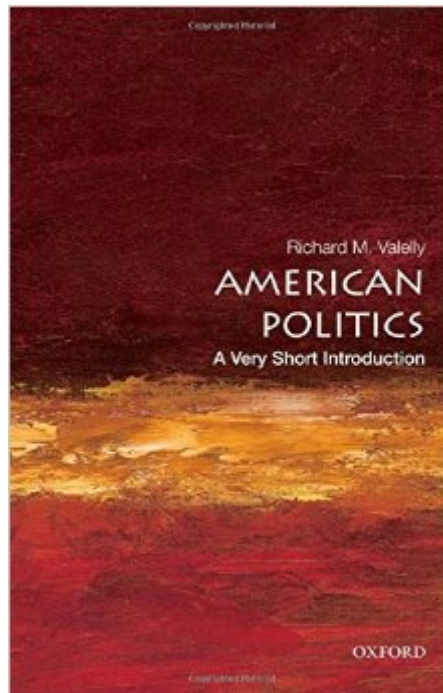


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American Politics: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



Synopsis

American politics seems to grow more contentious and complicated by the day, and whether American democracy works well is hotly debated. Amidst all this roiling partisan argument and confusing claims and counterclaims, there has never been a greater need for an impartial primer on the basics of the American political system. This Very Short Introduction gives readers a concise, accessible, and sophisticated overview of the vital elements of American democracy, emphasizing both how these elements function, their historical origins, and how they have evolved into their present forms. Richard Valelly covers all facets of America's political system: the bicameral Congress and the place of the filibuster, the legislative-executive process, the role of the Supreme Court, political parties and democratic choice, bureaucracy, the partisan revival, and the political economy. He offers as well an original analysis of the evolution of the American presidency and a fascinating chapter on the effects of public polling on political decision-making and voter representation. Valelly shows that the American political system is, and always has been, very much a work in progress--unfolding within, and also constantly updating, an eighteenth-century constitutional framework. In a refreshingly balanced and judicious assessment, he explores the strengths of American democracy while candidly acknowledging both gaps in representation and the increasing income inequality have sparked protest and intense public discussion. Finally, Valelly considers the remarkable persistence, for more than two centuries, of the basic constitutional forms established in 1787, despite the dramatic social changes that have reshaped virtually all aspects of American life. For anyone wishing to understand the nuts and bolts of how our political system works--and sometimes fails to work--this Very Short Introduction is the very best place to start.

About the Series: Oxford's Very Short Introductions series offers concise and original introductions to a wide range of subjects--from Islam to Sociology, Politics to Classics, Literary Theory to History, and Archaeology to the Bible. Not simply a textbook of definitions, each volume in this series provides trenchant and provocative--yet always balanced and complete--discussions of the central issues in a given discipline or field. Every Very Short Introduction gives a readable evolution of the subject in question, demonstrating how the subject has developed and how it has influenced society. Eventually, the series will encompass every major academic discipline, offering all students an accessible and abundant reference library. Whatever the area of study that one deems important or appealing, whatever the topic that fascinates the general reader, the Very Short Introductions series has a handy and affordable guide that will likely prove indispensable.

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Customer Reviews

I was required to read this book for a short session university course. The only reason I can think of for the professor picking it is that he must be a friend of the author. This book is absolutely useless in every sense of the word.-The author's grammar, diction, and phrasing are among the most atrocious I've ever seen in published writing. Had this book been run by me (or any other competent, English-speaking editor) in manuscript form, there would have been more red ink than black by the time I was done.-The ideas and "facts" put forward in this book with regard to the mechanics of how the US government operates are overly simplistic to the degree one would use when talking to an 8 year old. The book is completely lacking in nuance, depth, and terminology. Most of its explanations read like what one would find in an elementary school textbook.-The entire text is riddled with ideological statements, ridiculous generalizations, and laughably unrealistic best-case-scenario situations. Absolutely no attempt is made to dissect why political disagreements take place or the fact that sometimes one side or the other may be in the right about a particular issue. It just makes absurd claims about what a land of compromise America is.Do not buy this book. If you want to learn about American politics, pick up a newspaper and read through a few wikipedia articles, they contain more useful information in each paragraph than this book does per chapter.

Short, precise and informative. It is an introduction but it is easy to read and understand. I love

these short introduction series of books. I had one in the past, and this one did not disappoint.

I learned a great deal from this book, and I consider myself fairly well informed politically. The book takes a bird's eye view of the American political system explaining its origins in the Constitution and its evolution to the present day. Highly recommended for those wanting an outside look at the inside of our government.

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