American attitudes towards foreign law was initially ambivalent. The same can be said about foreign opinions towards American law. ‘The Court and the world’ looks at the extent the American experience with the operation of the Supreme Court has influenced other countries' and supranational developing political and legal structures and vice versa. No other country has chosen to bestow life tenure on its judges. Another difference is that European courts, for example, tend to observe a norm of unanimity. What is clear, however, is that even though most people know little about the Supreme Court, it occupies a place in the public imagination.

The U.S. Supreme Court: A Very Short Introduction
Linda Greenhouse

The U.S. Supreme Court: A Very Short Introduction tells the Court's story by drawing on its history and its written and unwritten rules to show how it really works. The Supreme Court today, housed in a majestic building on Capitol Hill, bears little resemblance to the ill-defined institution the Constitution's Framers launched. Their expectation was that it would be the weakest of the three branches of government. The Court put the independence the Framers gave it to use, and in many ways has continued to define itself. How do cases get to the Supreme Court? What special role does the chief justice play? How does the Court relate to the other branches?
What does the phrase ‘separation of powers’ mean? Would the phrase ‘dynamic interaction’ be more accurate? ‘The Court and other branches’ examines the relationships between the president, Congress, and the Court. When relations appear peaceful, there is often tension beneath the surface, reflecting distinct institutional limits, perceptions, and responses to events. If relations deteriorate, disequilibrium can turn into a power struggle. Relations between the branches are governed as much by norms and customs as by formal structures. The result is a cycle of action and reaction, passing between the Court and the political branches.

2. The Court at work (1)
Linda Greenhouse

How do cases reach the Court? How do the justices proceed to select and decide them? ‘The Court at work (1)’ looks at how the Court operates, and the sorts of cases that get heard by the Court. There are no typical Supreme Court cases: there is a typical range of cases during a given term. One category consists of cases of constitutional interpretation, usually involving a claim that a federal or state statute or policy violates a provision of the Constitution. The second consists of cases requiring the justices to decide the meaning or application of a federal statute. A third category consists of suits between states.

3. The justices
Linda Greenhouse

How does someone become a Supreme Court justice? Theoretically, anyone who can get nominated by the president and confirmed by a majority vote of the Senate can be a Supreme Court justice. ‘The justices’ examines the membership of the Court in history and now. Initially, the Court’s membership was entirely Protestant, white, and male. That has changed considerably over time. A justice’s place of origin is generally viewed as irrelevant but for many years, presidents have tried to achieve a geographic balance on the Court. The modern court also lacks diversity of professional background. So how can substantial changes in outlook be explained among a group of mature, professionally experienced individuals?

7. The Court and the public
Linda Greenhouse
What is the relationship between the Supreme Court and the public? Justices rely on public trust to put force behind their decisions. ‘The Court and the public’ considers the role of the public in the decisions of the Supreme Court. To what extent are justices influenced by public opinion? A judge's awareness of public opinion is regarded as necessary. Scholars regard the relationship between the Supreme Court and public opinion as elusive. Does the relationship run both ways? While the public may influence the Court, can the Court influence the public? Over time, the Court and the public seem to maintain a certain equilibrium. The public seem to approve of the institutions in general, rather than of particular actions.

5. Connecting to and leading the government

Charles O. Jones

Presidents face numerous challenges as they endeavor to meet expectations of leadership beyond given powers. “Connecting to and leading the government” shows how the presidency manages the many organizations and expenditures of government, a task that has grown in size, complexity, and intensity over time. To whom or what must presidents connect? The many cabinet departments and major agencies are described along with the roles of the inner circle—key advisers and assistants, the vice president, and the first spouse. The federal government is intricately connected to governance in the fifty states and thousands of localities. The challenge for presidents is to take advantage of bureaucratic experience in formulating and promoting their programs.