ers.” Meanwhile, most voters live in states that play the lesser role of “Confirmers” (choosing from a greatly reduced field of candidates) or “Rubber-Stamps” (who don’t get to vote until the race is over). This condition is not new, but, as Cook shows, it has grown increasingly severe.

This system is indeed arbitrary. Yet its policy consequences, as contrasted to those of alternatives Cook discusses, such as rotating regional primaries and a national primary, are less clear. Would presidents govern differently under a modified system? Cook does not say. In any case, he doubts that major reforms are imminent. This seems sensible. Despite its seeming unfairness, the current system does not observably bias outcomes in a way that generates intense opposition.

Although this book was completed before the recent campaign unfolded, it is hardly obsolete. Once again, the race ended before most voters had a chance to weigh in. The top finishers in “Kingmaker” Iowa now comprise the Democratic ticket. However, the pattern Cook notes, in which the early poll and fundraising leaders (usually the same candidate, in years past) prevail, was disrupted. Had those trends continued, either Howard Dean, the fundraising champion, or Joseph Lieberman, who topped the earliest polls, would have triumphed.

A few of Cook’s judgments and facts are questionable. The Democrats’ long-standing requirement of a two-thirds vote to choose a nominee was arguably less a cause of the party’s weakness than a symptom of their real problem, a very fractious coalition. Women did vote in presidential primaries in 1912; they were already enfranchised in California, one of the first states to adopt a primary. Although indeed a member of the House of Lords when named Prime Minister in 1963, Alec Douglas-Home had been in the Commons and the Cabinet and should not be listed, along with Dwight Eisenhower, among the “non-politicians” made party leaders. Yet these are minor flaws.

This enjoyable, informative book merits consideration by undergraduate instructors and civic-minded readers alike.

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Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices

Like most academic fields, policy analysis has its share of intellectual disputes. Frank Fischer is a regular participant in one of those disputes—the ongoing debate between the positivists and the “post-positivists.” The former school, almost certainly the dominant school among practicing policy analysts and probably also among scholars in the field, assumes that there are real “facts” that can be used to assess policies and to understand the dynamics of the policy process. In this view, policy analysis can be scientific and can provide
objective advice to policy makers about how best to govern. Advocates of the alternative approach, such as Fischer, argue that facts are constructed by society and theory, and hence, are shaped by the values of analysts. In that view, policy analysis is based on ideas and ideologies, and uses those ideas to shape policy prescriptions through discourses, scripts, scenarios, and analogous methods. Hence, from this perspective, policy analysis is far from objective, but represents a particular conception of reality based on ideas as well as interests.

As with most such academic debates, the battle lines are drawn more clearly than are the real differences in the scholarship, and the protagonists engage in a great deal of stereotyping of the approaches to which they do not subscribe. This book is an excellent presentation and defense of the constructivist perspective on policy analysis, and makes a strong, positive case for the utility of postempiricist reasoning for understanding policy choices, but also at times does oversimplify the claims of the positivists. Although there are many interesting points made in the book, the discussion of the contrasts between the constructivist perspective on policy learning and that offered by the more-familiar advocacy-coalition framework is an excellent presentation of the value of a less-positivist perspective on public policy.

What distinguishes Frank Fischer’s work from many other books in this genre is that it moves beyond presenting alternative explanations and descriptions of policy regimes to considering how this mode of thinking about policy can be used to advise policy makers. It must be said that this section of the book is less convincing than the more-descriptive elements of the discussion. The section on advice does remind the reader, however, that policy analysis may be more than an academic exercise and that there may be real consequences for society as a result of the advice provided to policy makers. At a minimum, however, the more-interpretative approach to policy can enable policy makers to understand their own premises and the socioeconomic interests that those ideas will serve. Further, as mechanisms for citizen participation in policy become more viable, at least in some contexts, the development of alternative sources of expertise and alternative perspectives on the content of policy becomes more central to governing.

In summary, this is an excellent, well-argued presentation of one view of public policy analysis. It is only one view, and one can certainly argue with some of the assertions made, but if a reader wants to understand the discursive perspective on policy, this volume would be a very appropriate place to begin.

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