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A review of 1982 American Government Texts, Readers and Supplements

American "government texts" joined those 36 published in 1980 and 1981.¹ Two of those — Krasner and Wasserman (all texts are identified by the name of the first author and are listed in the Appendix) — are short "basics" or "nuts and bolts" texts, each priced at \$9.95. Six — Coleman,² Eisinger, Saeger, Saye, Sherrill, and Woll — are intermediate size paperback books with more detail than the basics texts and priced \$9.95 to \$13.95. And the remaining seven — Dunn, Edwards, Getz, Hamilton, Morgan, Patterson, and Starling — are cloth bound, range in length from 544 to 641 text pages, and cost \$16.95 to \$20.95.

Table 1 shows the topics given chapter-length treatment in each text. (Three books — Sherrill, Starling, and Woll — were not available for review by deadline for this article, so tables of contents and similar material supplied by the publishers were used). All texts have one or more chapters on such standard topics as the Constitution, parties, voting, interest groups, and so on, so these are not shown in the table. Because coverage of public policy issues varies greatly and many faculty are also interested in the relative emphasis given to each of the institutions and to federalism (a currently hot topic), each of these is shown in the Table. Of course, a text may devote significant parts of chapters to topics without giving them chapter-length treatment. For example, Coleman gives attention to mass transit, pollution, energy, and housing (including redlining), among others. Eisinger includes a case study of economic policy. And Patterson, which devoted the most pages (about 90) to examination of the stages of the policy process, contains case studies of water policy, energy, housing, and Medicare, and discussion of the effects of federalism, among other topics.³

Text content is extremely difficult to summarize. Some text authors use a theme or explicit framework to organize the text. Coleman and Woll both emphasize a constitutional structure. The sub-title of Saeger's text, *A Neo-conservative Approach*, indicates that

(As might be expected, that book devotes more pages to discussion of political ideology than does any other 1982 text examined). And Dunn is the only available text in a "debate" format. But most texts do not have such a sharply defined approach. To check content in somewhat more detail than suggested just by chapter topic listings, the twelve texts available by late March 1982 were examined in relation to their treatment of five topics involving participation (voter turnout/non-voting), institutions (presidential approval or popularity by the public and presidential success with Congress), and public policy (the budget process and also inflation, specifically the consumer price index, CPI). Each of these is relatively important, discrete, and amenable to tabular or similar presentation. Table 2 shows the space and tabular-graphical material given by each text to each topic. In addition to the characteristics mentioned above, all these topics involve measures that have limitations or may be misused, though very few text authors point out these limitations, either in text or in notes. Exceptions are discussions by Edwards of limits of voter turnout rate data and the importance of budget assumptions (Edwards's discussion of the budget process is the most detailed of any of the texts examined) and by Patterson of voter turnout data and CPE limitations.

The four-year presidential election cycle complicates the writing and publishing of American government textbooks. A text published in 1980 would be very up-to-date at the time of the election but would appear quickly dated, so publishers of most of the major texts with 1980 copyright published an election supplement early in 1982, initially distributed separately then bound in later printings of the text. American government texts published in 1981 must have coverage of the 1980 elections, but publishing schedules permitted most of them to do so only in an appendix. Texts published in 1982 allow full discussion of the 1980 elections but relatively little of substance about the first year of a

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Political Science at a Teaching College

The author has asked
to remain anonymous

*teach and you teach and you teach with no time for research and no time for contemplation, no time for participation in outside affairs. Just teach and teach and teach until your mind grows dull and your creativity vanishes and you become an automaton saying the same dull things over and over to endless waves of innocent students...The reason you teach and you teach and you teach is that this is a very clever way of running a college on the cheap while giving a false appearance of genuine education.*¹

If you work at Harvard, Princeton, Northwestern, Michigan, Stanford or any other of the nation's academically excellent institutions this article doesn't apply to you. Despite all the grumbling you may do about your working life (and what faculty member doesn't grumble about that on occasion?) you still have time to research, to read, to take regular, stimulating sabbaticals, and to turn out articles. But if like many of us you teach in one of the so-called "teaching institutions" you know that you have real problems. Your classes are large, your preparations many, and you can never really keep up.

All colleges are teaching institutions of course. The ones which call themselves teaching institutions however typically do not value faculty research nor its products. Teaching institutions are usually, but not always, small, private colleges with few if any graduate programs. Professors have no graduate students to help run discussion groups, correct papers, or do library research. So they cannot turn out very much in the way of scholarly research because there is no time for such research. If they are lucky they can get to the regional professional meetings, and once in a while to the national meetings.

Hard science professors usually survive more easily in teaching institutions. Although their disciplines change fairly rapidly, biology, physics, and chemistry professors typically have fewer course preparations

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