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While grinding through yet another week of inhuman amounts of reading as a graduate student at Indiana University in the spring of 2003, I stumbled across what has come to be one of my favorite quotations. Political scientist James A. Stimson wrote on page 1 of *Public Opinion in America: Moods, Cycles, and Swings* (1999) that “people think about politics. Not often. Not systematically. But they do. Ordinary people do.” Given what I believe to be the profundity in that simple opening, I have always felt that it is the job of the scholar–teacher to give students a fighting chance to do a good job during those occasional, unsystematic times that they do think about who gets what, when, and how. Thus, it has been my distinct pleasure to revise this instructor’s manual for the second edition of Bill Bianco and David Canon’s *American Politics Today*. Bianco and Canon’s book is still terrific. Experience has now shown me that the book is a major asset when it comes to getting students thinking about how politics works, as well as the many ways in which it influences their lives, the lives of those around them, and the lives of those the students will not meet. While many 2nd editions of textbooks merely update tables and figures to the most recent year, Bianco and Canon have made many subtle, excellent improvements to the text while remaining true to the spirit that animated their desire to write *American Politics Today* in the first place. I hope that this instructor’s manual can be a useful tool for you as you introduce your students to the American political system and their place therein.

**HOW TO USE THIS BOOK**

My job, as I see it, is twofold. First, the “Lecture Outlines” provide basic outlines for lectures corresponding to the chapters in Bianco and Canon’s text.
They lay out a structured journey through the highlights of each chapter, introducing key concepts and providing relevant examples when necessary. My second job is a much more important one. I am confident that anyone teaching a course in American politics can read Bianco and Canon’s chapters and discern for themselves which points are most crucial—which points need the most explanation in a classroom setting. Thus, I have spent most of my time in this instructor’s manual giving students a reason to come to class—providing information that isn’t in the book, but still relates to the topic at hand.

To that end, each chapter contains four sections that follow the lecture outline. The first section, “Stories, Examples, and Asides”, provides four opportunities to step outside of Bianco and Canon’s fine work and offers examples that you can present systematically throughout the semester or just when the mood strikes you. “It’s all about the Scope of Conflict” contains either a real-life or scholarly (or, more commonly, both) examples of E. E. Schattschneider’s (1960) claim that, “he who determines what politics is about runs the country, because the definition of the alternatives is the choice of conflict, and the choice of conflicts allocates power.” This definition of politics is different from the one offered by Bianco and Canon, and thus offers an opportunity to bring information of “added value” into your classroom presentations for each chapter.

“There’s No Simple Solution” illustrates how political choices are not easy. Even though, as Bianco and Canon argue, “politics makes sense,” politics is not always easy. Thus, this section is designed to force students to confront the idea that their preferred solution to a political problem may not be perfect; indeed, it may be fraught with unintended consequences, smart, strong opposition, or a lack of political will that can stymie the political system.

The third section “And This Matters Because ….?“ was developed in response to regular student queries asking how the material we deal with in class affects their own lives. Most of the examples in this section are aimed at relating (as best I can!) to today’s eighteen- to twenty-two year-olds.

“But That Isn’t in the Book” is a section devoted to sharing research findings of particular interest that did not make it into the chapter itself. These make for particularly enticing test questions since they reward only those who came to class and paid attention while calling to attention those who think that all they need to succeed in school is to read the book the night before the test.
Some of the above sections were completely rewritten for the new edition while others were updated to reflect major events like the 2008 election, the BP oil spill, the passing of health care reform, and so forth.

The next major section of the instructor’s manual describes different kinds of “Class Activities” you may use to spice up a lecture, illustrate a point, or generate discussion. The activities are based on the three central tenets of Bianco and Canon’s book: politics is conflictual, political process matters, and politics is everywhere. Some of the activities require Internet access, some are games to be played in class, some require small group work, some need to be planned in advance, and all have the potential to lead to useful classroom discussion.

The fourth major section provides suggestions to spur discussion. Since I have sometimes found that the first question is followed by metaphorical tumbleweed rolling through the classroom, I have developed a “stunned silence suggestion” for each question. That is, I offer a second way of asking the question. Usually, it is one that increases how relevant the issue is to the typical student and is to be used in the event that the actual discussion question does not generate discussion.

The final major section, “Further Reading, Viewing, and Surfing,” provides avenues of exploration for the interested instructor/student to further investigate a particular topic area. The reading suggestions lean heavily to the academic side, though I do attempt to throw in books that appeal to a broader audience when appropriate. The viewing options make for good classroom movie days or solid extra credit opportunities. The surfing options list and describe relevant Web sites that you may want to examine before your lecture or suggest that your students log onto if they want to learn more.

**SOME FINAL ADVICE**

I have had the most success in teaching Introduction to American Politics courses (large or small) when I have used a fair amount of technology in the classroom, from PowerPoint-style slides to guide lectures such as those at www.norton.com/nrl, downloaded news clips (many helpful examples can be found on the Norton American Politics DVD), and scholarly tables and figures (see the Further Reading, Viewing, and Surfing section). Students seem to respond best in my classes when a clip, graph, or table can be put up on a large screen after a substantive point about the American political system is made by
the venerable instructor. One thing that is great about American politics in the modern era is that you can almost always find a clip from CNN.com or a similar Web site that airs a contemporary news story about any given day’s lecture topic. I also highly recommend pilfering political science oriented blogs like The Monkey Cage and Brendan Nyhan.

While people do think about politics, as Stimson noted that they do, many students think that they know too little about politics to ever speak up in class (whether it be to answer a question or even to ask one). The Discussion Questions suggested here (especially the “stunned silence” follow-ups) are tried-and-true ways to encourage these particular students to speak up for first time in class.

As is evident in the pages that follow, I am a fan of Schattschneider’s claim about the scope of conflict and refer to it often in lectures. As such, the “Stories, Examples, and Asides” section in each chapter can become a part of class that students rely on to further explain a point from the book, move beyond the book, or make politics relevant. It is my hope that your have as much fun teaching your course as I had putting together this manual.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for the advice, assistance, and support of Carly Fraser, Aaron Javsicas and Lorraine Klimowich at Norton. Their persistence in asking me to write the manual and their patience in waiting for me as I updated it are most appreciated. I also gratefully thank my family, especially my fantastic partner Rachelle and our glorious daughter, Eleanor June.
PART I

FOUNDATIONS
CHAPTER 1

Understanding American Politics

LECTURE OUTLINE

Most students—heck, most people—do not care very much about politics. Even fewer wake up each morning and say aloud, “how will I hold the government accountable today?” While few people of any age ask these questions regularly, political interest, awareness, and participation among students is lower than other portions of the American electorate. While the 2008 presidential campaign sparked youth involvement in presidential politics, the likelihood that this participatory spike will last beyond November 2008 is dismal at best. Some reasons that young people offer for not getting involved include: politics doesn’t matter, politics is too complicated, politicians are only out for themselves, the political process is too boring, and the political process is too conflict-laden.

Indeed, many people tune out of the political world because they do not have an appropriate appreciation for how the system works, why it works the way that it does, and how regular citizens can influence the political process. It is the purpose of Bianco and Canon’s American Politics Today to demonstrate that American politics makes sense. Indeed, the central theme of the book is that politics is about conflict and compromise. Indeed, politics is everywhere, the process matters, and its many conflicts are often healthy and productive. Chapter 1 gets us started.
I. Introduction
   a. Most people do not like politics
      i. Too complicated
         1. But items like the “bridge to nowhere” are explainable
            a. Small part of the budget
            b. Ensconced in the norm of reciprocity
      ii. Too argumentative
         1. Debate is necessary to resolve conflict
      iii. Politicians only in it for themselves
         1. Earmarks
         2. Pork-barrel spending

II. Why Do We Have a Government?
   a. To provide order
      i. Ensure domestic tranquility
      ii. Provide for the common defense
      iii. Establish justice
      iv. Need to mitigate the power of factions (from Madison)
         1. separation of powers
         2. checks and balances
         3. federalism
         4. a large republic
   b. To provide for the general welfare
      i. To deliver public goods like defense to help solve collective action problems such as the free rider problem

III. What is Politics?
   a. Politics is the process that determines what the government does
      i. See “It’s All About the Scope of Conflict” below for another definition that we will also use throughout this manual
   ii. Politics is everywhere!
      1. It is in our own identities
         a. Joining interest groups, being liberals/conservatives, Republicans/Democrats
      2. We pay taxes
      3. Use and receive government services
      4. Government action affects nearly all of our life (see Discussion question and “Politics is Everywhere” below)
      5. People’s political behavior mirrors their behavior in other parts of their life
iii. The political process matters!
   1. Elections are the primary example of this (See “Political Process Matters” below for an activity illustrating this)
   2. The federal bureaucracy affects us by the way in which they implement, or do not implement, laws passed by Congress and signed by the president.

iv. Politics is Conflictual!
   1. Most of us try to avoid conflict, which contributes to our distaste for politics
   2. Politics requires conflict
      a. Trade-offs

IV. Sources of Conflict in American Politics
   a. Economic Interests
      i. Free market
      ii. Economic individualism
      iii. Redistributive policies
   b. Cultural Values
      i. See “There’s no Simple Solution” below for discussion ideas
      ii. Culture Wars (Show Figure 1.2 to the class from the textbook)
      iii. Identity politics
         1. i.e. Whites tend to vote Republican, Latinos Democrat
         2. Ideology
            a. Conservative and liberal
            b. Ideology correlates with party identification such as Republican and Democrat
            c. Don’t forget Libertarians!
            d. The number of Republicans in the electorate has slowly been on the rise for about 40 years, though that trend has leveled off and even slightly reversed itself in the past few years (starting in 2006).

STORIES, EXAMPLES, AND ASIDES...
It’s all about the Scope of Conflict!

Bianco and Canon helpfully define politics as “the process that determines what the government does”. Given the textbook’s goal of showing students how American politics makes sense, their definition of politics is a reasonable one. Another important definition of politics comes from famed political scientist E.E. Schattschneider, who wrote in 1960 that “he who determines
what politics is about runs the country, because the definition of the alternatives is the choice of conflicts, and the choice of conflicts allocates power” (p. 66). For example, public opinion survey questions that ask if people support a women’s right to choose to have an abortion, a substantial majority of the public agrees. If the scope of conflict is redefined in a question that asks if people support a fetuses’ right to life, a small majority of the public agrees once again. Of course, it is impossible for majorities of the public to both support and oppose abortion rights. So, what was the crucial factor in determining public support of abortion? The scope of conflict.

As a central feature of American politics is the presence of democratic debate in the marketplace of ideas, Schattschneider’s definition of politics is a useful tool for explaining how we end up with the political outcomes that we do. In each chapter of this instructor’s manual, Schattschneider’s definition of politics will be applied to a political issue that relates to the chapter.

One way to explain the ubiquitous nature of both politics and the scope of conflict is to offer students the following example. Assume for the moment you and a group of friends are preparing to decide where to go for dinner. If you want pizza, one way to, in Schattschneider’s terms, allocate power to yourself is to try to control the scope of conflict. For example, you might suggest several options for dinner, such as Pizza Hut, Godfather’s Pizza, or Papa John’s pizza. You have likely noticed that all of the options are pizza places. Now, no matter which option your friends choose, you get what you want.

**Discussion Question 1:** Do you think that the way an argument is framed is more important in the modern political environment than the substance/veracity of that same argument? Why/why not?

**Discussion Question 2:** Issue positions like “pro-life” and “pro-choice” are entrenched in modern politics. Why do you think it is so hard to change/expand the scope of conflict? What factors might, on occasion, make it easier to expand the scope of conflict?

**There’s no Simple Solution!**

One reason that some political battles are more contentious than others is the nature of the issue that is being debated and how much compromise is available. For example, while policies setting our federal tax rates are controversial, Republicans and Democrats often compromise with each other
regarding how much of our paychecks we end up sending to Uncle Sam. It isn’t hard to see how the two parties can compromise on issues of economic taxing and spending. For example, if Republicans want to cut taxes by 3 percent and the Democrats want to hold taxes steady, a compromise of a 1.5 percent tax cut seems like an appropriate solution to the debate (if we hold constant items like which party controls Congress, the White House, and so forth). These issues are akin to what Bianco and Canon refer to as economic interests.

On the other hand, the very nature of other kinds of political issues makes compromise much more difficult. For example, the American public has been divided on the issue of abortion for decades. A solid majority supports abortion rights, but a large minority adamantly opposes them. Here, compromise is more difficult because, unlike our tax cut example, a person cannot have half of an abortion. Either a pregnancy is terminated or it isn’t. For some, abortion is a moral choice and absolute right; for others, it is a moral abomination. In other words, when it comes to battles over the abortion issue, one side wins while the other side loses. These are issues associated with what Bianco and Canon refer to as cultural values.

In these kinds of situations, we often see compromises made on related issues. While abortion is legal, for example, the federal government and several states have passed laws restricting things such as how far into a pregnancy can someone be and still have an abortion, whether the father has to be informed, if doctors have to tell patients about options other than abortion such as adoption, and if the government will pay for an abortion for the poor or members of the military. Abortion-rights supporters often claim these kinds of restrictions amount to an incremental reversal of the Roe v. Wade decision while anti-abortion activists claim that these issues are nothing in comparison with making abortion illegal. Regardless, there is no doubt that political battles over abortion will continue for the foreseeable future!

**Discussion Question 1:** When it comes to moral questions like whether to have an abortion or what constitutes a marriage, do you think that compromises on related issues (that is partial-birth abortion and civil unions) are a good idea? Why/why not?

**Discussion Question 2:** Besides the nature of the issue, what other factors do you think affect whether political compromise is possible? How can we test your ideas empirically?
And this Matters Because…?

Politics has winners and losers. When one candidate wins an election, the other candidate goes home. Elections have far reaching effects on public policy. Some of the best evidence showing how public opinion and elections ultimately influence public policy comes from James A. Stimson’s book *Public Opinion in America: Mood, Cycles, and Swings*. Stimson uses a large number of public opinion surveys over time to develop a measurement of the nation’s “policy mood”, that is, on average, the degree to which Americans favor liberal policies versus conservative ones on a wide range of issues. While all issues (abortion and crime, for example) do not fit into Stimson’s measuring of the ebbs and flows of policy mood, he does show that the public goes through predictable cycles of favoring more liberal policies or more conservative ones. Simplifying the argument a bit, Stimson shows that as the public begins to favor more conservative policies, more conservative candidates are likely to be elected. These candidates-turned-representatives are then likely to pass more conservative legislation. When they go too far to the right, the public’s policy mood craves more liberal policies, and the cycle begins anew.

**Discussion Question 1:** Does the fact that elected officials seem to respond to policy mood make you think that our leaders are responsive to our opinions, or do you think that our leaders are actually trying to shape our preferences to suit their own needs?

But that isn’t in the Book!

Bianco and Canon’s Chapter 1 sets the stage for our study of American politics by explaining the purpose of government, defining politics, and examining the major sources of political conflict in our country. While it is clear that our government is a republican democracy (see Chapter 2’s discussion of the Founding and the Constitution), the authors do not review some of the major theories of democracy and how they apply to politics and the government. Briefly, three major theories of democracy include elite democracy, pluralist democracy, and participatory democracy.

In an elite democracy, the only role of citizens is to choose their leaders. That is, once Election Day passes, citizens can tune out while the elected representatives take care of business. Those who favor such a system argue that since voters are choosing the “cream of the crop” to represent the country, citizens should trust their leaders to do what is best. Critics of elite democracy argue that it is dangerous to let the government run roughshod over the public.
A pluralist democracy’s central tenet is that group membership is the key to political power as it encourages elected officials to make decisions on the groups’ behalf. Thus, a simultaneous advantage and disadvantage of pluralist democracy requires more activity from its citizens.

Finally, a participatory democracy is one that we might find in some of the smaller parishes of New Hampshire as it is the form of government in which citizens play an active role in controlling all major aspects of their lives. Participatory democracy generally requires citizens to vote on each major issue that may affect them. This requires an enormous amount of effort, time, and knowledge for citizens to possess! Most observers of American politics believe we fit under the pluralist democracy umbrella best.

Discussion Question 1: Which kind of democracy do you think is the least likely to work in the United States? Why?

CLASS ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Politics is Conflictual

People consistently say that one of the things they like the least about politics is that it is conflictual. Of course, people rarely consider how political disagreements would get resolved without conflict. Divide the students into four groups. Give the students the following scenario: I want you to decide whether we have a daily quiz at the beginning of class that focuses on what we did in our last session or at the end of class that focuses on what we did on that same day. Assign two groups to the “quiz at the beginning” condition and two groups to the “quiz at the end condition”. Assign one of each group to engage in conflict resolution with one of the other groups with this wrinkle: only one pair of groups is allowed to discuss their conflict (in any way: vocally, on paper, via text messaging, et cetera). If possible, have the two sets of groups work to resolve their conflict in separate rooms so that the competing groups that are allowed to discuss their conflict are in one room and the competing groups that are forbidden to communicate are in another room.

Of course, the students in the condition that forbids communication will quickly realize that there is no way for them to resolve their conflict while the other group ought to come to some solution whether it involves one side winning and the other side losing or a compromise that varies the day on which the quiz
comes at the beginning or end of class. Some groups may agree to forgo the quizzes entirely! Regardless, the activity quickly demonstrates that conflict is necessary to resolve disputes.

**Activity 2: Political Process Matters**

Chapter 1 recalls a famous quotation from Michigan Democratic congressman John Dingell, who said, “If you let me decide procedure and I let you decide substance, I’ll beat you every time”. This activity puts that to the test. Have the students write down the name of their favorite candy on a sheet of paper. Tally up the scores and silently note which candy wins. Then, tell the students the top three vote getters (in no particular order) and have them vote again—*this time, they must pick one of the three top vote getting sweets*. Often, you’ll find that the initial favorite candy is not the same as the one originally chosen. Even if it is, the number of students voting for it will have greatly increased, still illustrating that the process affects the outcome.

If the candy that wins the second vote is not the same as the candy that won the first, you can ask students to discuss which candy is really the class favorite: the one that defeated all comers, or the one that got the most votes when the voting rules changed?

If the same candy wins, you can ask students to discuss whether the 2nd vote is a more or less appropriate measure of what the class’ favorite candy is: that is, when forced to choose one of three candies, does the result become less meaningful for those students who could not vote for what was truly their favorite candy?

**Activity 3: Politics is Everywhere**

One way to get students thinking about how politics is everywhere is to have them consider the many different ways in which politics affects their everyday lives. Have them think about things they do everyday and then discuss how politics is a part of each of those items. Examples include:

**Driving**

- Point out to students that students must be sixteen to drive a car, a decision determined by the government.
- Federal, state, and local governments are responsible for the maintenance and development of roads.
States are responsible for setting their own speed limits (Which vary widely from state to state!).

Eating
- The Food and Drug Administration is responsible for maintaining the safety of our food supply.
- If the food is organic, there is a special FDA certification process required.
- If you eat at a restaurant, there are local food inspections and overall cleanliness requirements restaurants must pass to stay open.
- At least twenty states require restaurants to provide the nutritional information of their menu items for customers to inspect.

Talking
- The Constitution provides Americans protection to speak freely and to freely associate with others. However, there are limits to free speech, including:
  - slander and libel
  - threatening people
  - noise pollution
  - some pornography
  - (see chapter on civil liberties for more detail on these limitations)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Given that politics is everywhere, the political process matters, and politics is full of conflict, why do you think that most people your age do not get involved—whether it is not showing up to vote, not paying much attention to political news, or not volunteering for campaigns or interest groups?

   A “Stunned Silence” Suggestion:
   In your own life, what are some reasons you decide not to do something that you know you should do, such as clean your room, work out, read before class, and so forth? How might these reasons translate more generally into justifications for not getting involved politically?
2. Thinking about the three major theories of democracy (elite, pluralist, and participatory), which do you think is most likely to make our republican democracy the healthiest?

A “Stunned Silence” Suggestion:
Would you rather have your parents: (1) make all decisions for you without any input from your siblings, friends, and other family members; (2) make decisions after hearing your concerns and any useful information from siblings, family, and friends, or (3) have every single household decision made by a vote of all affected parties? Why?

3. What do you think should be the most important thing on the mind of our elected officials in Washington? How should they go about dealing with whatever you have selected as their chief concern?

A “Stunned Silence” Suggestion:
Most political science research claims that the number one goal of our elected officials is re-election. Do you think this is an appropriate main goal for our representatives to have? What would be better?

4. Chapter 1 opens with a discussion of the famous “bridge to nowhere”, an example of pork barrel spending. Is it ok for all of the nation’s taxpayers to fund programs and projects that are specifically tailored to where you live? Why/why not?

A “Stunned Silence” Suggestion:
Should this university spend a great deal of money on the football program even though a very small percentage of students play the game? What about the chess club?

FURTHER READING, VIEWING, AND SURFING

Reading
The “go to” guide for political information about the 50 states and the 435 congressional districts within them. The book includes fascinating profiles of every governor and member of Congress.

The daughter of former North Dakota Senator Kent Conrad’s fair-minded and useful treatment of contemporary politics.


A new classic by the *Washington Post* reporter and columnist claiming that the often conflictual choices offered by contemporary liberalism and conservatism are false options.


An accessible and engaging scholarly book arguing that Americans detest political conflict and believe politicians try to feather their own nests at our expense. As a result, the authors argue that Americans would prefer a “stealth” democracy where they didn’t have to see lawmakers in action.


Provocative book arguing that a central problem facing democracies is not that people are alienated from politics, it is that they are naïve about it.

**Viewing**

*Fahrenheit 9/11*

A controversial political documentary from filmmaker Michael Moore that excoriates President Bush’s response to September 11th and the “War on Terror”.

*Why We Fight*

A documentary that explores the rise of the military industrial complex; the film argues that war has become a business.

*The Greeks: Crucible of Civilization*

A documentary that examines the many core political principles, including democracy, which developed in ancient Greece.

*The American President*

A fun, politically-oriented take on the life of a modern-day bachelor president, written by Aaron Sorkin and starring Michael Douglas.
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington
The classic Frank Capra tale of an idealistic senator (Jimmy Stewart) who dramatically stands up in the face of Washington corruption ... and this was made in 1939!

Can Mr. Smith Get to Washington Anymore
This engrossing documentary about the 2004 Missouri Democratic primary highlights how money, name recognition, and other traditional means of political power affect political newcomers.

Surfing
www.cnn.com
The official Web site for the Cable News Network, the nation's first major cable news channel. Some conservative critics claim CNN, started by liberal Ted Turner and based in Atlanta, GA, has a liberal bias.

www.foxnews.com
The official Web site for the Fox News Channel, a competitor with CNN. Some liberal critics claim FOX News, started by conservative Rupert Murdoch and based in New York City, has a conservative bias.

www.themonkeycage.org
A highly useful, up-to-date political science blog that uses existing political science research and/or fairly sophisticated "back of the envelope" analyses to comment on contemporary questions in both political science and politics.

www.nytimes.com

www.politico.com
A new Web-only (for the most part) source for national political news.

www.washingtonpost.com
The official Web site of the Washington Post.

www.wsj.com
The official Web site of the Wall Street Journal.

www.youtube.com
A searchable general interest repository of video clips that contains a great deal of current and historical political news, campaign advertisements, presidential press conferences, presidential debates, and political gaffes.
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<td><strong>Test Bank</strong>&lt;br&gt;True/False 1, 2, 3, 4&lt;br&gt;Multiple Choice 1, 6, 3, 4, 5, 2&lt;br&gt;Essay 1</td>
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## Big Question

What are the sources of conflict in American politics?

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### Additional:

**Instructor’s Resource Manual:**
- Concept Map
- Stories, Examples, and Asides...
- Further Reading, Viewing, and Surfing

**StudySpace:**
- What Do Political Scientists Do? Video Exercise
- Chapter Outlines
- Flashcards
### Big Question

What are the sources of conflict in American politics?

- Economic Interests
- Cultural Values
- Identity Politics
- Ideology

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### Chapter 1 Art PowerPoints

### Chapter 1 Lecture PowerPoints

### Test Bank
- True/False 12, 13, 14, 15
- Multiple Choice 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 46, 45, 46, 47, 49, 48, 50
- Essay 9, 10

### Study Space
- Chapter Quiz
- Questions 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
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