



*Readings
on the
Body Politic*

Fred R. Harris

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Introduction

America's democratic system of politics and government is complex. It is not easy to understand. And it is almost impossible to use effectively for those who do not understand it well.

A basic text that cites, quotes from, paraphrases, and presents in organized and narrative form the writings and findings of those who have thought most deeply about America's politics and government is central to understanding. But it is also important and helpful when you can read from these and other primary sources yourself.

Now in my eleventh year of teaching introductory American government courses, I believe ever more strongly that understanding America's system and how it works is much enhanced when you have the chance to get its real taste and feel and smell by studying for yourself what Madison actually said in *Federalist 10*, for example, or what John Marshall actually ruled, and why, in *Marbury v. Madison*, and by reading contemporary views on governmental and political concepts and modern policy issues. *Readings on the Body Politic* excerpts and reprints in one convenient volume the major political science classics, early and late, landmark Supreme Court decisions, and contemporary expository essays on political science principles and political and governmental issues and practices.

The book is divided into four main parts, each with a brief introduction to the particular subject matter it covers. At the beginning of most of the thirteen chapters, there is a brief and introductory survey of the basic principles and concepts of the particular field—civil rights, interest groups, or the presidency, for example. At the beginning of most chapters, too, pieces are selected for reprinting that delineate constitutional and historical foundations.

This book excerpts and reprints political science classics—both early ones, such as selections from the *Federalist* and Edmund Burke's "Statement to the Electors of Bristol," and later ones, such as those from David Mayhew's *The Electoral Connection* or Richard Neustadt's *Presidential Power*. But the student is not left hanging like a movie viewer without the last reel, as might be true if no account were taken of more recent or opposing views. Here, later classics are often followed by pieces that offer a different point of view, a different analysis, or more recent scholarship. For example, Richard Fenno, Jr.'s *Home Style* is excerpted to follow Mayhew, and John P. Roche's "The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus In Action," as well as portions of Robert E. Brown's work, follow excerpts from Charles Beard's *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*.

Landmark Supreme Court opinions, like that in the *Miranda* decision, for example, are reprinted or excerpted in this book, but so are more recent opinions that alter or amend the earlier holdings.

This book is also unique in that it combines both the “reader” and the “debate” approach. In addition to the reprinting of classics, Court opinions, and expository essays, there is also repeated use of the debate format. This is done to facilitate understanding and provoke thought in regard to key concepts and issues. There are debates on affirmative action, on limiting political action committees, on a one-term, six-year limit for presidents, on federal welfare and antipoverty programs, on “Star Wars,” and on U.S. policy toward Nicaragua.

Unusual about this book, too, is a separate section on public policy. After a brief survey introduction to the field in the public policy part opener, two chapters excerpt and reprint recent material on economic policy, foreign policy, and national security.

Finally, the U.S. Constitution is reprinted in full at the end of the book.

I appreciate the helpful work of research assistants Jonathan Eldredge and Larry McElvain, the encouragement of my wife, Margaret S. Elliston, and the interest of my students.

Used alone or with a basic text, *Readings on the Body Politic* is designed to allow students to consult first sources and thereby better master the principles and processes of our complicated, but fascinating, political and governmental system.

Fred R. Harris

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