



Political Theory

51-3501 HQ1190 2012-51421 CIP
Caputi, Mary. **Feminism and power: the need for critical theory.** Lexington Books, 2013. 195p bibl index afp ISBN 9780739175798, \$65.00; ISBN 9780739175804 e-book, \$64.99

Caputi (California State Univ., Long Beach) uses critical theory as a lens through which to assess third-wave feminism. Where second-wave feminism emphasized ways that women are victimized, what Caputi terms “power feminism” celebrates women’s victories and newfound status. Simultaneously, however, it is often characterized by a triumphal self-aggrandizement and toughness that ignores the importance of care and the needs of those who are neither listened to nor understood. Although empowerment is positive, its uncritical endorsement reveals a masculinist will to power that is congruent with traditional American cultural icons of rugged individualism. The ethic of care, as developed by Joan Tronto, could serve as a partial antidote and the gender-neutral basis of a society that confronts the damage of neoliberalism and global capital. The critical theory of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse, as well as the work of Jacques Derrida, Gayatri Spivak, Julia Kristeva, Morton Schoolman, and others all posit forms of immanent criticism and ways of thinking that recognize “the other.” Like Odysseus, readers must listen to the Sirens, even while restrained, if they are to replace instrumental rationality with an aesthetic rationality that could restore a hidden ethical dimension of human existence. **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ Upper-division undergraduate, graduate, and research collections.—*E. R. Gill, Bradley University*

51-3502 BL2747 2013-5862 MARC
George, Robert P. **Conscience and its enemies: confronting the dogmas of liberal secularism.** ISI Books, 2013. 290p index ISBN 9781610170703, \$29.95

George (McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence, Princeton Univ.) is a leading figure in contemporary conservatism. He writes: “The two greatest institutions ever devised for lifting people out of poverty and enabling them to live in dignity are the market economy and the institution of marriage.” *Conscience and Its Enemies* provides a good overview of his work. The book first discusses “judicial despotism.” It then outlines George’s view of natural law: “A natural-law theory is a critical reflective account of the well-being and fulfillment of human persons and the communities they form.” George then discusses marriage, “the partnership of husband and wife in a bond that is ordered to procreation,” and summarizes his opposition to euthanasia and abortion. Each of George’s arguments is clearly presented and rationally defended. He makes visible the deep foundations of simple truths about individual dignity, the importance of the family, and human orientation to excellence and self-mastery. Readers who support his positions will be challenged. Those who disagree will be forced to confront themselves. George’s views are fueled by moral passion, but it is his unfailingly intelligent and reasonable arguments that give him his well-deserved place in contemporary thought and action. **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ All readership levels.—*M. Blitz, Claremont McKenna College*

51-3503 JC573 2012-40406 CIP
Maciag, Drew. **Edmund Burke in America: the contested career of the father of modern conservatism.** Cornell, 2013. 285p index afp ISBN 9780801448959, \$29.95

Historian Maciag claims that “American opinions about Edmund Burke provide unique insights into the history of political thinking in the United States.” As proof, he offers this wide-ranging survey of American thinkers and politicians from John Adams through the American Whig Party to today’s conservative movement. Strangely, though, much of the book involves the exploration of what Maciag claims to be Burkean themes and ideas in otherwise unrelated political figures and currents. So his chapter on Woodrow Wilson, who offered two major lectures on Burke during his academic career, is much more successful than chapters on Adams or Theodore Roosevelt, neither of whom actually had much to say about the English thinker. The book also includes a “philosophical primer” on Burke that is too brief to justify the author’s idiosyncratic emphasis on Burke’s early reformist writings. In the end, the book works better as an exploration of intellectual currents that countered liberalism in America, more suited for scholars of American political thought (and Burke, of course) than generalists. **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ Graduate and research collections.—*R. J. Meagher, Randolph-Macon College*

51-3504 HV95 2012-37779 CIP
Mackin, Glenn David. **The politics of social welfare in America.** Cambridge, 2013. 226p bibl index ISBN 9781107029026, \$90.00

Mackin (political science, Eastman School of Music, Univ. of Rochester) examines the ways in which contemporary American discourses about “welfare” (or more precisely, means-tested social assistance) interpret welfare recipients as unable to participate as full citizens in public life. More surprisingly, he argues that many critics of American social policy unwittingly reproduce the same or a similar interpretation, even though they advocate for greater equality and democracy. Mackin rejects political theories that call for resistance to existing institutional arrangements or that insist that a wider range of people be seen as equal, and calls instead for a “politics without guarantees.” Rather than putting forward a view of justice as correct or valid, scholars should study how activists appropriate and transform existing discourses and associated practices, and learn from the experience of past movements in order to mobilize more successfully in the future. Mackin uses a variety of specific examples to develop his analysis, making his argument fresh and engaging. His theoretical perspective is informed by theorists such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Rancière, Jurgen Habermas, and Jacques Derrida. The writing is exceptionally clear, but the book will be difficult for general or undergraduate readers. **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ Upper-division undergraduate, graduate, and research collections.—*J. D. Moon, Wesleyan University*

51-3505 BP173 2013-3949 MARC
Mirror for the Muslim prince: Islam and the theory of statecraft, ed. by Mehrzad Boroujerdi. Syracuse, 2013. 465p bibl index afp ISBN 0815632894, \$49.95; ISBN 9780815632894, \$49.95

Boroujerdi (Syracuse Univ.), the series editor for the “Modern Intellectual History of the Middle East,” presents an exemplary edited collection. Nearly every chapter is superb, and the collection as a whole is even better. *Mirror* challenges the received scholarly notions that Islamic political thought is ultimately derivative from the Quran and all of it that deserves the name has been written in Arabic. In the final chapter, Ali al-Azmeh argues convincingly that for far too long scholars of Islamic political thought have become stuck in repeating misleading truisms about the primitive egalitarianism of the original political community in Islam against which the long, complex history of the caliphate and multifarious forms of kingship have been presented as foreign and



doomed to decline from the beginning. Of the four parts into which Boroujerdi divides the book, the second (chapters 3-7) offers the most striking series of studies of mirrors for princes, which give the lie to this received narrative. These contributors show that Persian political thought was not the foreign agent dooming Islam to decline that scholars, Islamists, and Salafists would have people believe. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. ★★★ Upper-division undergraduate, graduate, and research collections.—*J. S. Parens, University of Dallas*

51-3506 DA506 2013-935334 MARC
Norman, Jesse. **Edmund Burke: the first conservative.** Basic Books, 2013. 325p bibl index ISBN 9780465058976, \$27.99; ISBN 9780465044948 e-book, contact publisher for price

Norman, a British Conservative Party MP, has written an accessible, comprehensive, and instructive study of Burke. Burke's biography is canvassed through his participation in five great political battles that mark his political and intellectual career, beginning with his fight for fair treatment of Catholics in Ireland and colonial rights in North America, and ending with his epic campaign against the French Revolution. The second half of the book steps back to assess Burke's political thought that Norman says is situated at the "hinge of our political modernity": Burke combined an acute Enlightenment concern about the oppression of the weak (slaves, East Indians, colonists) with hostility to unencumbered reason and liberal individualism as foundations for political life. The British Constitution and the common law that guided Burke's thought expressed and protected a distinct moral community that linked generations and institutions, individuals and society, the quotidian and the transcendent. Today Burke remains a worthy guide to help recover values lost or threatened by extreme liberalism. Norman's Burke receives ratification by sociologist Philip Selznick, *The Moral Commonwealth* (1994), and political philosopher Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (1998). **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ General readers, upper-undergraduate students, graduate students, and research faculty.—*E. J. Eisenach, emeritus, University of Tulsa*

51-3507 JC381 2012-43149 CIP
Nyquist, Mary. **Arbitrary rule: slavery, tyranny, and the power of life and death.** Chicago, 2013. 421p index afp ISBN 9780226015538, \$45.00; ISBN 9780226726618 e-book, contact publisher for price

Nyquist (English and comparative literature, Univ. of Toronto, Canada) asks what political slavery, an image in anti-tyrannical polemic, has to do with chattel slavery. She argues that the use of such concepts in antiquity serves to create, in the early modern period, a sense of Europeans as free and non-Europeans as primitive. While an interesting claim, caution is in order due to the sloppiness of some textual interpretations. For example, Nyquist criticizes Locke's account of the pre-political executive power as providing a "rationale for taking the lives of extra-Europeans"; Locke justifies taking the lives of those who egregiously violate the natural law. Such a justification applies to those who transgress natural law, not to non-Europeans. Her discussion of slavery takes insufficient account of the role of natural law in Locke's thought. Similarly, the difficulties Nyquist raises concerning killing the self and killing others are easily dispatched by Locke's natural law, which requires self-preservation—suicide is forbidden, and self-defense is obligatory. Insufficient attention is paid both to primary texts and much relevant scholarship. Consequently, Nyquist presents as settled questions issues that are still very much under debate, and her discussions of individual thinkers are too often characterized by misreadings or lacunae

concerning important issues. **Summing Up:** Optional. ★ Graduate and research collections.—*M. Harding, Montgomery College*

51-3508 JC330 2012-38230 CIP
The Primacy of persons in politics: empiricism and political philosophy, ed. by John von Heyking and Thomas Heilke. Catholic University of America, 2013. 292p bibl index afp ISBN 9780813221236, \$69.95

This essay collection reflects on the approach to political matters taken by Tilo Schabert, a European student of politics not yet sufficiently appreciated in the US. Schabert's themes are captured in the book's title and subtitle. Opposing an overemphasis on political and legal forms, Schabert draws attention to the influence of specific persons and the manner in which their individual networks of friendships and alliances, their motives and skills, their tastes and character are expressed in the conduct of executive office. His studies of important leaders in Europe and in the US have used both close observation and the insights of political philosophers to provide a rich interpretation of creative political action. These essays, one by Schabert and eight from those working from his insights, draw productively from ancient and modern philosophers and theologians to illuminate aspects of politics, particularly where specific persons play a leading role. The subtitle "Empiricism and Political Philosophy" nicely captures the blend of close empirical analysis and theoretical depth that characterizes Schabert and those who have followed his path. **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ Upper-division undergraduate, graduate, and research collections.—*D. J. Maletz, University of Oklahoma*

U.S. Politics

51-3509 E176 2012-37740 CIP
Abbott, Philip. **Bad presidents: failure in the White House.** Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 260p index ISBN 9781137306586, \$90.00

There is much speculation as to who were the best presidents and why. But there is very little thought given to who were not the best and why not. This fascinating book attempts to fill that gap. As it turns out, the bad is not just the absence of the good. Abbott writes of bad presidents that "we may regret their appearance but they have much to teach us." Ultimately, the success of this book depends on its classification scheme, the author's ingenious attempt to use a literary analogy to rate presidents. Are failed presidents more comparable to the callow and feckless Richard II of Shakespearean lore, or are they better compared to the ruthless, despotic Richard III? That is, are the worst presidents those who were actively bad or those who were just thoughtless or beyond their competence? Although literature tells a lot about the human character, Abbott (Wayne State Univ.) ultimately fails because actual historical precedents are as difficult to buttonhole as are the best fictional characters. However, he should be applauded for the attempt. This entertaining book is worth the read for its thoughtful insights into why presidents fail. **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ General readers; upper-division undergraduate students and above.—*D. P. Franklin, Georgia State University*

51-3510 KF4770 2012-47962 CIP
Abrams, Floyd. **Friend of the Court: on the front lines with the First Amendment.** Yale, 2013. 473p index afp ISBN 0300190875, \$32.50; ISBN 9780300190878, \$32.50

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