

American Political History
A Very Short Introduction
By Donald Critchlow

Questions for Thought and Discussion

- Are political parties healthy for a democracy?
- Why did the drafters of the U.S. Constitution fear political parties?
- In which ways has the electorate expanded over the course of American political history?
- How has the tone of American politics changed with the expansion of the electorate?
- Is political campaigning more negative today than it was in the 19th century?
- Is rhetoric against “elites” stronger today than it was in the 19th century?
- Has the two-party system worked?
- Why have some parties failed and others succeeded?
- Why have third parties emerged?
- What influence have reform movements exerted on American politics?
- What role have women played in American politics and reform movements?
- In which ways can states be seen as laboratories of democracy?
- How successful is American politics and politicians in solving major issues of the day?
- Why has interest among voters in politics declined in the 20th century?
- Is there more distrust of government today than in earlier periods?
- Is the American political system a model for other countries today?

Selected Other Books by Author

When Hollywood Was Right: How Movie Moguls, Celebrities, and Big Business Remade American Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History (Harvard University Press, 2007; University Press of Kansas, 2011 pap.)

Phyllis Schlafly and the Republican Right: A Woman’s Crusade (Princeton University Press, 2005)

Intended Consequences: Birth Control, Abortion and the Federal Government in Modern America (Oxford University Press, 1999; paperback edition, 2001)

Further Reading

Jack N. Rakove, *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas of the Making of the Constitution* (New York, 1997).

Daniel Walker Howe, *What Has God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York, 2007)

Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York, 1988).

Morton Keller, *America's Three Regimes: A New Political History* (New York, 2009)

Michael E. McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865-1928* (New York, 1988)

Lewis Chesler, Godfrey Hodgson, and Bruce Page, *American Melodrama: The Presidential Campaign of 1968* (New York, 1969)