

# Chapter 1

# Politics and Knowledge



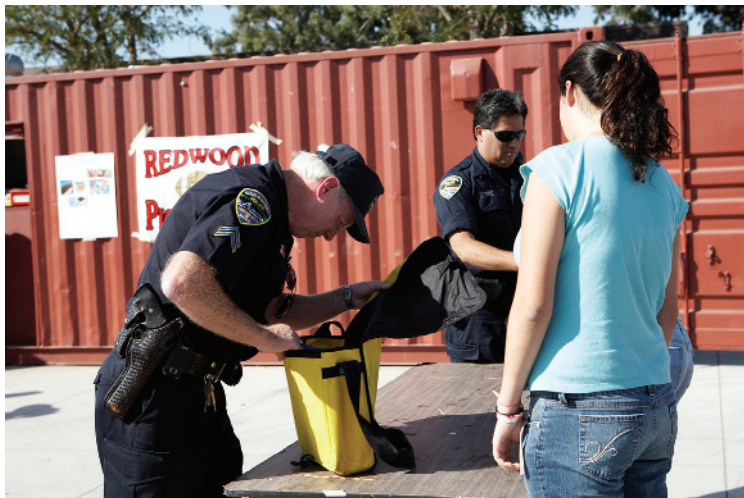
## Learning Objectives

- 1.1** Define politics within a public context.
- 1.2** Analyze three types of political knowledge.
- 1.3** Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different sources of political knowledge.
- 1.4** Identify techniques and approaches used to gain political knowledge and assess whether they constitute a science.

Imagine you have a 13-year-old sister in eighth grade. She has quite the day at school: The vice principal comes into her math class unexpectedly and asks her to bring her backpack and accompany him to his office. In his office, she sees a planner, a knife, a lighter, and some white pills on his desk. The vice principal lectures her about the importance of telling the truth, then asks which of the items belong to her. She tells him that she had lent the planner to another girl a few days earlier but that the other items are not hers. The vice principal responds that the other girl had reported your sister for giving her the pills, which students are not allowed to possess at school.

The vice principal asks if he can look through your sister's backpack, and she agrees. A female secretary enters the office and searches the backpack. Your sister is then told to follow the secretary to the nurse's office, where she is asked to remove her jacket, socks, and shoes. She follows their directions. They next ask her to take off her pants and shirt, and again she follows their directions. These clothes are searched, and when nothing incriminating is found, they order your sister to stand up, pull her bra away from her body and shake it, then pull her underwear loose and shake it. No pills drop out when she complies. She is allowed to put her clothes back on and sits outside the principal's office for several hours. Finally, she is sent back to class.

What do you think of the events just described? Is this situation *political*? Do the actions of the vice principal seem appropriate? What about the actions of the school's secretary and nurse? Did your sister do the right thing by complying with each of their requests? Did she have a choice? What would you do in a similar situation?



Search me? Are there fundamental political issues when a school searches its students? When is a search legal?

13-year-old Savana Redding of Safford, Arizona, in 2003. Here are some additional facts in this case. This public school has a responsibility to ensure the safety and health of all its students. The previous year, a student nearly died from drugs taken without permission at the school. The school district has a zero-tolerance policy for all drugs—no student is allowed to possess any drugs at school, whether over-the-counter, prescription, or illegal. The vice principal acted on information from another girl who reported that Savana had given her pills that day. It was not really a “strip search” because Savana never took off her underwear. All of these considerations seem to justify the actions that occurred.

However, there are valid points on the other side of the issue. The Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution seems to protect Savana from this kind of search unless significant evidence indicates that something illegal is occurring (probable cause). The vice principal’s actions were taken based on questionable information from another girl who was already in trouble for possessing the pills. And the search occurred despite Savana’s claim that she had no pills, without parental approval, and before any further investigation of the situation was attempted. Then there is common sense: The pills are merely extra-strength ibuprofen (pain killers). Is this really a legitimate reason for adults in authority positions to force a 13-year-old girl to submit to a humiliating strip search?

Savana’s mother was outraged. With the assistance of a lawyer from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), she sued the school officials on the grounds that they had subjected her daughter to an “unreasonable search.” Savana’s lawyer argued that, while a search of her backpack might be reasonable, a strip search was not, given the flimsy evidence of guilt and the minimal threat associated with ibuprofen. The school district’s officials responded that the vice principal’s actions were justified and consistent with numerous court cases that uphold the rights and responsibilities of schools to prevent dangerous behavior among their students, including searches for drugs or weapons.

Initially, a judge in Tucson ruled in favor of the actions by the school officials; however, on appeal, the circuit court reversed the decision by the narrowest of

*Stop and think about these questions briefly before you continue reading. You will be asked many such “reflection questions” as you read this book. Your attempt to answer them, either with a quick note in the margin or at least a mental note, will help you better grasp your own understanding of issues that are raised. As E. M. Forster commented: “How do I know what I think until I see what I say?” So, what do you think about this situation?*

Of course, this did not happen to your little sister (if you have one), but it did happen to

margins (6–5). The court concluded that the strip search of an eighth grader while looking for prescription drugs was a violation of her constitutional rights, and it held that the family could sue the school officials for damages. The school’s lawyers then appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 2009, the court majority (8–1) held that the search of Savana was unconstitutional. The majority reasoned that the particular drugs suspected in this case were not sufficiently threatening to justify the search. However, the court did not allow the family to sue school officials, leaving open the question of how it might rule if school officials suspected a student of possessing something more dangerous than ibuprofen.

## Toward a Definition of Politics

### 1.1 Define politics within a public context.

The first step in our journey toward a better understanding of the political world is to establish what we mean by politics. The Savana Redding search captures some of the crucial themes related to politics:

Politics is the competition among individuals and groups pursuing their own interests.

Politics is the exercise of power and influence to allocate things that are valued.

Politics is the determination of who gets what, when, and how.

Politics is the resolution of conflict.

All of these definitions share the central idea that **politics** is the process through which power and influence are used in the promotion of certain values and interests. (The **bold** type indicates a Key Concept; these terms are listed at the end of the chapter and are included in the Glossary beginning on page 461.) Competing values and interests are clearly at the heart of the search of Savana Redding. The values that guide a zero-tolerance policy regarding drugs at the school are balanced against values that protect a student against an illegal search. Other groups might have a stake in this conflict, as did the ACLU, which intervened to promote its views about individual liberty, and the courts, which asserted their responsibility to interpret the laws.

As individuals, groups, and governmental actors make decisions about what is good or bad for society, and as they try to implement their decisions, politics occurs. Every individual holds an array of preferred values and interests, and that individual cares more about some of those values than others. What values is each individual willing to promote or yield on? If the values of different individuals come into conflict, whose values and rights should prevail? And, if people cannot work out their conflicting values privately through discussion and compromise, must the government intervene? How does the government exercise its power to resolve the conflict? Who benefits and who is burdened by the policies of government? These are all *political* questions.

For our purposes, politics is associated with those aspects of life that have *public* significance. Other aspects of life, in contrast, are understood to be private and thus are beyond the domain of politics. However, what is considered “private” in

one country may be considered “public” in another. It is relevant that the search of Savana occurred in the United States. There are many other countries (e.g., Cuba, Iran, Zimbabwe) where the kind of search conducted on Savana would be well within the standard practices of government authorities and few, if any, citizens would publicly challenge the action.

In the political context of the United States, the school board—a political body elected by the citizens—has the right to establish policies regarding which behaviors will be unacceptable by the students (e.g., possessing drugs, using profane language) and by its employees (e.g., using corporal punishment, teaching creation science). The vice principal, as a public employee, exercises power when he implements those policies. The courts—another political institution—are active in the case as its judges, also public employees, attempt to resolve the conflict in values and interests between Savana’s family and the school’s employees. The court’s judgments are based on interpretations of politically created rules, including the U.S. Constitution, which ensures each citizen of certain rights but also grants government certain powers.

Even your choice about the job you take, the religion you practice, or what you read on the Internet can be either a private choice or one within the public domain. Can you see why a government might conclude that each of these choices has public significance and is thus political? Within each country, there is a constant debate about the appropriate areas for governmental action and the domains of life that should remain private and unrestrained by political action. Sometimes the term *politics* is used even more broadly than in this book to refer to competition over values in domains that are not truly public, such as the “politics of the family” or “office politics.”

In almost every contemporary society, the domains that are subject to politics are very large. Politics, usually via government, determines how much education you must have and what its content will be. Politics establishes the words you cannot utter in a public place, how much of your hard-earned income you must give to government, and how various governments spend that money to provide different groups with a vast range of benefits (e.g., education, roads, fire protection, subsidized health care, safe food, national defense, and aid to another country). Politics determines whether you are allowed to use a certain drug; the amount of pollutants that your car can emit; how secure you feel against violence by others within your neighborhood and within the global system; and whether you receive unequal treatment in the allocation of benefits because of your ethnicity, gender, ideology, or some other factor.

## On Political Knowledge

### 1.2 Analyze three types of political knowledge.

### Types of Political Knowledge

Clearly, politics can affect your life in many ways. Yet people differ greatly in their understandings about the nature of politics, the uses of political power, and the distribution of political benefits and burdens. If you have discussed politics with

your friends, you probably have noticed that they differ, both in how much they know about politics and in their opinions about what constitute good and bad political actions. Your understandings about politics and your decisions about whether to undertake specific political actions are grounded in your knowledge of politics. Every individual's understanding of politics is composed of three general types of political knowledge: (1) *descriptions* of political facts; (2) *explanations* of how and why politics occurs as it does; and (3) *prescriptions* of what should happen in the political world.

## Description

Many bits of political knowledge offer a *description*, which focuses on *what* questions and is usually based on one or more "facts." (The **bold and italic** type indicates a Key Concept; these terms are listed at the end of the chapter but are not in the Glossary at the back of the book.) Descriptive political knowledge is mostly composed of relatively straightforward political facts such as these:

The date Hosni Mubarak resigned as President of Egypt: February 11, 2011

The number of states in Nigeria: 36

The country with the highest GDP (gross domestic product) per capita (PPP) in the world in 2014: Qatar at \$102,100

But on many questions about the political world, there are no indisputable answers. On some questions, it is difficult to get precise information. Suppose you want to know which countries have operational nuclear weapons. Six countries acknowledge having operational nuclear devices: France, India, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. However, the precise number of such weapons in each country is a state secret. China clearly has nuclear weapons but claims that none are operational. Experts conclude that Israel has nuclear weapons, although Israel does not confirm this. North Korea claims to have operational nuclear weapons, but there is no publicly available evidence about this capability, and Iran is suspected of having a secret nuclear weapons program. Twenty other countries, including Algeria, Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, Kazakhstan, Libya, South Africa, and Ukraine, are "potential proliferators" that had or were close to having nuclear weapons but are now assumed to have backed away from nuclear ambitions (Federation of American Scientists 2014). Thus, even the experts cannot reach consensus on the straightforward issue of which countries belong to the so-called nuclear club.

On other questions about politics, description requires assessments that raise complicated issues about power, interests, and values, making it difficult to reach agreement about the facts. Here are two examples:

Do nonwhites and whites in the United States experience equal treatment before the law?

Can a country legally invade another country that has not used military force against it?

This discussion on “Description” briefly refers to 21 countries on five continents. Do you have a clear sense of where they are? There will be detailed discussions of many countries in this book. Knowing the location of a country and its geographic relationship to other countries in its region is sometimes extremely important for understanding its political choices and actions. When a country is discussed and you are not sure where it is, you are strongly encouraged to locate the country on a map. For this purpose, a set of maps is included in this book. Several recent studies have shown that students in the United States are more ignorant of world geography than students in most other countries. If that applies to you, help change the situation by referring frequently to the maps.

## Explanation

A lot of political knowledge is more complicated than just description because it is in the form of *explanation*, which attempts to *specify why something happens* and to *provide the reason or process by which the phenomenon occurs*.

Why is one in seven people “poor” in the wealthy United States? What causes a country (e.g., Zimbabwe) to have inflation higher than 10,000 percent in a single year? Why does a popular uprising rapidly overthrow the government in one country (e.g., Tunisia) but not in another (e.g., its neighbor, Syria)? Responses to these kinds of questions require explanation, not just descriptive facts. Such questions can be among the most fascinating in politics, but adequate explanation is often difficult because patterns of cause and effect can be extremely complex.

## Prescription

Statements about politics often include claims or assumptions that certain choices and actions are more desirable than others. These represent a third form of political knowledge: prescription. A **prescription** is *a value judgment that indicates what should occur and should be done*. Thus, a prescription deals with answers to questions about what ought to be, not merely description and explanation of what is.

For example, there are many possible prescriptive responses to this question: What should be the government’s role in the provision of health care? Answers vary from the viewpoint that government should take absolutely no action that interferes with the private provision of health care to the viewpoint that government should meet the full range of health care needs at no direct cost to patients. You can probably think of many positions between these two extremes.

The prescriptive position that you select on a political issue is an element of your **normative political knowledge**—*your value judgments*. Notice that normative political knowledge combines three types of understanding: (1) your descriptive knowledge of certain facts (e.g., the alternative ways that health care could be provided in a particular society); (2) your explanatory knowledge about why certain outcomes occur (e.g., the reasons why people don’t receive equal health care); and most important, (3) your priorities among competing values (e.g., your preferences regarding equality, lower taxes, and limited government).

Throughout this book, you will be encouraged to clarify your own understandings about politics. You will be offered a variety of descriptive, explanatory, and prescriptive knowledge claims. It is hoped that as you absorb more of this information, you will become more knowledgeable about politics! Let's explore some of your views about politics by means of a thought experiment we term "the acid test".

Assume you were born 20 years ago in either the country of Gamma or the country of Delta. You do not know about your personal situation: whether you are male or female; your ethnicity, education level, and social class; your parents' wealth; whether you reside in a city or a rural area; your religion; your mental or physical skills; and so on. Table 1.1 provides a variety of indicators of some *current* conditions in Gamma and Delta with regard to each country's prosperity, security, and stability. Here is the "acid test" question: *Now that you know the current conditions in Gamma and Delta, into which country would you prefer to have been born 20 years ago?* The Compare in 1 (there will be a Compare box in each chapter) considers some of the issues regarding this acid test. Make your choice from the data in Table 1.1 *before* you read the Compare in 1!

**Table 1.1** The Acid Test I

	Gamma	Delta
Governmental type	Nondemocracy	Liberal democracy
Democracy index (148 countries)	142 <sup>nd</sup>	38 <sup>th</sup>
Political rights (1–7; 1 = most extensive)	7 (very low)	2 (high)
Civil liberties (1–7; 1 = most extensive)	6 (low)	3 (moderately high)
Press freedom (among 194 countries)	181 <sup>st</sup> : Not free	72 <sup>nd</sup> : Partly free
Economic freedom (among 177 countries)	136 <sup>th</sup> : Partly free	119 <sup>th</sup> : Partly free
Government restrictions on religion	Very high	Low
Social hostilities involving religion	High	Very high
% women in national legislature	21%	11%
Gender Equality (186 countries)	35 <sup>th</sup>	132 <sup>nd</sup>
Political stability	High	Medium
Rate of crimes against the person	Low	Medium
Life expectancy	74 years	66 years
Literacy rate (adults)	94%	63%
Infant mortality/1,000	16	48
% population with access to essential drugs	85%	35%
Internet users/100	28.8	5.0
% below the national poverty line	2.8%	22.9%
Unemployment rate	6.5%	8.5%
Wealth (GDP: gross domestic product) per capita	\$9,300	\$3,800
GDP per capita annual growth: 2000–2012	10.6%	7.7%
Inflation rate	2.3%	9.3%
Public debt as % of GDP	31.7%	49.6%

## Compare in 1

### The Acid Test I

As you examined the indicators in Table 1.1, you perhaps noticed significant differences between Gamma and Delta. The economic prosperity (indicated by measures such as the country's wealth per capita and its economic growth rate) is noticeably higher in one country. The probability you would be poor, uneducated, and live a shorter life is higher in one country. Your likely freedom of action, in domains such as politics, religion, and access to information, varies considerably. There also seem to be differences in gender equality between the two countries. What differences are most striking to you?

The acid test asks you to decide, after considering all the data provided about Gamma and Delta, into which country you would prefer to be born. Which one did you choose?

Gamma and Delta are pseudonyms for two real countries, and the data are recent. Both countries have a variety of broad similarities—population, climate variability, social history, period of time since independence, violent interactions with neighboring countries, and so on. These are arguably the two most important countries in the developing world. Each country has a rich history, including a remarkable ancient culture; extensive colonial exploitation; a fickle climate; deep social cleavages, especially those based on religion, gender, and class/caste; and each has more than 1 billion people.

However, since the independence of India in 1947 and the communist victory in China in 1949, the two countries have followed very different paths. Under the long and tumultuous rule of Mao Zedong (in power from 1949–1976), China (Gamma) attempted to implement a pervasive system of communism with a command political economy and totalitarian one-party government. The Chinese leadership after Mao engaged in a steady introduction of market economics, transforming China into a global economic power while still retaining tight Communist Party rule over the government. Initially, India (Delta) attempted to implement strong government control of key sectors of the economy, and it introduced democratic politics, although one party

was very dominant. Eventually, both experiments evolved in India as the economy shifted much more to private firms and the political system became more competitive with multiple parties.

Some results of these two different approaches to government and policy are reflected in the measures in Table 1.1. The strong commitment under Mao to egalitarianism and providing benefits to all citizens led to public policies that reduced inequalities based on gender and social class with broad improvements in literacy and health for most of the population. The Indian government did not provide extensive policies to address inequalities based on caste, gender, and urban–rural differences; thus, these inequalities have lessened much more slowly in India, resulting in continued disparities in domains such as literacy and health. China has sustained remarkable levels of economic growth for several decades as it has become a global power, while India's growth has been more sporadic but high since 2000. India proudly proclaims itself the “world's largest democracy” with a rough-and-tumble political system characterized by broad political rights, a relatively free media, a professional apolitical military, and an independent judiciary. In contrast, China's leadership continues to use a combination of state military and security forces, political socialization, severe censorship, and rewards to those who conform to sustain its oppressive Communist Party domination of political and social life.

Despite many similarities in their resources and history, China and India have significantly different current profiles. While many explanations can be offered for these differences, it is reasonable to claim that the most powerful explanation is *politics*—the decisions and actions taken by those with political power and authority in each country. As you develop your understandings of politics in this book, some of the key points underlying this acid test will be persistent themes.

First, a people and its government can pursue numerous desirable goals. While every country (and you) might like to have very positive scores on every



indicator in Table 1.1, you will discover that the reality is starker: Most countries cannot have it all. Various trade-offs must be made due to limited resources, the incapacity of people and their institutions to control their environment fully, and other factors related to human failures and impacts of the global system.

Second, the acid test challenges you to decide what aspects of political, social, economic, and personal life are more important to you. The book will assist you in clarifying your own thinking about what you value and what role you think government should play in helping you achieve those values.

And third, your choices and your values will not be the same as everyone else's—even among your peers and certainly among people around the globe. You will gain greater awareness of the different

mixes of approaches and values that are part of the debate about how government can help individuals and societies pursue a variety of desirable life conditions such as security, prosperity, stability, freedom, equality, justice, democracy, and well-being. Disagreements about ends and means are at the heart of politics in every country.

## Further Questions

1. Which broad value seemed to most influence your choice between Gamma and Delta?
2. Did your knowledge of the identities of Gamma and Delta change your evaluation at all?
3. What assessment(s) might cause another person to select the country that you did not select?

# Sources of Political Knowledge

## 1.3 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different sources of political knowledge.

This chapter has already made many knowledge claims—statements about what is accurate or correct. Table 1.1 and the Compare in 1 are loaded with such claims. When you are confronted by such claims, how do you decide what you know and what you believe? That is, where does your political knowledge—your unique combination of descriptive facts, explanations, and prescriptions about politics—come from? This section describes three important sources of your knowledge: (1) authority; (2) personal thought; and (3) science.

## Authority

The method of **authority** involves *the appeal to any document, tradition, or person believed to possess the controlling explanation regarding a particular issue*. Knowledge about politics can be based on three kinds of authority sources: (1) a specific authority; (2) a general authority; or (3) “everyone.”

**SPECIFIC AUTHORITY SOURCES** A particular individual (but few others) might place great confidence in the knowledge he derives about politics from a specific authority source such as a parent, teacher, friend, or famous person. Young people and those minimally interested in politics are especially likely to rely on specific authorities for much of their political knowledge. Chapter 4 will argue that specific authority sources powerfully influence some important political beliefs of most individuals. Can you think of a significant piece of your own political

knowledge that you derived primarily from a parent, an influential teacher, or a public figure you admire?

**GENERAL AUTHORITY SOURCES** A general authority source is one that has substantial influence on a large proportion of people in a society. Examples include constitutions, revered leaders, widely respected media or books, and religious teachings. General authorities are especially evident as a basis for normative political knowledge. Consider, for example, the issue of the role of women in politics. While this can be a descriptive issue, how do we determine the normative question of what the role of women should be? In some societies, there is disagreement about this question, and many look to an authority source to provide the answer.

- In the United States, the crucial source of authority for such questions is a *legal document*—the Constitution. Despite the claim that “all men...are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights...” not every citizen was allowed to vote in 1787. Indeed, women were not granted this fundamental political right until the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920—130 years into the American Republic. Advocates of women’s rights argue that women still do not have full and equal political rights and proposed another constitutional amendment, the Equal Rights Amendment; but it was never ratified by the 38 states necessary for its passage.



*My Little Red Book*: Young girls recite and memorize sayings from Chairman Mao Zedong during China’s Cultural Revolution (circa 1968).

- In Iran, the key source of authority on women’s political rights is also a document, but it is a *religious document*, the Koran. During the political regime of Shah Reza Pahlavi (1941–1979), women were encouraged to participate much more fully in politics than what Iran’s religious conservatives thought was consistent with the Koran. When the Ayatollah Khomeini (in power 1979–1989) replaced the shah, he insisted on a strict interpretation of the Koran that significantly limited the political roles of women. The political rights and activities of Iranian women remain a contentious issue between those who advocate an expanded role and those, like the current top leader Ayatollah Khamenei, who insist on enforcing a more conservative interpretation of the Koran.
- In contemporary China, the political rights of women were established by the authoritative pronouncements of a *person*, Mao Zedong (in power 1949–1976). Prior to the revolution of 1949, the role of women in China was defined by the traditions of Confucianism. Most

women were essentially the property of men, and they had few political rights. As part of Chairman Mao's efforts to transform Confucian tradition, he granted women full equality under the law, and women were encouraged to participate actively in all aspects of political life. (The conflict between Mao's views and those of Confucianism are explored further in the Focus in 4.)

**“EVERYONE” AS AUTHORITY** Sometimes we are convinced that something is true because it is a belief strongly held by many other people. If almost everyone (i.e., the reference group to which you look for information and knowledge) seems to agree on a “fact” about politics, there is little reason for you to disagree with or challenge that fact. One reason to place confidence in a belief that is strongly held by many people is the assumption that it is unlikely so many people could be incorrect. Such knowledge has stood the test of time because it could have been challenged and repudiated in the marketplace of ideas. For example, you will probably find that almost everyone you know agrees that political terrorism is bad.

**PROBLEMS WITH AUTHORITY AS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE** There are fundamental problems with using authority as a way of knowing. This should be most obvious with *specific authorities*. You might think that your parent or best teacher or favorite celebrity has the correct view on an important political issue, but few of the other 7.2 billion people in the world have any confidence in this source of your political knowledge.

And even though “everyone knows that X is true,” there is no guarantee that everyone is correct. First, as “Honest Abe” Lincoln observed, you can fool all of the people some of the time. Indeed, a political belief that is widely held might be particularly immune to careful assessment. Experiments in psychology have revealed that some of a person's beliefs can be altered by the beliefs of others. For example, if a subject hears several respondents (collaborating with the experimenter) all give identical wrong answers to a question, the subject can usually be persuaded to change his mind about what he knows—even when he is correct. Second, “everyone” often consists mainly of people whose cultural background we share. If you reexamine the above example about terrorism with a different “everyone,” it is unlikely that almost everyone living under an oppressive political regime believes that political terrorism is bad. It is common for citizens in most political systems to believe that the citizens of rival political systems have been brainwashed. We know that some beliefs of our rivals are incorrect. Isn't it likely that they are equally convinced that some of our strongly held beliefs are wrong?

There are even problems with *general authorities*. Sometimes even the most competent general authorities might not have access to crucial information or might rely on inaccurate data, as when they list the countries with nuclear weapons. And sometimes, despite a group's acceptance of a single authority, there are still ambiguities and problems of interpretation.

Consider again the normative issue of the political role of women. In interpreting gender equality, all branches of government in the United States continually debate and interpret the rather limited framework outlined in the Constitution. The appropriate



Powerful women: A chat between former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Supreme Court Justices Elena Kagan (right) and Sonia Sotomayor (center), who are among those with key roles in defining the evolving role of women in American politics.

role of women in Iran's politics remains a highly contested issue, despite the Koran. Indeed, there is considerable difference of opinion within the broader Muslim world regarding how to interpret the Koran's authoritative prescriptions regarding women's roles in political life. In some Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Sudan, women's roles are greatly restricted. Yet Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Turkey are Muslim-majority countries that recently selected female heads of government (prime ministers). And in China, Mao Zedong's pronouncements

on many topics, especially on economic matters, are now rejected by the leadership, even as his general views about gender equality remain a key authority source.

In short, it is common, and perhaps inevitable, for authority sources to offer inconsistent or conflicting knowledge claims about the political world. It is extremely difficult to differentiate among alternative authorities or even to establish widespread agreement on precisely what political knowledge a particular authority source provides.

## Personal Thought

Have you ever insisted that some fact is correct because it seemed so obvious to you? It is possible to feel confident that you know something on the basis of personal thought—your own reason, feelings, or experiences. This second source of knowledge does not rely on outside authorities; rather, it assumes that the individual can use his own rationality, intuition, or personal experience to assess a knowledge claim.

**RATIONALITY** On occasion, you probably have decided that a certain claim is true because it is logical or obvious—it “just makes sense.” The available information fits together in a coherent framework that, it seems, would lead to agreement among all people who think clearly. Or it is assumed that the knowledge claim is verified because it is self-evident to reasonable people and needs no further justification. For example, the Preamble to the U.S. Declaration of Independence claims that there are “self-evident” truths—that all men are created equal and that they have inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

**INTUITION** Another form of personal thought is intuition. Here, one's knowledge is based on feeling, on a sense of understanding or empathy, rather than on reason. You have probably been convinced that something is correct because it *feels* right. For

example, the key slogan of Barry Goldwater, the Republican presidential candidate in 1964, was an explicit appeal to intuition: “In your heart, you know he’s right!” And Barack Obama’s 2008 campaign incantation “Change we can believe in!” was essentially an appeal to feeling and hope.

**PERSONAL EXPERIENCE** You can also be convinced that something is true because of your personal experiences. For example, you might be convinced that government bureaucracies are inefficient because a specific agency handled your inquiries so ineptly. Or you might believe that different ethnic groups can live together in harmony based on your own positive experience in a multiethnic setting. Personal involvement in a dramatic event, such as witnessing a handgun murder or being physically harassed by the police, can have a particularly powerful impact on one’s political beliefs.

**PROBLEMS WITH PERSONAL THOUGHT AS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE** There is a major problem with all three forms of personal thought as a source of knowledge: There is no method for resolving “thoughtful” differences of opinion among individuals. This is most obvious with personal experience: Because people have different personal experiences, they are unlikely to reach the same conclusions about what is true. Similarly, there is no reason to assume that different people will share the same intuitive feelings regarding what is true. Goldwater’s poor electoral showing (he received only 39 percent of the vote) suggests that many people concluded (intuitively?) that he was not right, or perhaps they decided (rationally?) that he was too far right—too conservative ideologically. And, after a few years of Washington’s rough-and-tumble politics, many of Obama’s supporters had lost confidence in “change you can believe in.”

Even rational thought will not necessarily enable people to agree on political facts. We do not all employ the same logic, and it is rare to find a knowledge claim that everyone agrees is obviously correct. Consider again the key knowledge claim cited earlier: “We hold these truths to be self-evident—that all men are created equal.” This seems a clear appeal to rationality, a political fact that is self-evident to all thinking people. But what exactly does this claim mean? Do all men have equal physical or mental traits at birth? Do they grow up with equal opportunities? Are they equal before the law, regardless of the quality of legal help they can purchase? We have noted the historical disagreement about how women’s equality is to be interpreted. Many legal and political struggles in the United States during the more than two centuries since this “self-evident” truth was proclaimed have concerned precisely what equal rights *are* assured to every person in the U.S. political system, with particular regard to race, gender, and age.

## Science

In contrast to the two other sources of knowledge, science uses explicit methods that attempt to enable different people to agree about what they know. The goal of any

science is to describe and explain—to answer *what*, *why*, and *how* questions. There are four essential characteristics of the **scientific method**:

1. Science is *empirical* in the sense that it is concerned with phenomena that can be observed or at least measured.
2. Science entails a *search for regularities* in the relationships among phenomena.
3. Science is *cumulative* because it tentatively accepts previously established knowledge on a subject as the foundation for development of further knowledge. One can challenge existing knowledge, but it is not necessary to reestablish the knowledge base every time.
4. The method of science is *testable*. Its practitioners, scientists, specify the assumptions, data, analytic techniques, and inference patterns that support their knowledge claim. Other scientists look for some analysis or evidence that would invalidate (falsify) the claim. They evaluate all aspects of the claim and can repeat the analysis to ensure that the claim should be part of the accumulated knowledge.

These four characteristics are supposed to give the scientific method some major advantages over the methods of authority and personal thought in determining whether we can agree on a knowledge claim. This can be helpful because you are surrounded by competing claims regarding the political world. There are many sources of statements about politics—family, friends, television, books, newspapers, teachers, politicians. When you hear or read any claim about politics, you might take one of the following actions:

- Ignore it.
- Accept that it is correct.
- Reject it.
- Try to assess it.

If you decide to assess it, you would probably ask questions such as: Is it based on accurate information? Is it consistent with other things I know about politics? Does it influence any political actions I might take? When you begin to ask assessment questions, and especially when you try to answer them, you are engaged in political analysis. At its core, **political analysis** is *the attempt to describe (to answer the what questions) and then to explain politics (to answer the why and how questions)*. This book attempts to enhance your ability to engage in political analysis—to answer the *what*, *why*, and *how* questions about politics.

## Political Science

### 1.4 Identify techniques and approaches used to gain political knowledge and assess whether they constitute a science.

Political science is one approach to political analysis. As you will discover in reading this book, **political science** applies *a set of techniques, concepts, and approaches whose objective is to increase the clarity and accuracy of our understandings about the political world*.

That is, it is an attempt to apply the logic of the scientific method to political analysis. You will learn how some political scientists try to think systematically about political phenomena to describe “political reality” and to explain how politics works. You will also be introduced to some of the findings about politics that have emerged from the work of political scientists and other social scientists.

## Doing Comparative Analysis

Aristotle observed: All thinking begins in comparison. This book is called “a *comparative* introduction to political science” because it emphasizes how to utilize comparative thinking to enhance our understanding of politics. Comparisons will guide many of the discussions throughout the book, and each chapter will also have a specific feature called “Compare in...” to illuminate the comparative method in action. You were introduced to some aspects of the comparative method in the “acid test” that was the focus of the Compare in 1.

## Political Science and Political Knowledge

Not everyone agrees that it is appropriate and desirable to apply the scientific method to politics. Some insist that a “real” science must utilize strong applications of the four elements set out in Thomas Kuhn’s book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1996): (1) central **concepts**, which *identify and name crucial phenomena* (specifically, such as “the Iraq War,” or generally, such as “war”); (2) **theories**, which are *sets of systematically related generalizations that provide explanations and predictions about the linkages between certain concepts* (in the form “If A, then B under conditions C and D”); (3) *rules of interpretation*, which indicate the methods that will establish whether the explanations and predictions posited by the theory are right or wrong; and (4) a list of questions or *issues* that are worth solving within the area of inquiry.

Few would claim that political science is fully developed on any of these four elements. Thus, is it possible to engage in political science? Each chapter in this book will offer you a debate about an issue relevant to the attempt to understand the political world. Where better to start than with the Debate in 1: Is political *science* possible?

The discussion about the value of political science raises important questions that you should assess throughout this book. In general, this book will make the case that, despite the complexity of politics, generalizations are possible—each political phenomenon is not unique. If political science means the attempt to apply the scientific method to understand the political world better, it seems desirable to use such systematic and analytic thinking. And, if we are to share *any* knowledge about the political world, we need methods to reach some interpersonal agreement about political facts. Although political science lacks precise concepts and theories, it does enable us to develop better concepts, improved methods, and sounder generalizations, and thereby it makes the study of the political world an exciting intellectual challenge.

This book assumes that understanding politics is extremely important. As Austrian philosopher of science Karl Popper (1963: 227) suggests, “We must not expect too much from reason; argument rarely settles a [political] question, although it is the only

means for learning—not to see clearly, but to see more clearly than before.” In the face of fundamental value conflicts and the potential for massive political violence among individuals, groups, and countries, enhanced political knowledge might reduce our misunderstandings and misconceptions. It can also be the grounds for greater tolerance and wiser value judgments about normative political issues. Enhancing *what* we know about politics and what we *value* should make us more effective in knowing *how* to behave politically—as voters, political activists, and political decision makers. The study of the political world is of crucial importance to the creation of humane social life. Ultimately it is up to you, as you read this book, to decide what can be known about politics and whether you think political science is feasible.

## The Debate in 1

### Is Political Science Possible?

#### Science and Politics Do Not Go Together Well

- The analysis of politics cannot be objective and unbiased in the way assumed by the scientific method. The issues chosen for study and the manner in which variables are defined, measured, and analyzed are all powerfully influenced by the analyst’s social reality (e.g., by the analyst’s own culture, ideas, and life experiences). In this view, no person—whether Sunni Muslim or agnostic, rural Nigerian or cosmopolitan Parisian, international lawyer or migrant farm worker—can be totally objective and unbiased in the way he tries to analyze political phenomena.
- The subject matter of politics defies generalization. The political world is far too complex and unpredictable for systematic generalizations. Politics is based on the actions and interactions of many individuals, groups, and even countries. Politics occurs in the midst of many changing conditions that can influence those actions. The range of variation in what people might do and in the conditions that might exist is so vast that clear “if A, then B” statements about politics are impossible.
- Political science is not a “real” science, in comparison to natural and applied sciences (e.g., chemistry, physics, engineering). The four key elements described by Kuhn (as listed above) are well developed and widely shared within

the research communities of every natural and applied science. In contrast, researchers in political science (and other social sciences) have not agreed on a coherent set of concepts, theories, and rules of interpretation. As you will discover throughout this book, many different methods are used in political science. There is disagreement regarding the important issues that ought to be solved, little consensus on what theories or generalizations have been proven, and even great difficulty in operationalizing key concepts such as power or democracy.

- The “scientific” study of politics cannot adequately address the most crucial questions about politics, which are normative. Since the time of Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.), classical political theorists have insisted that the ultimate aim of political analysis is to discover “the highest good attainable by action.” In this view, political analysis is a noble endeavor because it helps determine what government and individuals *should* do so that valued goals (e.g., democratic politics, a good life, a just society) can be achieved. Max Weber (1864–1920), the influential German social scientist, approvingly quoted Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy’s assertion that science can provide no answer to the essential question, “What shall we do, and how shall we arrange our lives?” (1958a: 152–153).



### Political Science Is Possible and Worthwhile

- Every person, including those who study politics, has biases. But the scientific method encourages individuals to be very aware of their biases and to counteract those biases by making their assumptions as transparent as possible. The method of science requires the analyst to be extremely clear in describing his assumptions, in characterizing how evidence is gathered, in displaying the techniques used to analyze the data, and in exploring threats to the validity of the knowledge claims that are made. This transparency limits bias and exposes the analyst's thinking to scrutiny. (As authors, we have attempted to be aware of our own biases—as Americans, men, baby boomers, etc.—that influence every aspect of this book. As you read, try to become more conscious of *your* biases, which will affect your assessments of claims about the political world.)
- While the political world is complex, few events are truly random—there are patterns and linkages among political phenomena. The challenge for the political scientist is to specify these patterns. Rather than assuming that all is chaos and nothing is related, the political scientist assumes that, by employing systematic techniques of gathering and analyzing empirical data, it is possible to present knowledge claims that help clarify that complex reality. Tendency statements—“if A, then a tendency to B”—might seem imperfect, but they can significantly increase our confidence regarding what we know to be true or untrue about politics.
- Although some sciences come closer to Kuhn's ideal than others, no science is pure. Scholars who study the way in which a scientific community operates conclude that every scientific discipline can be characterized by disagreements over concepts, methods, and theories and that the theories of every science include subjective elements. It is certainly true that political science is less scientifically pure than astronomy or chemistry, but this does not negate the value of applying the scientific method to make our thinking more precise and our knowledge claims more transparent, testable, and reliable.
- Even those who use the scientific method to study politics do not assume it can provide a compelling answer to every important normative question. However, if it does provide more reliable knowledge, it enhances our capacity to reason about the questions of what should be done. Whether at the individual level or at the national government level, decisions about what actions should be taken in the political world will be improved if they are informed by empirical evidence and sound knowledge claims that are based on the scientific method.

### More questions...

1. Can you identify any of your own biases about political issues? What might be the main sources of those biases?
2. Can you think of examples where you have gained useful political knowledge from nonscientific sources such as literature, music, personal experience, or general authorities?

## The Subfields of Political Science

Political science is composed of certain subfields that are usually defined by their specific subject matter rather than by their mode of analysis. While there are different ways to categorize the subfields, four are prominent:

1. **Comparative politics.** This subfield *focuses on similarities and differences in political processes and structures*. As noted above, much of empirical political science is comparative. Thus, comparative politics covers a huge domain within political analysis, and it has many sub-subfields (e.g., public administration, political parties,

development, individual political behavior, and public policy). Comparison might be crossnational (e.g., comparing the legal systems of Iran and Italy or comparing the voting patterns in 40 countries), or it might compare actors within a single country (e.g., comparing the political beliefs about democracy among different religious groups in Nigeria).

2. **American politics.** To the rest of the world, the study of American politics is merely a subfield of comparative politics. While this is quite sensible (and appropriate), American politics is treated as a separate subfield in the United States. In terms of issues and approaches, American politics covers the same types of topics as comparative politics.
3. **International relations.** The *focus is on the political relations among countries, the behavior of transnational actors, and the dynamics within the worldwide system of states and groups.* Subjects within international relations include war, interstate conflict resolution, international law, globalization, neocolonialism, regional alliances (e.g., the European Union), international organizations (e.g., the United Nations), and transborder political organizations (e.g., Amnesty International). The study of foreign policy is also within this subfield.
4. **Political theory.** More precisely called political philosophy, this subfield *focuses on the ideas and debates dealing with important political questions.* Some of this work attempts to characterize and interpret the writings of major political theorists (e.g., Plato, Thomas Hobbes, Karl Marx, John Rawls), whereas other work is original explorations of the political questions themselves (e.g., What is the nature of a just society? What is the appropriate relationship between the citizen and the government?). Political *theory is the source of many of the normative knowledge claims made by political scientists.* Much of the work in political theory is based on the methods of rationality or authority or on an appeal to moral truths rather than on the scientific method.

**BOUNDARY-SPANNING HYBRIDS** Political science is an eclectic field that often links with other fields of inquiry or at least borrows and adapts ideas from other disciplines. Some work actually spans the boundary between political science and another discipline. While the subject matter of this work fits within one of the preceding four major subfields, these hybrids include political anthropology, political economy, political psychology, political sociology, and biopolitics.

## Where Is This Book Going?

Just as there are different approaches to political science, there are different ways to introduce you to the political world. This book is organized to lead you along one route to understanding. It uses a comparative approach; it builds from the politics of the individual to the politics of countries and the international system and concludes with chapters that bring all the topics together for each of three large groups of countries. Fundamentally, the book aims to help you create an increasingly

sophisticated analytic framework for the study and analysis of the political world that surrounds you.

The book is organized in five parts, each with its own chapters. You have nearly completed Part One, which offers an initial discussion of the nature of political knowledge and the approach political scientists take to understanding, analyzing, and evaluating that knowledge. Each chapter includes a Debate on a political topic, a Compare analyzing two or more political actors, and a Focus on a chapter-relevant topic for a single country. Since this chapter has focused on political knowledge, the Focus in 1 shows you how the scientific method has been applied to explore whether political knowledge varies across age groups within the United States.

The remaining four parts of the book build from studying the individual in the political world to analyzing countries in the global system. “Man is the measure of all things,” observed ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras (ca. 490–421 B.C.E.). In that spirit, Part Two begins its exploration of the political world at the most personal and individual level. It initially examines what individual men and women think about politics and how they act politically. After Part Two, the book moves on to the politics of large collectivities of people that we call states and that are organized politically as governments. Thus, Parts Three, Four, and Five offer perspectives and explanations from political science regarding how states and governments are organized for political action, how political processes occur, and how countries are attempting to fulfill their political goals in the challenging conditions of the global system.

Part Two, “Political Behavior,” begins in Chapter 2 with an assessment of the kinds of *political beliefs* that people hold and a description of normative political theories. It continues in Chapter 3 with a consideration of the *political actions* that people and groups undertake. Chapter 4 moves from description to explanation: Can we explain *why* people think and act politically in certain ways?

Part Three, “Political Systems,” is about the politics of large numbers of people—how the political world is organized and the *structures of government*. Chapters 5 through 8 address questions such as: What is a state? How are the political system and the economic system linked? What features distinguish democracies from dictatorships? What are the responsibilities of political structures such as the judiciary or the legislature?

Part Four, “Political Processes,” emphasizes the *key dynamics of politics*. Chapter 9 characterizes the public policy process and details three major explanations for how political power is distributed and how policy decisions are made. Chapter 10 explores the processes of political change and development. The vital issues of politics across borders and the manner in which states and other transnational actors cooperate and compete are central to Chapter 11. The various forms and causes of political violence are analyzed in Chapter 12.

Part Five, “Politics among States,” focuses on the actions and challenges facing *countries in the contemporary political world*. Chapters 13 through 15 consider countries at different levels of development as they pursue the general goals of prosperity, security, and stability in the complicated global system. Finally, the Appendix explains

some major concepts in political science, including four important frameworks for engaging in political analysis: taxonomic, formal, functional, and relational.

Our hope is that, by the time you complete reading and studying this text, you will think more like a political scientist in the sense that *you will have more confidence in your knowledge about politics and you will have developed a more informed and systematic approach to understanding the political world.*

## Focus in 1

### The Political Knowledge of Different Age Groups in the United States

You might have heard the claim that younger adults are less knowledgeable about politics than older adults. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press uses sophisticated social science methods to regularly assess what the people know about a host of issues. To illustrate how the scientific method is used to explore a political question, this Focus very briefly describes the steps the researchers utilize as well as a few of their results and conclusions.

1. *Examine existing evidence* that is relevant. Initially, you should look at existing research by political scientists or other social scientists that offers evidence and conclusions on the topic. Pew used the available research on age and political knowledge as the foundation for designing and conducting the study.
2. With this background, *state the issue* in a precise manner. This particular issue can be stated in the form of a *hypothesis* (i.e., a proposition about a political fact): Younger people have less political knowledge than older people.
3. *Operationalize key concepts* by specifying exactly what each concept means and how it will be measured. In this study, operationalizing the concept of political knowledge begins with the recognition that it could cover many things. Political knowledge could be defined in terms of descriptive, explanatory, and/or prescriptive information about various aspects of politics such as policies, institutions, events, or people. It could also include how-to knowledge, such as how to vote or how to circulate a petition. For simplicity, the Pew analysis focuses on a few descriptive political facts.

Specifically, Pew examines people's knowledge of the names of key political leaders and the central facts in current political issues. While cross-national comparisons are interesting, this analysis looks only at people in the United States and only at a single point in time (2010). Another key concept in this research is age. Pew uses a simple taxonomy of four age groups among adults, as listed in Table 1.2. (If you don't know what a taxonomy is, consult the discussion of this concept in the Appendix.)

In any scientific research, you should consider whether there might be problems with the validity of the data. In this case, for example: Was the set of individuals selected for study a reasonable one? Were the questions well-constructed, minimally biased, properly asked, and accurately recorded? Was sufficient data gathered to explore the core question?

4. *Gather appropriate data.* You need a strategy for collecting evidence that is valid (i.e., it measures what it is supposed to measure) and reliable (i.e., it is accurate). You also decide what specific cases you are going to examine. In the empirical work by Pew, the data were collected from a U.S. national sample of 1001 adults, selected randomly and interviewed by means of a telephone survey using numbers from both cell phones and landlines. Respondents were asked eleven multiple choice questions about their political knowledge and about certain personal characteristics (including age). You can take Pew's most recent News IQ Quiz at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/politicalquiz/>

5. *Analyze the evidence.* The data in Table 1.2 simply report the percentage in each age group who correctly answered the question. A more thorough analysis might use computer-based statistical techniques to assess the explanatory power of multiple variables, rather than just age, or it might combine multiple responses into an index score of knowledge.
6. *Decide what, if any, inferences and conclusions can be made* about the issue on the basis of your evidence. This is where your analytic skills become especially important. The Appendix in this book discusses some of statistical techniques that can be utilized to help you judge whether the age-group differences in the data are greater than might be expected by chance. Without engaging in these statistical tests, what do you think from assessing Table 1.2? Do these data indicate differences in political knowledge across the age groups? The data do seem to suggest that the youngest group knows less about most of the questions asked. However, notice the results for the last question. Are there issues on which younger people may be just as aware or even more informed than older people?

Is this evidence sufficient to conclude whether younger adults are less politically knowledgeable? Can you have confidence in a generalization about

age and political knowledge in the United States based on only these questions in a single study at one point in time? Defensible conclusions often require extensive data, thorough analysis, and consideration of several alternative explanations. Sometimes the phenomena are so complicated or the evidence is so mixed that no generalization is possible. Any conclusion based only on Table 1.2 would be very tentative.

Other research on this topic contains more extensive data analyses. For example, a book-length study by Cliff Zukin and his colleagues (2006) analyzed a large database with sophisticated techniques. They concluded that there is a positive relationship between higher age and greater political knowledge in the United States. Their study, like most good research, attempts to address the deeper questions and the ultimate goal of the scientific method, explanation and broader generalization (theory). Does increased age cause increased political knowledge? If so, why and how does this occur? In trying to explain the relationship between age and political knowledge, has some other important variable been overlooked?

To deal with this possibility, Zukin's group identify and analyze factors other than age that might affect political knowledge. Among other explanatory factors that seem relevant are the individual's: income level; education level; gender; political

**Table 1.2** Political Knowledge among Adults in the United States, by Age

Age Group	18–29	30–49	50–64	65+	Old-Young Difference
New House Speaker? (Boehner)	14%	39%	48%	51%	+37%
Republicans have majority in? (House)	27	45	55	57	+30
India-Pakistan relations? (Unfriendly)	27	42	46	46	+19
Current unemployment rate? (10%)	43	52	57	60	+17
Int'l trade: U.S. buys/sells more? (Buys)	54	63	74	68	+14
Prime Minister of Great Britain is? (Cameron)	10	14	16	19	+9
U.S. gov't spends most on...? (Defense)	45	41	35	33	-12

Each column contains the percentage providing the correct answer in the age group identified at the top. These are abbreviated versions of the multiple choice questions asked, with the correct answers in parentheses after the question.

**SOURCE:** Pew Research Center (2010). <http://www.pewresearch.org/2010/11/18/public-knows-basic-facts-about-politics-economics-but-struggles-with-specifics/>

party affiliation; the political issues that matter most to each age group; and the political climate at the time of the study. Do you understand why these types of factors might provide a better explanation than age does for the cause of variations in political knowledge? Zukin's group did conclude that age mattered, even when considering other variables.

Political phenomena are rarely straightforward and they can change—sometimes quite rapidly. These are among the reasons that the study of politics is so fascinating (and perhaps frustrating). For the political analyst, this means that generalizations must be made with care. If you wanted to establish a broad generalization about age and political knowledge, you would want data on more measures of political knowledge, from several time periods, and probably not just from the United States. In the spirit of the scientific method, every aspect of the analysis is open to criticism by other analysts. And the

conclusions stand only as long as other analysts are unable to challenge successfully any aspect of stages 1–6 in this process. In exploring political questions, further analyses are always appropriate to strengthen our knowledge claims.

## Further Focus

1. What political knowledge would you measure if you did a comparative analysis across different age groups? Why? (Always assume there is an implicit “why” question when these questions are raised in the book.)
2. What do you think is the most compelling explanation for the apparent differences in political knowledge across age groups in the United States? Would this differ in another country? What countries come to mind?

## Key Concepts

authority (as a knowledge source), p. 9  
concept, p. 15  
description, p. 5  
explanation, p. 6

normative political knowledge, p. 6  
political analysis, p. 14  
political science, p. 14  
politics, p. 3

prescription, p. 6  
scientific method, p. 14  
theories, p. 15  
theory, p. 18

## For Further Consideration

1. What do you think is the most serious obstacle to a “science” of politics?
2. Which authority have you relied on most extensively as a source of your knowledge about politics? What is the biggest shortcoming of this source?
3. What is the most important question that political science should attempt to answer? What might prevent political scientists from answering this question adequately?
4. Many people insist that most of their political knowledge is based on their own rational thought processes. What might be wrong with this claim?
5. Do you think political scientists can play an important role in government, or are they just intellectuals who should only stand on the sidelines and analyze politics?

## For Further Reading

- Almond, Gabriel. (1989).** *A Discipline Divided: Schools and Sects in Political Science*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. One of the major scholars of comparative politics assesses the diversity of approaches to political science and the possibility of a science of politics.
- Brians, Craig, Lars Willnat, Richard Rich, and Jarol B. Manheim. (2011).** *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science*. 8th ed. New York: Pearson. A very effective and understandable presentation of the primary methods that political scientists utilize in the attempt to understand politics and develop defensible generalizations, focusing on a full range of qualitative and quantitative approaches.
- Goodin, Robert E., ed. (2011).** *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*. New York: Oxford University Press. Almost seventy top political scientists contribute articles summarizing the key issues, findings, and emerging developments in all the subfields of political science, selected from the ten Oxford Handbooks focusing on each subfield of political science.
- Katznelson, Ira, and Helen Miller, eds. (2004).** *Political Science: State of the Discipline. Centennial ed.* New York: W. W. Norton. In only(!) 993 pages, a diverse group of political scientists offers essays (sponsored by the American Political Science Association) on the current insights and debates on central issues related to core concepts in the discipline such as the state, democracy, political institutions, participation, and modes of political analysis.
- King, Gary, Kay L. Schlozman, and Norman Nie, eds. (2009).** *The Future of Political Science: 100 Perspectives*. London: Routledge. One hundred mini-essays (in 304 pages), many by distinguished political scientists, which explore a broad array of interesting questions about politics and political science.
- Kuhn, Thomas. (1996).** *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. A short, understandable, and enormously influential discussion of how sciences develop and overturn paradigms; first published in 1962.
- Kurian, George, James E. Alt, Simone Chambers, Geoffrey Garrett, Margaret Levi, and Paula D. McClain, eds. (2011).** *The Encyclopedia of Political Science*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. This five-volume reference resource provides helpful essays on more than 1,200 concepts that are significant in the study of politics as well as hundreds of valuable overview essays.
- Monroe, Kristen Renwick, ed. (2005).** *Perestroika: The Raucous Rebellion in Political Science*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. These essays reflect on a strong reform movement that emerged among some political scientists who demanded a broader and more methodologically diverse discipline, a democratization of the profession's governance and journals, and a broadening of graduate student education.
- Pollack, Philip H. (2011).** *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. Using many interesting examples, the book explains how to use empirical data and quantitative analysis (especially the Statistical Package for Social Sciences—SPSS) in the study of political phenomena.
- Popper, Karl R. (2002).** *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. London: Hutchinson. A major and widely respected statement of the philosophy and application of the scientific method; first published in 1959.

## On the Web

**<http://www.apsanet.org>**

This Web site for the American Political Science Association, the major organization for political scientists in the United States, provides links to a variety of activities and opportunities associated with political science professionals, including online papers from the national conference and articles from *PS: Political Science and Politics*.

**<http://www.psqonline.org>**

*Political Science Quarterly* is the United States' oldest, continuously published political science journal and brings you the world of politics.

**<http://www.etown.edu/vl>**

The rich and extensive set of links on this Web site, "WWW Virtual Library: International Affairs Resources," includes numerous sites

for each region as well as links to many key international topics as varied as international organizations, environmental issues, world religions, media resources, health, and human rights.

**<http://www.realclearpolitics.com>**

This Web site is a daily compendium of many of the most interesting stories about politics available on the Internet, including blogs, with a primary focus on U.S. politics.

**<http://www.politicsresources.net>**

Richard Kimber's Political Science Resources page includes an extensive listing of sites on topics such as political theory, political thought, constitutions, elections, political parties, international relations, and British politics.