

American Government and Politics Today. 12th edition.

by Schmidt, S.W., Shelley, M.C. & Bardes, B.A · Language: EN

Summary by booksummaryai.com —

<https://booksummaryai.com/country/en/american-government-and-politics-today-12th-edition>

Overview

American Government and Politics Today, 12th edition, by Schmidt, Shelley, and Bardes, serves as a comprehensive and accessible introduction to the institutions, processes, and policies of the United States government. The book aims to equip students with a foundational understanding of how American democracy functions, exploring its historical roots, constitutional framework, and contemporary challenges. It delves into the interplay between citizens, political parties, interest groups, and the media, demonstrating how these elements shape public opinion and influence policy outcomes. The text emphasizes critical thinking about political issues, encouraging readers to analyze the complexities of governance and their own roles as informed participants.

The 12th edition updates its analysis to reflect recent political developments, electoral trends, and shifts in public policy, including economic policy and social issues. It systematically examines the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, alongside topics such as federalism, civil liberties, and civil rights. A central argument woven throughout the book is that American government is a dynamic system, constantly evolving in response to societal demands, technological advancements, and global events. By presenting a balanced perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of the American political system, the authors provide a robust framework for understanding both its enduring principles and its ongoing debates, making it an essential resource for anyone seeking to grasp the intricacies of U.S. politics.

Key Takeaways

- The U.S. Constitution establishes a framework of limited government, separation of powers, and checks and balances to prevent tyranny.
- Federalism divides power between national and state governments, leading to complex policy implementation and varying citizen experiences.
- Civil liberties protect individual freedoms from government interference, while civil rights ensure equal treatment under the law for all citizens.
- Public opinion, political parties, and interest groups are crucial in shaping the policy agenda and influencing electoral outcomes.

- The three branches of government—legislative, executive, and judicial—each play distinct yet interdependent roles in governing the nation.
- Economic policy, including taxation, spending, and regulation, is a primary function of government, significantly impacting citizens' lives and the national welfare.
- Active and informed citizen participation is vital for the health and responsiveness of a democratic system.

Chapter Summaries

Foundations of Government

Explores the philosophical underpinnings of American government, the colonial experience, and the critical events leading to the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation. It examines the challenges faced by the early republic and the motivations behind the drafting of the U.S. Constitution, setting the stage for understanding the nation's political heritage.

The Constitution

Details the structure and principles of the U.S. Constitution, including popular sovereignty, limited government, separation of powers, checks and balances, and judicial review. It analyzes the process of ratification, the Bill of Rights, and the ongoing debate over constitutional interpretation and amendment.

Federalism

Investigates the division of power between the national and state governments, tracing its evolution from dual to cooperative federalism and beyond. This chapter examines the constitutional basis for federalism, the role of federal grants, and the implications of intergovernmental relations for policy-making and citizen services.

Civil Liberties

Focuses on the fundamental freedoms guaranteed to individuals by the Bill of Rights, such as freedom of speech, religion, and the press. It explores how these liberties have been interpreted and protected by the courts, often balancing individual rights against collective interests and public order.

Civil Rights

Examines the struggle for equality for various groups in American society, including African Americans, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals. This chapter analyzes the legal and political battles against discrimination, landmark legislation, and the ongoing challenges in achieving full civil rights.

Public Opinion and Political Participation

Discusses how public opinion is formed, measured, and its influence on government. It also covers various forms of political participation, including voting, protests, and civic engagement, analyzing factors that affect voter turnout and political efficacy.

Political Parties and Elections

Explores the role of political parties in American democracy, their historical development, and their functions in organizing elections and governing. It details the electoral process, campaign finance, and the impact of different electoral systems on political outcomes.

The Congress

Provides an in-depth look at the structure, powers, and functions of the U.S. Congress, including the House of Representatives and the Senate. It examines the legislative process, the role of committees, and the influences on congressional decision-making, such as constituents, parties, and interest groups.

The Presidency and the Bureaucracy

Analyzes the powers and responsibilities of the President, the evolution of the office, and the relationship with the executive branch bureaucracy. It explores the challenges of presidential leadership, the implementation of policy, and the accountability of government agencies.

The Judiciary and Public Policy

Focuses on the structure and function of the federal court system, the process of judicial review, and the impact of Supreme Court decisions on American society. It also broadly examines the policymaking process, including the formulation and implementation of key public policies, such as economic, social, and foreign policy.

Themes

- Constitutionalism
- Checks and Balances
- Federalism
- Civil Liberties
- Political Participation
- Public Policy

Frequently Asked Questions

What is American Government and Politics Today. 12th edition. about?

This textbook provides a comprehensive introduction to the U.S. government and political system. It covers the Constitution, federalism, civil liberties, political parties, elections, and the three branches of government, along with public policy. Its aim is to help readers understand how American democracy functions and evolves.

Is American Government and Politics Today. 12th edition. worth reading?

Yes, it is highly recommended for students and anyone seeking a thorough understanding of American government. Its clear explanations, updated content, and focus on critical thinking make complex political concepts accessible. It serves as an excellent foundational text for political science studies.

How does American Government and Politics Today. 12th edition. end?

Spoiler: As a textbook, it does not have a narrative ending. The 12th edition typically concludes with discussions on public policy, the challenges facing American democracy, and the future of U.S. politics, encouraging readers to consider their role as informed citizens.

Who should read American Government and Politics Today. 12th edition.?

This book is primarily intended for college and university students taking introductory courses in American government or political science. It is also valuable for general readers, educators, and anyone interested in gaining a deeper, structured understanding of the U.S. political system.

How long does it take to read American Government and Politics Today. 12th edition.?

Given its comprehensive nature and typical textbook length (around 600-800 pages), reading the entire 12th edition could take approximately 25-40 hours, depending on reading speed and engagement with the material.