## Note to Reader

This book is written for you – students early in college – to provide a guide to the founding documents and structures of governance that form the United States political system. This book is called American Government and Politics *in Principle and Practice* because you will notice that what has been inscribed in law has not always been applied in practice-particularly for indigenous peoples, enslaved peoples, people of color, women, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, those formerly incarcerated, immigrants and the working class within U.S. society.

In designing this book, we have two goals. First, we want you to know what the founding documents say and how our political institutions were formed. Second, and as important, we season the book with questions for you to investigate and learn concerning who has been excluded and who has benefited from the political structures of the United States. We will examine the contradictions and tensions that erupt, and how social movements have transformed our political landscape. We offer a range of questions/assignments that will allow you to help us keep this book up to date.

You will read, across time, tensions between the federal and state governments, between individual and collective rights, between those with power and those without, and you will notice when and for whom rights have been protected by our government and when and for whom rights have been trampled. We will explore the historical context that informs significant political movements and structures of the present. This is history riddled with racism, xenophobia, sexism and imperialism, and also a vibrant history of struggle where groups of people imagine, fight for, and often achieve a more equitable society.