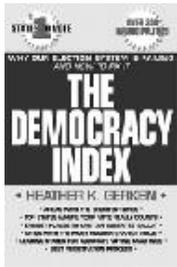


E PLURIBUS PARALYSIS: Can We Make Our Democracy Work?

Symposium: Saturday, November 9, 2013, Boston College

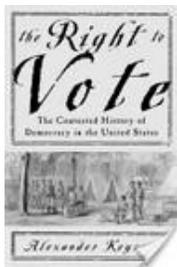


Books by our panelists:



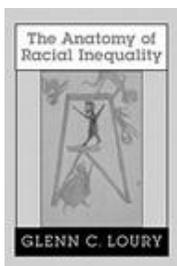
Heather K. Gerken, *The Democracy Index: Why Our Election System is Failing and How to Fix It* (Princeton University Press, 2009)

An election and constitutional law scholar at Yale Law School, Gerken has diagnosed what is wrong with our elections and proposes a radically new yet simple solution – a Democracy Index that would rate the performance of state and local election systems. The Index would measure three simple things: registration (can every eligible voter who wishes to vote do so?), balloting (can every registered voter who wants to cast a ballot do so?); and counting (is every ballot counted properly?). Like the influential *U.S. News and World Report* ranking of colleges and universities, the Index would provide election officials with an incentive for improved performance and reform. No one wants to be ranked at the bottom.



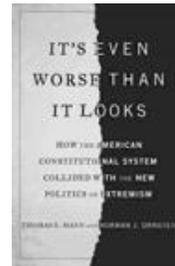
Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (Basic Books, 2000)

A finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, the *LATimes* Book Award, and the Francis Parkman Prize, *The Right to Vote* is already a classic. Alexander Keyssar, Professor of History and Social Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government has written a first-of-its-kind social, political and legal history of the suffrage from the American Revolution to the dawn of the twenty-first century. Meticulously researched and engagingly written, *The Right to Vote* is a sweeping reinterpretation of American political history as well as an exploration of the changing meaning of democracy in contemporary American life.



Glenn C. Loury, *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality* (Harvard University Press, 2003)

Thoughtfully examining what might be called the political economy of race, Brown University Professor of the Social Sciences, Economics and Public Policy Glenn Loury challenges orthodoxies of both the Right and the Left regarding the meaning of race and racism. A fluent and compelling statement of a position developed over decades by one of the nation's leading economic theorists and black intellectuals, *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality* presents Loury's deep understanding of the causes and consequences of the exclusion and marginalization of so much of black society today.



Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, *It's Even Worse Than It Looks, How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism* (Basic Books, 2012)

The title says it all. Long time Congress watchers, Mann (a Democrat) and Ornstein (a Republican) have diagnosed the disease infecting American democracy (hyper-partisanship and “asymmetric polarization”) and offer, if not a cure, a collection of palliative reforms – in the government, in the media, and in voter behavior – that will allow the political system to function as intended. Until voters lean to act strategically to reward good government and punish obstructionism, they conclude, our democracy will remain in serious danger.



Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Harvard University Press, 2010)

Following the 1890 census, the first to measure the generation of African Americans born after slavery, crime statistics, new migration and immigration trends, and symbolic references to America as the promised land of opportunity were woven into a cautionary tale about the exceptional threat black people posed to modern urban society. Excessive arrest rates and overrepresentation in northern prisons were seen by many whites – liberals and conservatives, northerners and southerners – as indisputable proof of blacks' inferiority. Chronicling the emergence of deeply embedded notions of black people as a dangerous race of criminals by explicit contrast to working-class whites and European immigrants, Muhammad reveals the influence such ideas have had on urban development, race relations, and social policies.



Zephyr Teachout, “Original Intent: How the Founding Fathers Would Clean Up K Street” (*Democracy, A Journal of Ideas*, Winter 2009)

In this brief but influential article, Teachout makes a compelling argument for the constitutional importance of placing limits on paid lobbying. Corruption, defined as using public channels to serve private ends, was a paramount concern of the Founders, Teachout explains, and they put a number of structures in place in the constitution to prevent or mitigate the effects of corruption. While these provisions may not provide much in the way of legal weapons against the current structure of dependency, she argues, they do provide a “model of thinking,” a way of trying to protect against the temptations provided by lobbyists and a culture

that encourages thinking in terms of self-interest. The Framers' thinking is important because it did not simply try to leverage people's self interest against each other—the stereotyped vision of Madison – but instead tried to create structures in which people's best instincts would flourish. The historical reasoning and provocative ideas presented in this article are more fully articulated in Teachout's forthcoming book, *Corruption, the Constitution and the Courts: The Career of a Concept*.

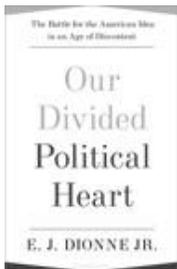


Alan Wolfe, *Does American Democracy Still Work?* (Yale University Press, 2006)

In this perceptive analysis of the current state of our democracy, widely respected social and political thinker Alan Wolfe argues that American politics is undergoing significant changes that threaten to undermine some of our nation's most

cherished values, including the liberal values that encourage robust debate, rely on the separation of powers, and recognize the need for and proper role of a loyal opposition. There is no quick fix, according to Wolfe. To begin to heal our damaged political environment, we will have to pay more attention to the way our elections take place, our laws passed, and our expectations are shaped.

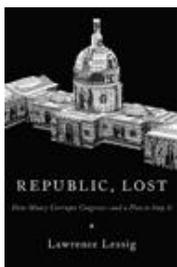
Other recent noteworthy books on our topic:



E.J. Dionne, Jr., *Our Divided Political Heart, The Battle for the American Idea in An Age of Discontent* (Bloomsbury, 2012)

This book by one of our country's most respected political commentators is an historically and philosophically rigorous exploration of the American character and the attempt to balance individualism with

community from the Founding to the present.

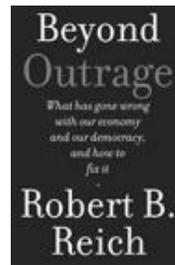


Lawrence Lessig, *Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress – and a Plan to Stop It* (Twelve, 2011)

With a nod to Zephyr Teachout, Lessig describes in great detail and with numerous examples how “the economy of influence” and the “culture of dependency” in Washington corrupt our democracy. The book concludes with three strategies for -

reforming the status quo including, finally, widespread mobilization and new Constitutional Convention. For an entertaining illustrated lecture based on the book see

www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkIAK56FtVc.



Robert B. Reich, *Beyond Outrage: What Has Gone Wrong with Our Economy and Our Democracy and How to Fix It* (Vintage, 2012)

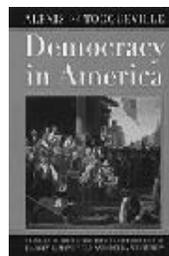
This highly partisan and often humorous polemic from the former U.S. Labor Secretary explains the self-reinforcing connections between growing economic inequality and diminishing democracy in the United States. The book's concluding chapter includes a call to action and a list of specific recommendations for making our economy fairer and our politics more democratic.



Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy, From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2003)

In this important book, Harvard social theorist, Theda Skocpol documents and examines the consequences of the movement over the past fifty years or so away from participatory democracy and social movements and toward the professionalization of political advocacy. Her recommendations for a popularly inspired participatory democracy call upon long standing but highly atrophied civic traditions.

Classic texts:



Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*



Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*