with the myth of the “all-powerful presidency” (Chapter 12).

One of the benefits of this approach has been its flexibility in the face of cultural and technological changes. For many of us, the traditional classroom provided the opportunity to isolate students from the outside world for an hour or so while we lectured or engaged them in focused discussions. In the wireless environments of most university campuses, we can no longer think of the classroom as the only or most effective means for focusing the attention of our

students. With laptops, mobile devices, and access to the Internet, the outside world is a constant and competing classroom presence that offers a previously unfathomable range of sense-making approaches, from the paranoid (e.g., conspiracy theory blogs) to the satirical (e.g., *The Daily Show*) and the partisan (e.g., Fox News and MSNBC). These are the new media outlets through which old and new myths about American government and politics are developed and sustained. Rather than regard these alternative perspectives as threats to a better understanding and appreciation of our civic life, *American Government: Myths and Realities* accepts the role that they play and seeks to teach students to take a more reflective and critical view of how they and others perceive American government.

## Policy Connection Essays

Introductory courses in American government are typically focused on core institutions and political dynamics, and this has been reflected in the structure of traditional American government textbooks. In many cases, public policy—that is, how government responds to public problems—is relegated to one or two chapters at the end of the traditional textbook. This approach often makes it difficult for students to appreciate the complex connections among government institutions, partisan politics, and the public policies that affect their daily lives.

In *American Government: Myths and Realities*, we deal with this problem by introducing a Policy Connection essay at the end of each chapter. Each essay addresses a particular issue that connects the subject of the preceding chapter with a domestic or foreign policy–related question.

As distinct units within the textbook, each essay is designed to be used in a number of ways. They can be treated as an extension of the preceding chapter or used as material to stimulate classroom or online discussion in conjunction with class lectures. Instructors can select certain Policy Connection essays as the basis for creating a special topic that can be added to the general syllabus. Students can be assigned one or more essays to explore on their own as research paper topics or for extra credit assignments.

In addition to the unique use of the Policy Connection essays in each chapter, those faculty interested in providing more traditional coverage of domestic and foreign policies can refer students to Chapters 15 and 16 provided on the companion website.

## Features

*American Government: Myths and Realities* includes several helpful pedagogical features.

- Each chapter includes an “Asked & Answered” feature, which uses an accessible question-and-answer format to take a closer look at political issues of interest to students. Topics include the following:
  - > So you want to change the Constitution? (Chapter 2)
  - > Why can’t we reduce the role of money in elections like other nations do? (Chapter 8)
  - > Why are there so few women serving in legislative bodies? (Chapter 11)
- The “Politics & Popular Culture” feature, referenced in each of the text chapters, appears on the text’s companion website. This feature examines how popular culture reflects and influences government and politics. Topics include the following:
  - > HBO’s Favorite Founding Father (Chapter 2)
  - > Twitter Campaigning in the Digital Age (Chapter 8)
  - > Hollywood Bureaucrats and Other Myths (Chapter 13)

## Chapter-Opening Vignettes

Each chapter opens with an introductory vignette, all of which are new. Among the new and updated topics covered in this edition are the following:

- The challenges of the 2016 presidential election cycle with regard to our understanding of American politics (Chapter 1)

- The controversies surrounding North Carolina’s 2016 “Bathroom Law” and its implications for American federalism (Chapter 3)
- The increasing amount of money spent every four years on presidential and congressional campaigns (Chapter 8)

## Skills-Focused Pedagogical Features

Each chapter is carefully structured to enhance student learning and does the following:

- Opens with a preview outline and focus questions correlated to each major section of the chapter.
- Introduces the myths and realities to be discussed in the chapter.
- Includes boldfaced key terms, whose definitions appear in the margins of the chapter where the terms first appear.
- Closes with a conclusion presenting a retrospective glance at the highlighted myths in light of the whole chapter discussion.
- Reviews the chapter materials with “Focus Questions Review,” a point-by-point summary of the chapter’s main ideas that includes a recap of, and answers to, the focus questions.

## Appendices

Appearing at the end of the text are the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America (annotated as to those paragraphs no longer in effect).

## Ensuring Student Success

OUP offers instructors and students a comprehensive ancillary package for qualified adopters of *American Government: Myths and Realities*.

**Ancillary Resource Center (ARC):** This convenient, instructor-focused website provides access to all of the up-to-date teaching resources for this text

while guaranteeing the security of grade-significant resources.

In addition, it allows OUP to keep instructors informed when new content becomes available. Register for access and create your individual user account by visiting [www.oup.com/us/gitelson](http://www.oup.com/us/gitelson). The following items are available on the ARC:

- **Instructor’s Manual and test bank:** Includes chapter objectives, detailed chapter outlines, lecture suggestions and activities, discussion questions, and video and web resources. The test bank includes multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions.
- **Computerized test bank:** Utilizes Diploma, a test-authoring and management tool. Diploma is designed for both novice and advanced users and enables instructors to create and edit questions, compose randomized quizzes and tests with an intuitive drag-and-drop tool, post quizzes and tests to online courses, and print quizzes and tests for paper-based assessments.
- **Downloadable and customizable PowerPoint slides:** One set for in-class presentations and another for text images.
- **Access to thirty CNN videos** correlated to the chapter topics of the text. Each clip is approximately five to ten minutes long, offering a great way to launch your lecture.
- **Companion website at [www.oup.com/us/gitelson](http://www.oup.com/us/gitelson):** This open-access companion website includes several learning tools to help students study and review key concepts presented in the text, including learning objectives, key-concept summaries, quizzes, essay questions, web activities, and web links.
- **Interactive media activities, available on the free open-access Companion Website ([www.oup.com/us/gitelson](http://www.oup.com/us/gitelson)):** These activities are designed to reinforce key concepts with real-world situations. Each activity:
  - > Takes fifteen to twenty minutes to complete and produces unique results for each student.
  - > Enables students to experience how politics works, seeing the trade-offs required to produce meaningful policies and outcomes.

- > Is optimized to work on any mobile device or computer.
- > Ends with assessments to connect the activity to classroom discussions.

Interactive media activities include the following:

- NEW—Individualism versus Solidarity
- Passing Immigration Reform
- Electing Cheryl Martin
- Building the USS Relief
- Intervening in Bhutan
- The Fight Against Warrantless Wiretapping
- Balancing the Budget
- NEW—Redistricting in “Texachusetts”
- NEW—Saving the Electric Car
- Election Reform
- NEW—Fact-checking the Media
- NEW—Passing the Thirteenth Amendment
- NEW—Negotiating with China

**NEW—A Closer Look media tutorials, available on the *American Government: Myths and Realities* free, open-access Companion Website ([www.oup.com/us/gitelson](http://www.oup.com/us/gitelson)):** These activities are designed to teach key concepts and help students master important, high-interest class material. Each tutorial runs three to five minutes and ends with assessment opportunities for student to test what they know. Topics include the following:

- The Constitution: A brief tour
- Civil rights: How does the Fourteenth Amendment ensure equal rights for all citizens?
- Federalism: What does it mean to incorporate the Bill of Rights?
- Political participation: What affects voter turnout?
- Media: How the news is shaped by agenda setting, framing, and profit bias?



- Interest groups: What is a political action committee, and what makes some PACs super PACs?
- Congress: Why do we hate Congress but keep electing the same representatives?
- The judiciary: How do judges interpret the Constitution?
- Polling: How do we know what people know?
- Campaigns and elections: How does gerrymandering work?

—**Course cartridges** containing student and instructor resources are available through Angel, Blackboard, Canvas, D2L, Moodle, Respondus, or whatever course management system you prefer.

Now Playing: Learning American Government Through Film

Through documentaries, feature films, and YouTube videos, *Now Playing: Learning American Government Through Film* provides a variety of suggested video examples that illustrate concepts covered in the text. Each video is accompanied by a brief summary and discussion questions. It is available in both a student and an instructor version and can be packaged with *American Government: Myths and Realities* for free.

**Format choices:** Oxford University Press offers cost-saving alternatives to meet the needs of all students. This text is offered in a looseleaf format at a 30 percent discount off the list price of the text and in an eBook format, through CourseSmart, for a 50 percent discount. You can also customize our textbooks to create the course material you want for your class. For more information, please contact your OUP sale representative, call 1-800-280-0280, or visit us online at [www.oup.com/us/gitelson](http://www.oup.com/us/gitelson).

## Packaging Options

Adopters of *American Government: Myths and Realities* can package any OUP book with the text for a 20 percent savings off the total package price. See our many trade and scholarly offerings at [www.oup.com](http://www.oup.com) and then contact your local OUP sales representative to request a package ISBN. In addition,

the following items can be packaged with the text for free:

*Now Playing: Learning American Government Through Film* (ISBN 9780190233341)  
Williams, *Research and Writing Guide for Political Science* (ISBN 9780190243357)  
Dashboard (ISBN 9780190233754)

We also encourage the following texts for packaging:

### Very Short Introduction Series

Valelly, *American Politics*  
Crick, *Democracy*  
Boyer, *American History*

Other titles recommended for packaging:

Lindsay, *Investigating American Democracy: Readings on Core Questions*  
Miethe/Gauthier, *Simple Statistics: Applications in Social Research*  
Niven, *Barack Obama: A Pocket Biography of Our 44th President*  
Wilkins, *Questioning Numbers: How to Read and Critique Research*

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As always, we welcome comments and feedback from readers of this book. All comments and inquiries should be sent to the authors at the following email addresses:

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R. L. D.  
M. J. D.