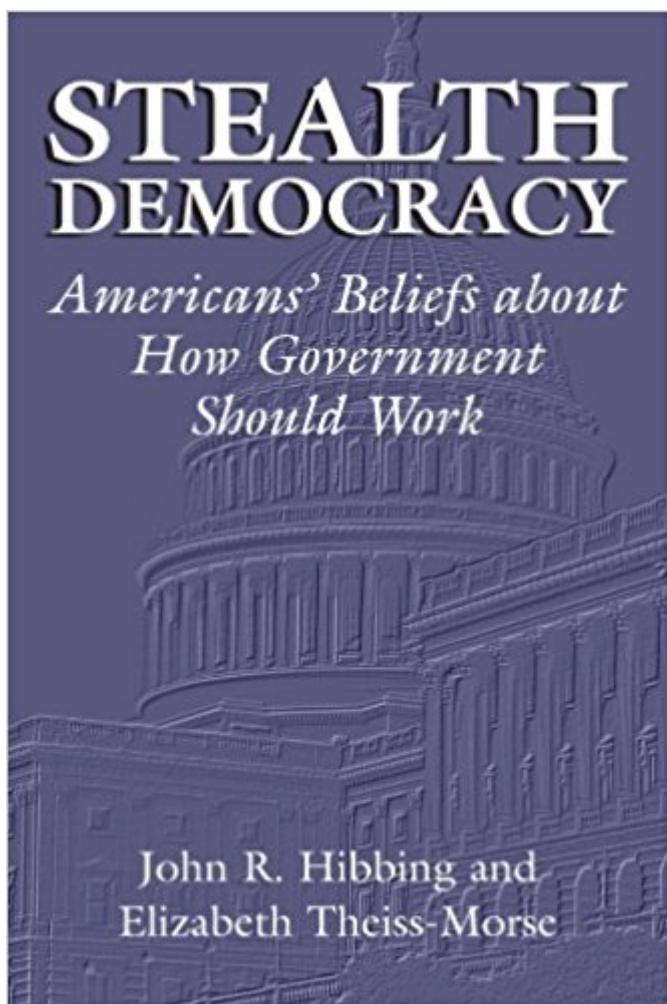


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Stealth Democracy: Americans' Beliefs About How Government Should Work (Cambridge Studies In Public Opinion And Political Psychology)





Synopsis

Examining how people want their democratic government to work, this study finds that Americans don't like many of the practices associated with democracy: the conflicts, the debates, the compromises. It finds that Americans don't want to have to see democracy in practice, nor do they want to be involved in politics. If American citizens had their way, political decisions would be made by unselfish decision-makers, lessening the need for monitoring government.

Book Information

Series: Cambridge Studies in Public Opinion and Political Psychology

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Cambridge University Press (October 7, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0521009863

ISBN-13: 978-0521009867

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.7 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #250,665 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #192 in Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Political Science > Public Affairs #195 in Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Political Science > Civil Rights #316 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > Public Affairs & Administration

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"A compelling challenge to the prominent view that government participation leads to better government." The Futurist "This wonderfully provocative book uses survey data and interviews to support hypotheses that run against the conventional scholarly wisdom about what is wrong with the US political system.... This excellent contribution to the sociological and political science literature on participation is written in a clear, occasionally witty, and understandable prose that all will appreciate. Essential." Choice

Stealth Democracy examines how people want their democratic government to work. It finds that Americans don't like many of the practices associated with democracy--the conflict, the debates, the compromises. They don't want to have to see democracy in practice and they do not want to be involved in politics. If they had their way, political decisions would be made by decision makers who

were not at all selfish because then the people would be free from having to monitor government and could pursue the multitude of interests they find more enjoyable

Hibbing and Theiss-Morse offers an answer to the question of why our elections always seem to turn on personality, voters' anger at Washington, and negative politics rather than actual questions of policy. They argue the answer is that voters really don't care about policy and that most American citizens simply don't want to be bothered. According to their findings--based on polls and focus groups--voters believe the game is rigged and politicians respond to special interests, rather than "ordinary" Americans. What voters want is not particularly a change in government policies so much as a change in processes--how decisions are reached. Voters perceive policy conflicts between political parties as more a clash of special interests than of genuine difference in policy. The result is a deeply pessimistic picture of American democracy, with an increasingly alienated and distrustful citizenry viewing their elected representatives and institutions as threats, rather than resources. It's worth noting this book was written in 2002, almost a decade before the emergence of the Tea Party and long before the Trump and Sanders candidacies. I hesitate to accept all of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's conclusions, given the comparatively small numbers of subjects involved in their focus groups. That said, they offer a valuable picture of a frustrated group of citizens who have since played an important role in national politics.

Really good. Worth reading just to understand today's politics.

Stealth Democracy gives the reader a deeper understanding of how democracy works within the United States. It explains that people want the government basically run on its own (stealth) but still be visible when the people want to see that it is acting in the interest of the people.

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