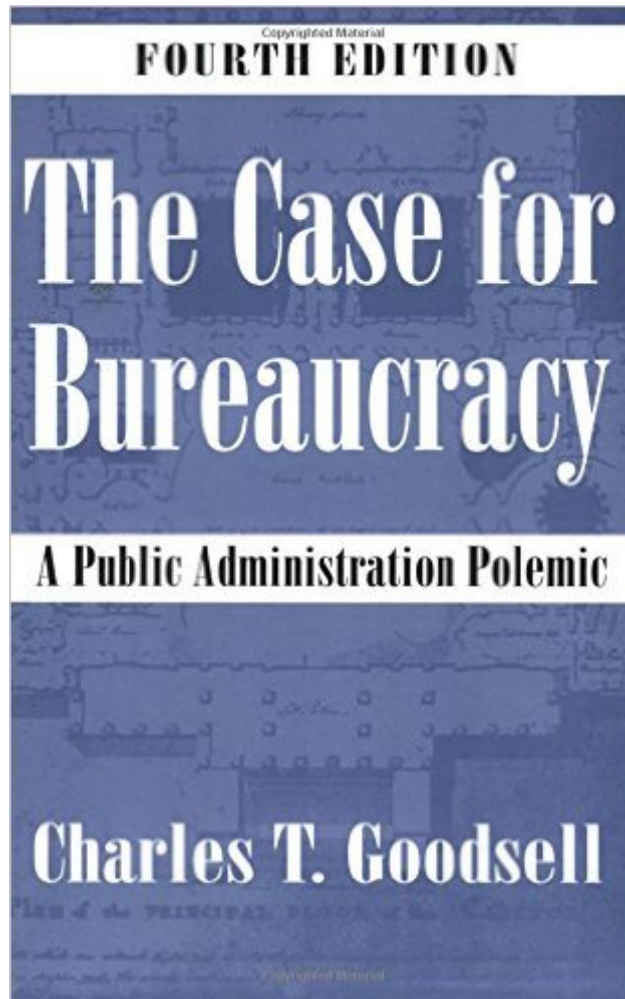


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The Case For Bureaucracy: A Public Administration Polemic



Synopsis

The Case for Bureaucracy persuasively argues that American public servants and administrative institutions are among the best in the world. Contrary to popular stereotypes, they are neither sources of great waste nor a threat to liberty, but social assets of critical value to a functioning democracy. In presenting his case, Goodsell touches on core aspects of public administration while drawing on important, recent events to bring case material and empirical evidence fully up to date. This new edition incorporates the events of 9/11 to explore their impact on future bureaucratic performance, speaking specifically to the massive reorganization under the new Department of Homeland Security. As well, Goodsell offers a complete assessment of the reinventing government movement and related reforms to show how far bureaucracies have come, while pointing to the challenges they continue to face. Updating worth highlighting: New data on public perceptions of bureaucracy. New section on the delegation of policy implementation to contractors and nonprofits. New statistics regarding quality-of-life improvements in American society since the 1980s. New profiles of real bureaucrats—and citizen interaction with them—giving bureaucracy a human face. New material on bureaucratic contributions to the political system that go beyond implementing policy. New coverage of the administrative consolidation following 9/11 and competitive outsourcing by the Bush Administration. New analysis of current reform proposals focused on market competition and business management practices. New proposals for ways to improve bureaucracy.

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Customer Reviews

So far, much has been written about the evils of bureaucracy, but less has been written about the accomplishments of bureaucracy. Generally, the message given by popular literature regarding government bureaucracy was one-sided and too far from completeness. In this book, the author tries to draw a complete picture of government bureaucracy. In contrast to popular bureaucracy-bashing writing, Goodsell reaches surprisingly interesting conclusions that contradict long-held beliefs toward public bureaucracy. The overall characterization of government bureaucracy within popular culture reflects that government bureaucracy is overstaffed, inflexible, unresponsive and power hungry. In forming such an image, media and academia have played a crucial role, according to the author. The economists are hostile to government bureaucracy on the basis that competitive markets and profit incentives are feasible means to obtain efficiency; sociologists are concerned with pathologies of bureaucracy; and so on. However, generally, criticism of bureaucracy is not well supported by empirical data. As being different from those who attack bureaucracy based on unfounded assumptions most of the time, Goodsell supports his arguments with empirical data that have been obtained from citizen surveys. In my opinion, the reason for the case is very well presented and worthy of careful reading. One of the arguments of the author is that critiques of government bureaucracy fall prey to the mistake of seeing bureaucracy as a whole (a form of abstraction), and ignoring the differences between different public agencies. Goodsell aptly illustrates how public agencies greatly differ from each other in terms of performance, conduct and so on.

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