

in 1963 (compared to a Republican president in 1956) may have invoked more robust relationships between advocates and northern Democratic politicians, given that party realignment on race had been underway for two decades.

In addition to its insightful scholarly contributions, this concise and readable text would fit well in the classroom. It is well-suited to undergraduate courses where instructors seek to prompt discussion on lobbying, advocacy, and the representation of marginalized groups in U.S. politics. In threading together theoretical questions with a substantively important case study, it would also be a valuable entry in graduate syllabi on interest groups, American political development, and racial and ethnic politics.

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Congress and the First Civil Rights Era, 1861–1918

By Jeffery A. Jenkins & Justin Peck. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021. 332 pp., \$35.00 Paper/\$105.00 Cloth

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Congress and the First Civil Rights Era, 1861–1918 makes three important contributions. First, it provides an accessible catalog of important reconstruction and civil rights legislation passed in the period from the start of the Civil War through the First World War. Second, it provides details on the competing proposals and rationales that informed the debate and shaped both legislative successes and failures. Third, it offers new insight into American political development by positing the years from 1861 to 1918 as a distinct and coherent epoch in the history of racial politics in the United States.

Legislative history can be difficult to present clearly and succinctly, but Jenkins and Peck have managed to translate congressional records into an account that is as readable as it is comprehensive. One of the greatest strengths of the book is its collection and explanation of all major reconstruction and civil rights bills in their period of study. The authors' clean prose allows readers to follow the development of the legislation over time, through multiple amendments and procedural maneuvers, without losing track of the substance or underlying purpose of each bill. The book's clarity makes it an invaluable resource for those wishing to understand the legal regime that developed in what the authors call the "first civil rights era."

A related strength is the detail it provides about the proposals that did not succeed and the factors that led to the enactment of some proposals and the defeat

of others. As the authors note, this allows us to imagine some of the “what ifs” or counterfactuals in the story of civil rights in the United States (p. 311). We get a glimpse of what could have been, had, for example, radical Republicans held greater majorities over a longer period of time. The narrative also allows us to see the political forces that held back efforts toward a more racially just post-Civil War America and the trade-offs Congress made along the way. It leaves the reader simultaneously amazed by what was able to be accomplished and disappointed over the near misses that could have improved so many lives. These details also shed light on the constitutional uncertainty facing Congress in these years. Though they succeeded in pushing through three Reconstruction Amendments, substantial disagreement remained about how far the federal government could go in enforcing its will upon the states that had rebelled.

This book makes a compelling case that the period from 1861 to 1918 is a distinct political epoch, the study of which can aid our understanding of racial politics over time. The authors argue the Republican Party generally and congressional Republicans in particular were instrumental in advancing civil rights early in the period, and that their retreat from these issues in the late 1800s and early 1900s allowed new (or renewed) abuses of Black citizens to take root. While the broad strokes of this history are well known, the book provides fresh insights into the intraparty dynamics that shaped specific actions along the way. In particular, it highlights the critical role of moderate Republicans in Congress, whose support was central to early successes and whose later abandonment of the cause in favor of other (White Northern) voters’ interests cost the party a strong Southern foothold for decades. Situating these details in the context of the nation’s overall history, the authors argue that this epoch illustrates “a dynamic central to race politics in America: a period of progress followed by a period of backlash and reversal, followed in turn by a new period of advance” (p. 15).

The book’s contributions are substantial. The one disappointment is the degree to which the book focuses nearly exclusively on White men, their contributions, and their motivations. Women are entirely absent from the narrative, and Black people figure primarily as the subjects of legislative action. The authors seem to acknowledge this when they note that their approach is “Congress-centered” and their focus is on policy history, rather than a replication of the detailed histories of Black civil rights in this period already written by other authors (pp. 2, 7). Certainly, White men controlled most positions of power in the United States generally and in Congress specifically during this time period. For this reason, they were central in policy-making. Still, it is hard to feel that there were not missed opportunities to present this history in a more inclusive manner. Prominent Black intellectuals like Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and W.E.B. Du Bois were active in promoting policy ideas during the period of the study but receive little discussion. Perhaps more relevant, given the book’s focus on Congress, is that this time period saw the election of over 20 Black members of Congress, many of whom were formerly enslaved and all of whom represented districts in former Confederate states. Most of them are not mentioned until the book’s conclusion, and for most their mention is limited to inclusion in a list of Black members of Congress during the period. Only one legislative proposal from a Black Congressman receives any detailed discussion – an amendment by Representative James O’Hara seeking to address discrimination in interstate travel (pp. 210–217). Readers are left

to wonder whether or to what extent other Black members of Congress contributed to other policy debates. If these Black members brought their experiences to bear in policy discussions, it would enrich the narrative to cover more of their contributions. If they did not, some exploration of why they did not and the limitations they faced would have been worthwhile.

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Gerrymandering the States: Partisanship, Race, and the Transformation of American Federalism

By Alex Keena, Michael Later, Anthony J. McGann, and Charles Anthony Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 189 pp., \$29.99 Cloth.

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How does a party that routinely receives a minority of the vote share continue to retain power? *Gerrymandering the States* shows how the exploitation of redistricting, a low salience element of American politics, raises a serious threat to democracy. Gerrymandering is the strategic drawing of electoral districts to give partisan advantage to the mapmakers. This process presents a serious threat to democracy and can deny equal access to the vote. This book shows that redistricting maps drawn in 2010–2011 (following the 2010 decennial Census) and used in subsequent elections introduced severe partisan bias into the electoral system. This bias overwhelmingly favors the Republican Party, giving them an “advantage in state government so extreme that the average state legislative plan gives Republicans about 9 percent more seats than Democrats for the same share of the vote.” (p. 185). In the subsequent decade, gerrymandering allowed states to slowly undo Voting Rights Act provisions and deny democratic representation to citizens.

The authors demonstrate precisely how political actors use their tools to accomplish their primary goal—electoral victory. If there is a motive and an opportunity to create a competitive edge, political actors take it. Partisan control of redistricting efforts routinely results in partisan bias, brought about by maps that give more seats to one party over the other for the same number of votes. While geography and political demographics play a role in creating bias, it is not inevitable. Tainted maps are always a deliberate choice by the cartographer(s). That said, the potential for bias is not equal for both parties. Democrats tend to live in urban areas, and this demographic clustering limits the degree to which biased maps can be drawn in their favor. The