



American Difference; American Politics from a Comparative Perspective

By Lori M. Poloni, Michael R. Wolf

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Americans strongly believe in the idea that our democracy is unique-is an exception, in fact, among other advanced industrialized democracies. But exactly how and why is our political system different? Poloni-Staudinger and Wolf start with the idea that each country's political priorities are influenced by the development of its political beliefs, political culture, and political institutions. They want to remind American students that our form of democracy is just one form of democracy. And if we examine components of our political system comparatively, we can better see and learn the ways in which our government is unique as well as see how other democracies function differently and successfully. This learning through contrast not only enriches students' understanding of their own political system, but this comparative context has become increasingly important as students see themselves as global citizens, competing and engaging in what is truly a globalized world and workforce. Unfortunately few American government texts offer much in the way of comparison to other countries and comparative politics books don't always situate the US in their analysis. This book fills that void with a crisply written and brief supplement.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This book is a concise, no-nonsense account of the ways in which US politics differs from that of other advanced industrial countries. It offers a combination of brevity and comprehensiveness rarely found in introductory textbooks." -- Taylor Dark "I believe that American students especially benefit from seeing their own system from a comparative perspective. They are often frustrated or disillusioned with shortcomings in American democracy and they are not used to thinking about other ways that democracy is practiced. Poloni-Staudinger and Wolf's book gives students a context for understanding weaknesses and strengths in American democracy and enables students to (often to their great surprise) appreciate their system in a new light. As educators and policy-makers look for ways to increase undergraduate interest in civic engagement and democracy-promotion, this book could be a valuable tool for helping students to see how democracy can work to provide the public good in various countries." -- Jacqueline Reich "I think the main strength of this text is the attention paid to culture and the recurring theme of American exceptionalism. The authors stay focused on those themes and it shows throughout the book. This gives the text a clarity that other books may lack." -- Joseph Romance

About the Author

Lori Poloni-Staudinger, PhD, is an Associate Professor and Chair in the Department of Politics and International Affairs at Northern Arizona University. She specializes in citizen participation, at the individual and group levels, and political contention, particularly in democratic settings. Much of her work looks at gender in various contexts. She is the recent author, with Candice Ortals, of *Terrorism and Violent Conflict: Women's Agency, Leadership and Responses* (2012, Springer). Michael R. Wolf (PhD Indiana University 2002) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne. His research focuses on comparative and American public opinion and political behavior. He has recently published on the nature and effects of political discussion in democracies and the dynamics of political compromise and political incivility. He is a research partner with the Kettering Foundation, a research fellow with the Mike Downs Center for Indiana Politics, and former Lugar Senior Fellow.

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