

CHAPTER 1

POLITICS: WHO GETS WHAT, WHEN, AND HOW

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 1 establishes the foundation for the balance of the text's chapters by introducing questions fundamental to the study of and interest in politics and government. Dye's discussions and presentations in texts, charts, graphs, and features clarify distinctions between governmental politics and political behavior in other organizations.

The Constitution of the United States establishes foundations and purposes of government. Concepts in the Constitution originate from many political philosophers, two of whom, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, are discussed with their contributions examined in some detail.

Throughout the chapter, readers are directed to consider the purpose of the established democratic government. The diversity of the government, how it works, and the complexity of the ideas and experiences that have evolved since its establishment contribute to an increasingly challenged government and its policies. What form of government then exists in the United States and in other nations of the world? The chapter focuses on discussion of pure democracy and limited, or representative, democracy. Another key question is, What kind and how much power is held by the public and by government, in the United States and in other nations of the world? Finally, consideration of who rules is determined, and the chapter "sets up" the answers to the questions by pointing to the need to seek further information, which is provided in the rest of the book.

CHAPTER THEMES

- The meaning of politics and political science
- Politics is "who gets what, when, and how."
- Government compared to social organizations
- Purposes of government
- Uses of law by government for the public
- Meanings of democracy
- Democracy in other nations
- Direct democracy versus representative democracy
- Paradox of democracy: majority rule or individual freedoms
- Sources of power to rule: elitism versus pluralism
- Conflict between the ideal of democracy and the reality of government

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- To stimulate interest in political science for the purpose of understanding government
- To develop understanding for the causes of government, and how government responds to the public
- To create knowledge of different kinds of democracy
- To promote student discussion and consideration of the challenge of democracy
- To point out the complexity of government
- To motivate students to seek answers to seemingly unanswerable questions
- To provide students with the analytical sense of "who gets what, when, and how" with which to evaluate politics

CHAPTER OUTLINE*

*(Including chapter "Features" appropriate to outline topics.)

I. Politics and political science

A. Politics is deciding "who gets what, when, and how."

B. Political science is the study of politics, associated with three basic questions:

1. Who governs?
2. For what ends?
3. By what means?

*Features:

Who Gets What, When, and How? (p. 3)

What Do You Think? "Can You Trust the Government?" (pp. 4-5)

II. Politics and government

A. What are differences between governmental politics and politics in other societal institutions?

1. Government decisions extend to the entire society.
2. Government can legitimately use force.

B. Why do citizens comply with government requirements?

1. The habit of compliance develops so citizens avoid consequences of fines and/or prison.
2. Though government could not apply force to all noncompliant citizens, application or threat of force to even a few citizens effectively creates legitimacy of government.

*Feature:

A Conflicting View: "American Politics as Violence" (p. 6)

III. The purposes of government

A. All governments tax, penalize, restrict, and regulate their people.

1. More than 86,000 governments in the United States receive more than 40 cents of each dollar earned by Americans.
2. Congress, bureaucracies, and state and local governments create about 44,500 laws, rules, and regulations each year!

B. Purposes of government are identified in the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States:

1. To establish justice, ensure domestic tranquillity
 - a. Government may be seen as a social contract, in which people allow themselves to be ruled in exchange for protection.
 - b. Thomas Hobbes viewed life without government as "a war where every man is enemy to every man."
2. To promote the general welfare
 - a. Government provides public goods and services.
 - b. The provided goods and services are those that could not profitably be provided by the private sector, such as roads, clean air, police protection, etc.

3. To regulate society

4. To transfer income

5. To secure the blessings of liberty

*Features:

A Conflicting View: "Sometimes It's Right to Disobey the Law" (p. 8)

"How Big Is The Government and What Does it Do?" (pp. 10-11)

IV. The meaning of democracy

A. Democracy has a variety of meanings, depending on the area of the world and the era of its use.

1. Almost all nations of the world claim to practice democracy.
 - a. North Korea is named the "'Democratic' People's Republic of Korea."
 - b. A number of governments claiming or titled democracies are not.

2. A meaningful definition of democracy must include such specific rights and/or opportunities as:

- a. Recognition of the dignity of the individual
- b. Equal protection of laws for each individual
- c. Opportunity for all to participate in public decisions
- d. Decision making by majority rule with the value of each vote being equal

*Feature: Compared to What? "Freedom and Democracy around the World" (p. 12)

V. The paradox of democracy

A. The concept of democracy contains many conflicting challenges that must be managed.

1. There is a paradox in management of rule by the majority versus rights of the minority.
2. The paradox of individual rights versus majority rule comprises major conflict in the United State's version of democracy.

B. James Madison, in Federalist Paper #10, warned against democracy.

C. The Constitution creates a representative democracy, in which elected leaders decide public issues.

D. Powers are separated so that a majority cannot change the nation's leadership too easily and quickly.

E. Checks and balances were established in the Constitution so that each branch of government can restrain actions of other branches.

F. Federalism exists, requiring the national government to share power with state governments.

*Feature: People in Politics John Locke and the Justification of Revolution (p. 14)

VI. Direct versus representative democracy

A. Direct democracy is a form of government in which all qualified members of the society take part in the decision- and policy-making process.

1. Direct democracy, also called "pure" or "participatory" democracy, is very rare.
2. New England town meetings, in which all of the citizens decide town affairs in face-to-face settings, are as close to direct democracy as exists in present governments.

B. Representative democracy exists when qualified citizens select their representatives, and those selected decide issues on behalf of the people.

1. Representatives are selected by vote of all the people.
2. Elections are open to competition.
3. Candidates can freely express themselves.
4. Representatives are selected periodically.

*Feature: What Do You Think? "Is The American Government Of, By, and For the People?" (p. 18)

VII. Who really governs?

A. The elitist perspective asserts that government is managed by the few, and that the few have certain characteristics in common.

1. Elites have power, while masses do not.
2. Elites do not, necessarily, exploit masses.
3. Elites may be self-seeking or public-spirited.

B. C. Wright Mills popularized the term power elite in his thesis that there are few members of society who actually rule.

1. Mills credited corporate, military, and national government leaders with the real power-based authority in the American system of government; hence the "power elite."

2. Other social scientists support Mills's thesis, but add the contingency that the real power elite are:

- a. Disproportionately wealthy
- b. Educated
- c. Upper class
- d. White
- e. Male
- f. Anglo-Saxon
- g. Protestant groups

C. The pluralist perspective argues that Americans participate in all life-shaping decisions; that the majority prevails; that life, liberty, and property are never sacrificed; and that every American has equality of opportunity.

1. The pluralist viewpoint is seen as the best approximation of the ideal of a representative democracy, because of the size and complexity of the society.
2. Pluralism is designed to make the theory of democracy "more realistic."
3. Pluralists realize that public policy and majority preference do not always coincide.
4. "Equilibrium" is achieved when balance, as compromise, is concluded.

VIII. Democracy in America

- A. There is a conflict between the concepts of elitism and pluralism.
- B. Democratic ideals may well be in conflict with reality of American politics.
 1. Ideals are associated with such concepts as individual dignity, equality, popular participation, and majority rule.
 2. Reality is the identification of who gets what, when, and how in the American political system of representative democracy.

*Feature: Looking Ahead: Twenty-first Century Directions (p.22)

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter raises questions that will stimulate students' thoughts on how government operates, and how it will affect each participant in American society.

Using the theme of the chapter's subtitle, "Who gets what, when, and how," Dye introduces the basic purposes of government, and then moves to government used in the United States. As a democracy, there are certain assumptions often made by students to include the belief there is only a single form of democracy. Dye refutes this presumption, demonstrating the variety of forms, degrees of power, and challenges to rule available in a system identified as a "democracy," both in the United States and in other nations of the world.

By the end of this chapter, Dye has offered identifications of governments, their forms, how democracy works in the United States, thereby provoking students into questioning how rules acquire power. Using C. Wright Mills's "power elite" in contrast to Madison's "pluralism," students will realize that democracy is not a single, simple concept, and identifying sources of power, even within a representative democracy, poses difficulties in assessing assignment of clearly paradoxical support for majority rule and individual freedoms.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Harold Lasswell's book *Politics: Who Gets What, When, and How*, can be seen as associated with the often-made statement "It's not what you know, but who you know." How do the two different statements relate to each other, as well as to present-day political realities?
2. What impact does government have on each aspect of our daily lives?
3. Define and discuss politics in the business setting. The health-care setting. The educational institution setting. Other settings. What are the similarities and differences between politics in government and in the identified settings?
4. In broad terms, Americans are often justifiably identified as "suspicious" of government, whether large or small. Using specific examples, what causes such suspicions?
5. Combining all forms of payments by citizens to all governments in the United States—taxes, fees, licenses, etc.—we find that Americans pay at least 40 percent of their income to some governments. What benefits are received in return for such payments? Is there equality between payments and receipts? Why or why not?
6. Periodically, civil disobedience has been used to reform government processes, procedures, and even law. In light of often-identified needs of society, what subjects today appear to justify civil disobedience?
7. What is meant by the Constitution's Preamble's use of the term "general welfare"?
8. In his 1651 *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes observed that without government, life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Justify his argument. With this justification, justify the existence of government as it presently operates in the United States today.
9. Other than government, what institution might be charged with performing the roles of government? Is such a consideration possible?
10. Statements associated with C. Wright Mills's "power elite" appear to be regularly assigned credibility by many of present-day voters. Effectively, "Government today is rule by an elite few." Support or deny this belief: "The power of a few control all of our lives in the United States today."
11. The author of this book, Thomas Dye, contends that leaders are made by climbing the "ladder of success" rather than being born into power classes. How does this approach compare to Mills's "power elite" versus the approach defined as "pluralism"?

ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

1. Within the first days of regular classes, request students to write a question they have about government. Collect all of the questions and "slot" them in the chapter concerning the questions' answers. When one of the written questions sequence, in the normal sequence of classroom activities, read the question, with the name of the questioner. Address the answer, or even devote the entire lecture, to that individual personally. (Note: This will personalize lectures throughout the semester. It seems to be particularly effective with large introductory-format classes).

2. Divide the class into “elitists” and “pluralists.” Identify a headline topic, and have the two groups identify how their group would respond to the topic. Putting the two groups back together, compare and contrast differences and similarities between the two groups. (As instructor, I often serve as the moderator, putting differences and similarities onto the board.) Discuss expectations or surprises found from this exercise.

3. Have your students go to the “Getting Into Politics” websites featured on page 24. Starting with any of the three sites listed, ask students to find three additional sites and provide a two to three sentence description of the site. Then collect the assignment and compile—or have a student compile—a “master list” of sites that can be distributed in class. This will serve as a great starting point for additional research throughout the class.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Identify at least six purposes of government.
2. Compare and contrast “pure democracy” with “limited democracy.”
3. Political science tends to focus on the study of politics in government. What is, in your evaluation, the difference between politics in government and politics in the church, school, business, family, etc.?
4. With recent headlines in mind, identify five causes for the public to not trust government, and five causes for the public to trust government.
5. Rewrite the “Preamble” of the Constitution into contemporary language.
6. John Locke and Thomas Hobbes were major contributors to the philosophy that developed as the American Constitution. Specifically, what thoughts or ideas can be attributed to these two men, as found in the Constitution?
7. What is the difference between “equality” and “equality of opportunity”?
8. Who gets most and least of the best in the United States today? Why? Justify your statements.

CHAPTER “QUICK” QUIZ

1. Politics is (who gets what, when, and how.)
2. There are more than (86,000) local governments in the United States today.
3. Martin Luther King, Jr., received the (Nobel Peace Prize) in 1964.
4. Thomas Hobbes authored (Leviathan), in which he observed life would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” without government.
5. The yearly gross domestic product (GDP) of the United States is almost (\$7 trillion).
6. All governments must maintain order, protect national security, regulate society, provide public goods, and care for those unable to fend for themselves, but democratic governments have the added responsibility of (protecting individual liberty).

7. John Locke's work, (Second Treatise on Government), is credited with inspiring the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States.

8. In present-day America, the notion of equality extends to equality (of opportunity).

9. The system of (checks and balances) was established by the Founders so that each branch of government could restrain actions of other branches.

10. A system in which the national government shares power with state governments is called (federalism.)