CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Introduction (pp. 1-7)

II. Government (pp. 7-9)
   A. The institutions that make authoritative decisions that apply to all of society are collectively known as government.
   B. All 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 (p. 9)
   A. Politics determines whom we select as our governmental leaders and what policies they pursue.
   B. Harold D. Lasswell defines politics as “who gets what, when, and how.”

IV. The Policymaking System (pp. 9-12)
   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 issues that attract the serious attention of public officials and other people 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 combat 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, p. 11.)
2. Policy impacts are the effects that a policy has on people and on society’s problems.

V. Democracy (pp. 12-20)
A. Defining Democracy (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?
G. Preview Questions about Democracy

VI. The Scope of Government in America (pp. 20-24)
A. How Active Is American Government?
B. Preview Questions About the Scope of Government

VII. Summary (pp. 24-25)
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying Chapter 1, you should be able to:

1. Describe what government is and what governments do.
2. Understand that 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 six ways in which all governments are similar.
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.
   6.

Objective 2: Understand that politics is the struggle over “who gets what, when, and how.”
   1. Define the term “politics.”
   2. Give examples of the “who,” “what,” “when,” and “how” of politics.

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 the 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 what is meant by 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 the five elements of the American creed according to Seymour Martin Lipset.
      
      1. 
      2. 
      3. 

7
3. Explain what is meant by a “culture war.”

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
policymaking system

linkage institutions

policy agenda

political issue

policymaking institutions

public policy

democracy

majority rule

minority rights

representation

pluralist theory

elite and class theory
hyperpluralism

policy gridlock

political culture

gross domestic product

*Compare and contrast:*

government and politics

policy agenda and public policy

policymaking system and linkage institutions

policymaking system and political issue

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 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 (pluralism, elite and class, and hyperpluralism). Use newspapers, newsmagazines, and/or the Internet 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.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Check ☑ the correct answer:

1. According to Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, political knowledge is important because it
   ☐ a. fosters civic virtues.
   ☐ b. helps citizens identify policies that would benefit them.
   ☐ c. promotes active participation in politics.
   ☐ d. all of the above

2. The age group with the lowest political interest, knowledge, and participation is
   ☐ a. 25 years old or younger.
   ☐ b. 26 to 40 years old.
   ☐ c. 41 to 64 years old.
   ☐ d. 65 years old or older.
3. The institutions that make authoritative decisions that apply to all of society are collectively known as
   □ a. the political system.
   □ b. government.
   □ c. linkage institutions.
   □ d. public goods.

4. Which of the following is NOT a general characteristic of public goods?
   □ a. Governments usually must provide them.
   □ b. Most businesses provide them for a profit.
   □ c. They cannot be denied to anyone.
   □ d. They are shared by everyone.

5. Which of the following is NOT an example of a public good?
   □ a. a college education
   □ b. parks
   □ c. national defense
   □ d. highways

6. All governments
   □ a. provide services.
   □ b. have written constitutions.
   □ c. have a president.
   □ d. have a legislature.

7. One of the basic functions of government is to socialize young citizens into the political system through schooling.
   □ True
   □ False

8. Harold Lasswell’s definition of politics is
   □ a. “who gets what, when, and how.”
   □ b. “what gets done, then and now.”
   □ c. the authoritative allocation of the GNP.
   □ d. voting in a duly constituted election.

9. The media usually focus on the
   □ a. “who” of politics.
   □ b. “what” of politics.
   □ c. “when” of politics.
   □ d. “how” of politics.
10. Political issues get government's attention through linkage institutions.
   □ True
   □ False

11. One type of linkage institution is
   □ a. an interest group.
   □ b. a bureaucracy.
   □ c. a government.
   □ d. a legislature.

12. Which of the following is NOT an example of a linkage institution?
   □ a. the National Rifle Association
   □ b. the Democratic Party
   □ c. a referendum
   □ d. the Social Security Administration

13. A policy agenda is
   □ a. ignored by public officials.
   □ b. an electoral ballot.
   □ c. a list of problems to which serious attention is paid.
   □ d. a public opinion poll.

14. A government’s policy agenda changes infrequently.
   □ True
   □ False

15. Which of the following policymaking institutions was NOT established by the Constitution?
   □ a. Congress
   □ b. the bureaucracy
   □ c. the presidency
   □ d. the courts

16. Public policy
   □ a. consists of laws passed by Congress.
   □ b. is what government chooses not to do.
   □ c. involves making decisions.
   □ d. all of the above

17. Public policies include
   □ a. congressional statutes.
   □ b. court decisions.
   □ c. budgetary choices.
   □ d. all of the above
18. The last part of the policy system concerns
☐ a. implementation.
☐ b. the policy agenda.
☐ c. policy impacts.
☐ d. elections.

19. (bonus) According to *The Communist Manifesto*, the specter haunting Europe was
☐ a. democracy.
☐ b. military dictatorship.
☐ c. communism.
☐ d. freedom.

20. The writers of the U.S. Constitution
☐ a. cherished the idea of democracy.
☐ b. favored government by the people.
☐ c. rejected democratic ideals.
☐ d. had no fondness for democracy.

21. (bonus) Who said the people “should have as little to do as may be with the government”?
☐ a. Abraham Lincoln
☐ b. Elbridge Gerry
☐ c. Roger Sherman
☐ d. Alexis de Tocqueville

22. The basic principles of traditional democratic theory include all of the following EXCEPT
☐ a. equality in voting.
☐ b. effective participation.
☐ c. government control of information.
☐ d. inclusion.

23. In democratic theory, the principle of minority rights accompanies the principle of
☐ a. majority rule.
☐ b. representation.
☐ c. pluralism.
☐ d. equality.

24. The closer the correspondence between representatives and their electoral majority, the closer the approximation to democracy.
☐ True
☐ False
25. Pluralists argue that
   □ a. there are only a few influential groups that shape American policymaking.
   □ b. the American political system is a competition among many groups.
   □ c. the public interest rarely prevails.
   □ d. many access points diminish group influence.

26. Critics of the pluralist theory contend that it
   □ a. misses the larger question of how the pie is distributed.
   □ b. is overly pessimistic.
   □ c. places too much emphasis on class differences.
   □ d. fails to explain bargains and compromises.

27. Elite and class theory holds that
   □ a. power is dispersed among many institutions.
   □ b. wealth is irrelevant to political power.
   □ c. American society is divided along class lines.
   □ d. elites influence policymakers but are distinct from them.

28. According to the theory of hyperpluralism, government has become more effective with time.
   □ True
   □ False

29. The idea of powerful groups and weak government is most closely associated with
   □ a. democratic theory.
   □ b. elite and class theory.
   □ c. pluralism.
   □ d. hyperpluralism.

30. Hyperpluralism can lead to
   □ a. elite rule.
   □ b. muddled and contradictory policy.
   □ c. more effective and efficient government.
   □ d. centralized power and authority.

31. Democratic theory requires citizens to become experts on almost everything.
   □ True
   □ False

32. Winning a congressional seat these days requires a campaign war chest of at least
   □ a. $100,000.
   □ b. $250,000.
   □ c. $500,000.
   □ d. $1 million.
33. Political action committees usually care only about how members of Congress vote on issues that particularly affect them.
   □ True
   □ False

34. A common consequence of the situation in which different parties control the president and Congress is
   □ a. policy compromise.
   □ b. pluralism.
   □ c. policy gridlock.
   □ d. individualism.

35. What unites Americans more than anything else is
   □ a. the president.
   □ b. their political culture.
   □ c. participation in elections.
   □ d. a belief in group politics.

36. According to Seymour Martin Lipset, the American creed includes the idea of
   □ a. individualism.
   □ b. laissez-faire.
   □ c. populism.
   □ d. all of the above

37. A key aspect of American egalitarianism is economic equality.
   □ True
   □ False

38. An important result of American individualism has been a clear tendency to prefer
   □ a. laissez-faire economic policies.
   □ b. higher tax rates.
   □ c. national welfare policies, such as health care.
   □ d. big government.

39. Research clearly indicates that America is engaged in a bitter culture war.
   □ True
   □ False

40. The percentage of the gross domestic product currently spent by our government is about
   □ a. 10%.
   □ b. 50%.
   □ c. 30%.
   □ d. 75%. 

17
41. Which of the following statements about the scope of our national government is TRUE?
   □ a. It spends almost $3 trillion annually.
   □ b. It employs two million people.
   □ c. It owns one-third of the land in the United States.
   □ d. all of the above

42. The fraction of the federal budget devoted to national defense is about
   □ a. one-tenth.
   □ b. one-sixth.
   □ c. one-fourth.
   □ d. one-third.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Define government and identify the functions that governments perform. What is the role of politics in government?

2. What are the principal choices that governments face when confronting policy problems? Illustrate your answer with an example of a policy that poses tough choices. Explain how government makes policy even when it chooses to do nothing.

3. What are the principal components of the policymaking system? Explain how a political issue travels through the policymaking system by using an example.

4. What is the definition of democracy? What are the basic principles of traditional democratic theory? What problems might emerge when the theory is put into practice?

5. Compare, contrast, and critically evaluate the three theories of American democracy: pluralist theory, elite and class theory, and hyperpluralism.

6. Summarize some of the major challenges facing American democracy today. Briefly state your opinion as to how serious these challenges are and how they might be met.

7. What is meant by political culture? What is the nature of the American political culture? In your opinion, is America experiencing a “culture war”?

8. In what ways might it be said that American government is “big”? How does the scope of the American government compare to other Western democracies?