

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

in legislatures *generally*, the advantage of majority over minority or government over opposition boils down to the asymmetric costs faced in getting proposals considered on the plenary agenda. These asymmetries vary from legislature to legislature, but characterizing this variation is useful in conceiving of a continuum of legislatures.

This argument turns contemporary understanding of majority party advantage (at least in the literature on the House) on its head with its emphasis on *positive* as opposed to *negative* agenda power. The Senate majority party does not enjoy the extent of negative agenda power that the House majority party does (because of the Senate's lack of a powerful Rules Committee and a germaneness requirement for amendments). But its numerical advantage, its control of committee chairs (a position whose power scholars of the Senate have often denigrated), and its ability to undermine the minority's strategic use of amendments through motions to table, specifically, and party discipline on dispositive votes on amendments, more generally, all make it relatively less costly for the Senate majority party to bring to consideration *and pass* its policy proposals than is the case for the minority party. This asymmetry represents an easier path to legislating *and* represents a resource that can be used to the majority party's advantage when bargaining with rank-and-file members and leaders of the minority party for procedural concessions, since they presumably have policy proposals they would like to see considered and passed as well.

A colleague of my mine is fond of saying that as far as political science is concerned, there are two chambers in America's national legislature: the Congress and the Senate. For a variety of reasons, scholars have ignored the Senate in building models of the U.S. Congress. Den Hartog and Monroe offer an important corrective, demonstrating that the sort of sophisticated theoretical and empirical research usually conducted in the context of the House can find traction in the Senate despite the challenges it presents. In so doing, they have also produced a simple yet elegant argument that has important implications for the comparative study of legislatures. This book should be on every legislative scholar's book shelf, and I look forward to seeing it appear increasingly often on graduate *and* undergraduate syllabi.

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**American Neoconservatism: The Politics and Culture of a Reactionary Idealism** by Jean-François Drolet. *New York, Columbia University Press, 2011. 256 pp. \$30.00.*

In attacking neoconservatism, this book does not launch a broadside so much as unleash the Samson option. Like Israel's all-azimuth nuclear doctrine, it scores many hits at the cost of the precision required for the offensive. Rather, its battering of concepts only partially linked to neoconservatism—neoliberalism,