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In 2012, American voters reelected President Barack Obama, a Democrat. In 2014, voters elected Republican majorities to both the House and the Senate. You may be puzzled about why voters divide political power in Washington. And you might also wonder why our political system permits, and even encourages, such mixed verdicts. We have found that election results like these lead many students to conclude that government in America is incredibly complex and hard to make sense of. We are not going to make false promises and tell you that American government is easy to understand. However, we do intend to provide you with a clear roadmap to understanding our complex political system.

The framers of our Constitution could have designed a much simpler system, but they purposely built in complexities as insurance against the concentration of power. Despite these complexities, many of the founders, such as Jefferson, were confident that the American people would be able to navigate their constitutional system and effectively govern themselves within it. In writing this book, we are similarly confident that young adults in the twenty-first century can participate effectively in our democracy.

The major message that we convey in this book is that politics and government matter to everyone. Government in America explains how policy choices make a difference and shape the kind of country in which we live. We will show you how these choices affect the taxes we pay, the wars we fight, the quality of our environment, and many other critical aspects of our lives.

Students often ask us whether we are trying to convey a liberal or conservative message in this book. The answer is that our goal is to explain the major viewpoints, how they differ, and how such differences matter. We wish to give you the tools to understand American politics and government. Once you have these tools, you can make your own judgment about policy choices and become a well-informed participant in our democratic process. In the twenty-first century, it is often said that “knowledge is power.” We sincerely hope that the knowledge conveyed in this book will help you exercise your fair share of political power in the years to come.

Meet Your Authors

GEORGE C. EDWARDS III
is University Distinguished Professor of Political Science at Texas A&M University and the Jordan Chair in Presidential Studies. He is also a Distinguished Fellow at the University of Oxford. When he determined that he was unlikely to become shortstop for the New York Yankees, he turned to political science. Today, he is one of the country’s leading scholars of the presidency and has written or edited 26 books on American politics.

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In 2008, the United States elected Barack Obama as president in the hope of making progress on a host of issues, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, immigration, climate change, and health care. Some changes did occur: health care reform expanded health insurance coverage to millions of Americans and protected millions of others against abuses by insurance companies; new regulations on Wall Street were put in place in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008; and immigration policy limited the deportation of young illegal immigrants.

More generally, however, the nation faced gridlock, especially following the substantial Republican gains in the 2010 congressional elections. The national government even came close to defaulting on its debt. Democrats and Republicans have been further apart in their thinking about the role of government than at any time since Reconstruction, and Republicans have pledged to undo the Democrats’ health care reform.

The 2014 Elections and Updates Edition of Government in America explains the reasons we have such a difficult time resolving differences over public policy and the stakes we all have in finding solutions to the challenges facing our nation. We frame its content with a public policy approach to government in the United States and continually ask—and answer—the question, “What difference does politics make to the policies that governments produce?” It is one thing to describe the Madisonian system of checks and balances and separation of powers or the elaborate and unusual federal system of government in the United States; it is something else to ask how these features of our constitutional structure affect the policies that governments generate.

The essence of our approach to American government and politics is that politics matters. The national government provides important services, ranging from retirement security and health care to recreation facilities and weather forecasts. The government may also send us to war or negotiate peace with our adversaries, expand or restrict our freedom, raise or lower our taxes, and increase or decrease aid to education. In the twenty-first century, decision makers of both political parties are facing difficult questions regarding American democracy and the scope of our government. Students need a framework for understanding these questions.

We do not discuss policy at the expense of politics, however. We provide extensive coverage of four core subject areas: constitutional foundations, patterns of political behavior, political institutions, and public policy outputs; but we try to do so in a more analytically significant—and interesting—manner. We take special pride in introducing students to relevant work from current political scientists, for example, on the role of PACs and SuperPACs or the impact of divided party government—something we have found instructors to appreciate.
New to This Update

Government in America, 2014 Elections and Updates Edition, has been revised and updated to reflect recent changes—often of a historic magnitude—in politics, policy, and participation. The revisions focus on updates in the following areas:

- The 2014 congressional elections
- Recent Supreme Court decisions, ranging from searches and seizures to same-sex marriage.
- The Obama administration
- Current policies, including health care reform and conflict in the Middle East
- Recent events with significant political implications
- The 2012 presidential election, incorporating additional data and the most recent scholarly studies

Naturally, we have full up-to-the-minute coverage of the 2014 congressional elections and of the latest Supreme Court decisions on civil liberties, civil rights, federalism, and congressional and presidential powers. The updating of Supreme Court decisions includes recent key decisions such as those on the conflict between religious views and insurance mandates, searches and seizures, and same-sex marriage.

In addition, we have devoted attention to recent events with significant political implications such as Edward Snowden and leaked national security documents; changes in the rules on women in combat, the Senate filibuster, and on campaign contributions; and the clash over the legalization of marijuana. The historic struggles over the budget and national debt, health care reform, economic policy, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan also receive significant coverage.

In our chapter on the presidency and throughout the book, we have broad coverage of the Obama administration and current policies, in areas ranging from budgetary policy and relations with Congress in this era of polarization to foreign policy challenges such as the upheaval in the Middle East. The entire chapter on the core issue of the budget has been thoroughly updated to reflect the central importance of taxing and spending in American government and the core issues of the fiscal and debt crises. We have the latest on all the policies we cover, from health care reform and Medicare to the war in Afghanistan and relations with Iran.

All of the figures and tables reflect the latest available data. Since the last edition, we have been able to incorporate updated data related to the 2012 presidential election, and the most recent scholarly studies. We take pride in continuously improving our graphical presentations of this data.

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Themes and Features

*Government in America* follows two central themes. The first great question central to governing, a question every nation must answer, is, *How should we govern?* In the United States, our answer is “by democracy.” Yet democracy is an evolving and somewhat ambiguous concept. The first theme, then, is the nature of our democracy. In Chapter 1, we define democracy as a means of selecting policymakers and of organizing government so that policy represents and responds to citizens’ preferences. As with previous editions, we incorporate theoretical issues in our discussions of different models of American democracy. We try to encourage students to think analytically about the theories and to develop independent assessments of how well the American system lives up to citizens’ expectations of democratic government. To help them do this, in every chapter we raise questions about democracy. For example, does Congress give the American people the policies they want? Is a strong presidency good for democracy? Does our mass media make us more democratic? Are powerful courts that make policy decisions compatible with democracy?

The second theme, the scope of government, focuses on another great question of governing: *What should government do?* Here we discuss alternative views concerning the proper role and size for American government and how the workings of institutions and politics influence this scope. The government’s scope is the core question around which politics revolves in contemporary America, pervading many crucial issues: To what degree should Washington impose national standards for health care or speed limits on state policies? How high should taxes be? Do elections encourage politicians to promise more governmental services? Questions about the scope of government are policy questions and thus obviously directly related to our policy approach. Since the scope of government is the pervasive question in American politics today, students will have little problem finding it relevant to their lives and interests.

Each chapter begins with a preview of the relevancy of our two themes to the chapter’s subject matter, refers to the themes at points within the chapter, and ends with an “Understanding” section that discusses how the themes illuminate that subject matter.

Our coverage of American government and politics is comprehensive. First, we present an introductory chapter that lays out the dimensions of our policymaking system and introduces our themes of democracy and the scope of government. Next, we provide four chapters on the constitutional foundations of American government, including the Constitution, federalism, civil liberties, and civil rights. We then offer five chapters focusing on influences on government, including public opinion, the media, interest groups, political parties, and elections and voting behavior.

Our next five chapters focus on the workings of the national government. These chapters include Congress, the president, budgeting (at the core of many issues before policymakers), the federal courts, and the federal bureaucracy. Finally, we present three chapters on the decisions policymakers take and the issues they face. First are economic and social welfare policies, then
come health care, environmental protection, and energy policies, and finally, we focus on national security policy.

Our features support our fundamental idea that politics matters and engage students in important political and policy issues.

- Chapter-opening vignettes make the subject matter of each chapter as relevant as possible to current concerns and pique student interest. From the first chapter, we emphasize the significance of government to young people and the importance of their participation.

- The classic You Are the Policymaker asks students to read arguments on both sides of a current issue—such as whether we should prohibit PACs—and then to make a policy decision. In Chapters 4 and 5 (Civil Liberties and Civil Rights), this feature is titled You Are the Judge and presents the student with an actual court case.

- The America in Perspective feature examines how the United States compares to other countries on topics such as tax rates, voter turnout, and the delivery of public services. By reading these boxes and comparing the United States to other nations, students can obtain a better perspective on the size of our government and the nature of democracy. Instructors report that this feature provides them with especially useful teaching points.

- Several times in each chapter, Why It Matters to You insets encourage students to think critically about an aspect of government, politics, or policy and to consider the repercussions—including for themselves—if things worked differently. Each Why It Matters to You feature extends the book’s policy emphasis to situate it directly within the context of students’ daily lives.

- The popular Young People & Politics feature illustrates how policies specifically impact young adults, how their political behavior patterns are unique and important, and how public officials are meeting or ignoring their particular policy desires.

- Every chapter includes a marginal glossary to support students’ understanding of new and important concepts at first encounter. For easy reference, key terms from the marginal glossary are repeated at the end of each chapter and in the end-of-book glossary. Unique to Government in America, we also include a key term glossary in Spanish.

We hope that students—long after reading Government in America—will employ these perennial questions about the nature of our democracy and the scope of our government when they examine political events. The specifics of policy issues will change, but questions about whether the government is responsive to the people or whether it should expand or contract its scope will always be with us.
AP Edition Program Components

Pearson is pleased to offer teacher and student program components that will make teaching and learning from the AP Edition of Government in America even more effective and enjoyable.

For the Teacher
Most of the teacher supplements and resources for this text are available electronically for download to qualified adopters from the Pearson Instructor Resource Center (IRC). Upon adoption or to preview, please go to www.pearsonschool.com/access_request, select We need IRC Access and complete the form under Option 1. Teachers will be required to complete a brief onetime registration subject to verification of educator status. Upon verification, access information and instructions will be sent via email. Once logged into the IRC, 987-0-13399175-8 in the “Search our Catalog” box to locate these resources.

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For the Student
Test Prep Workbook for AP® Government and Politics: United States

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CORRELATION GUIDE FOR AP GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: UNITED STATES


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GOVERNMENT IN AMERICA