



Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis

Paul Pierson

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This groundbreaking book represents the most systematic examination to date of the often-invoked but rarely examined declaration that "history matters." Most contemporary social scientists unconsciously take a "snapshot" view of the social world. Yet the meaning of social events or processes is frequently distorted when they are ripped from their temporal context. Paul Pierson argues that placing politics in time--constructing "moving pictures" rather than snapshots--can vastly enrich our understanding of complex social dynamics, and greatly improve the theories and methods that we use to explain them.

Politics in Time opens a new window on the temporal aspects of the social world. It explores a range of important features and implications of evolving social processes: the variety of processes that unfold over significant periods of time, the circumstances under which such different processes are likely to occur, and above all, the significance of these temporal dimensions of social life for our understanding of important political and social outcomes. Ranging widely across the social sciences, Pierson's analysis reveals the high price social science pays when it becomes ahistorical. And it provides a wealth of ideas for restoring our sense of historical process. By placing politics back in time, Pierson's book is destined to have a resounding and enduring impact on the work of scholars and students in fields from political science, history, and sociology to economics and policy analysis.

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