

## Preface to the second edition

In the years since the first edition of this book appeared, the United States Supreme Court has become even more important and controversial in American politics than ever. It has decided the outcome of the 2000 presidential election, challenged the President and Congress over the rights of detainees in Guantanamo Bay, declared a constitutional right to same-sex marriage and, by a whisker, preserved President Obama's crowning achievement, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. It has been attacked by both the Left and the Right, despite having a distinctly more conservative orientation than it had in the 1990s. And appointments to the Court reflect a much sharper partisanship, even though there has been no single nomination battle to rival that of Robert Bork or Clarence Thomas.

This second edition has been thoroughly updated, to include the major decisions of the 2014–15 Supreme Court Term, but the structure and themes of the first edition remain. Above all, the Court continues to exhibit the same complex blend of politics and law and continues to play a vital role in American government and policy-making. More than ever, students of politics in the United States need to understand how and why the Court has acquired its role and power and why it is an indispensable feature of government in America. Hopefully this second edition will assist students to achieve that understanding.