

Saunders's work is readable and accessible, and should be of great interest to anyone who cares about presidential leadership and the use of military force. Her focus is on ideal types, which means that there is some inevitable messiness in the details, but she makes a convincing case for the importance of the individual in these critical decisions, especially the need to calibrate ends and means. Her observation that presidents appear to be slow learners should be a sobering assessment for the concerned citizen.

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**Changing Inequality** by Rebecca M. Blank. Berkeley, University of California Press, 2011. 240 pp. \$24.95.

In recent years, a growing chorus has sounded the alarm about rising income inequality in the United States. Concerned citizens, ranging from academics to political pundits to those participating in the “Occupy Wall Street” protests, contend that decisive action is necessary to reverse this trend. Amidst this backdrop, a crucial question often goes neglected: Why, exactly, has income inequality increased so markedly? In her highly accessible book, Rebecca Blank sets out to empirically answer this question.

Blank first reveals that income inequality has risen not only because of changes in the distribution of wages, but also due to changes in work patterns and the composition of American households. Using Current Population Survey data to compare earnings and work effort in 1979 and 2007, Blank shows that while inequality in wages has increased (primarily due to rapid increases for top income earners), this trend has been partially offset by more people (primarily women) joining the workforce and working more hours. Simultaneously then, the United States has experienced increasing inequality alongside real growth in earnings for most Americans. As Blank puts it: “Overall incomes are growing at the same time that their distribution is becoming more spread out” (p. 8). Using data simulations that are explained in detail in the book’s appendices, Blank also estimates that 14 percent of the rise in inequality is due to shifts in family demographics, specifically, a decline in married-couple families and a corresponding increase in single-person households and families with a single parent. This is an important insight because, to date, changes in family structure have received little attention in analyses of rising income inequality.

Blank then moves from the empirical to the theoretical to consider how major economic shocks might affect income distribution over time. Drawing on historical evidence, she provides a succinct and insightful discussion of the effects of both “short-term” (deep recession, war, a major health crisis) and “long-term” shocks (new technologies and resources, the development of skills and human capital) on both overall economic productivity, and inequality, in particular. Returning to the data, Blank considers how hypothetical changes

in skills, key economic variables (wages, labor-force participation, and investment income), marital choices, and redistributive policies might affect income inequality in the next 10 years. Overall, she finds that any of these changes would have only a minor impact and would not return the United States to anywhere near 1979 income inequality levels. Of particular interest for political observers, Blank finds that even if policy efforts were undertaken that somehow lifted every single American above the poverty line, the overall level of income inequality would decline only slightly.

If the book has a weakness, it is this final analysis of the potential effects of hypothetical changes. While the data simulations are instructive and thought-provoking, the parameters chosen are (by Blank's own admission) rather optimistic and perhaps even unrealistic in some cases. For example, in one simulation, Blank assumes that wages will grow faster for workers at the low end of the income distribution than for those at the high end. Given the data trends reviewed earlier in the book, this assumption seems highly unlikely to be actualized. Ultimately, the reader is left to decide whether the hypothetical changes in skill levels, marital choices, and redistributive policies are helpful in forecasting what the immediate future may hold.

Overall, Blank takes on a question that requires extensive data analysis and explains it to the reader in very accessible terms. Each chapter has a helpful summary that extracts the main conclusions from the analysis, and Blank is always careful not to get so bogged down in data details as to lose sight of the larger question. It is an effort that should be commended and is why I recommend this book not just to academic specialists, but to anyone interested in why income inequality has increased so markedly over the last 30 years.

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**Agenda Setting in the U.S. Senate: Costly Consideration and Majority Party Advantage** by *Chris Den Hartog and Nathan W. Monroe*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011. 252 pp. \$85.00.

Chris Den Hartog and Nathan W. Monroe note that for a variety of reasons, the study of the U.S. Senate has been stubbornly resistant to scientific, theoretically sound inquiry. For them, previous arguments about the Senate have tended to be as post hoc and inductive as the process and procedure of the chamber are thought to be ad hoc and idiosyncratic. The authors seek to change this with their ambitious attempt to integrate the descriptive understanding of the Senate found in the literature with a deductive theory of Senate politics centered on majority party advantage.

Den Hartog and Monroe admit that the advantages enjoyed by the Senate majority party fall short of what we see in the House. At the same time, they use this divergence in constructing a widely applicable model which posits that