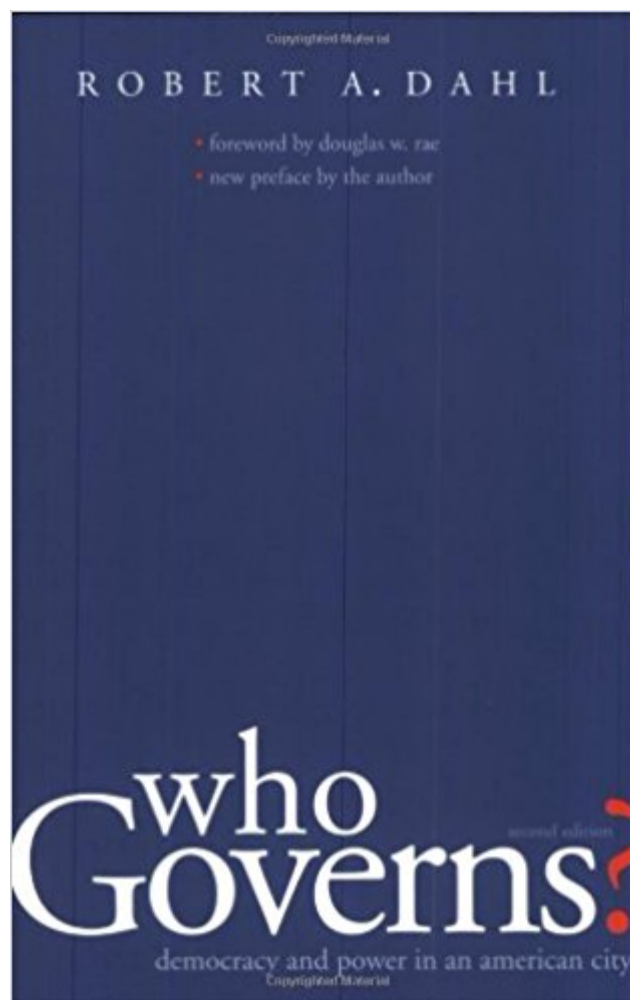




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Who Governs?: Democracy And Power In An American City, Second Edition (Yale Studies In Political Science)



Synopsis

In this now-classic work, one of the most celebrated political scientists of the twentieth century offers a powerful interpretation of the location of political power in American urban communities. For this new edition, Robert A. Dahl has written a new Preface in which he reflects on *Who Governs?* more than four decades after its publication. And in a new Foreword, Douglas W. Rae offers an assessment of Dahl's achievement in this, Dahl's greatest and most influential book.

“Dahl is never dogmatic, and never imagines that the world stands still to accommodate either the democratic ideal or his own pluralistic theory of city politics. . . . *Who Governs?* is Dahl's liveliest and most remarkable book.”

—Douglas W. Rae, from the Foreword

“From reviews of the first edition: ‘A book that no one interested in politics can afford to ignore.’

—Lewis A. Coser, *Commentary*

“Anyone seriously concerned with current systematic political theory or with urban politics should read *Who Governs?*”

—Hugh Douglas Price, *Political Science Quarterly*

“A sophisticated and undogmatic treatise on democratic politics.”

—Heinz Eulau, *American Political Science Review*

“Dahl has illuminated a central question in political science, the problem of how men can govern themselves in complex societies. . . . *Who Governs?* will become a classic.”

—from the citation of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation Award

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Customer Reviews

"A book that no one interested in politics can afford to ignore."âLewis A. Coser, Commentary
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 "Dahl has illuminated a central question in political science, the problem of how men can govern themselves in complex societies. . . . Who Governs? will become a classic."âfrom the citation of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation Award
 "A major breakthrough in American political science, and a work destined, deservedly, to influence profoundly all future investigation of our politics . . . masterful, imaginative, and courageous. I recommend it unreservedly to the attention of all students of American politics."âWillmoore Kendall, National Review
 "Dahl is never dogmatic, and never imagines that the world stands still to accommodate either the democratic ideal or his own pluralistic theory of city politics. . . . Who Governs? is Dahl's liveliest and most remarkable book."âDouglas W. Rae, from the Foreword
 "Magnificently conceived and beautifully executed . . . presenting a rich body of data succinctly and persuasively . . . They are going to have to rewrite the texts on municipal government."âWallace Sayre

Robert A. Dahl is Sterling Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Yale University and past president of the American Political Science Association. He is the author of numerous books, including Polyarchy and Democracy and Its Critics, available in paperback from Yale University Press.

Dahl's Who Governs is probably no less relevant today than it was in its own time. A fairly comprehensive quantitative and qualitative study of the political nature of the City of New Haven from its founding to approximately 1959, Dahl presents a view of American "democracy" as a democracy where resources of power are unevenly distributed, and not cumulatively held by one single segment of society. Power and government are pluralistic in a uniquely American sense in his New Haven of the past, and also "democratic" in an American understanding. In this book he gives us an idea of who and what groups are involved in power and making decisions in politics, and how those individuals at the top involve the middling and lower strata of society in their elevation to power and execution thereof. What's most interesting to me is that Dahl's conception of power under Mayor Lee in the 1950's approaches nearly a corporatist government structure based on groupings of power bases (ethnic, regional, intellectual, industry-based) and strategically selected political "representatives" of those distinct groups selected by the mayor. However, Dahl is clear to point out

that although Lee ran an effective executive office that was able to effect a broad swath of policy changes, the citizens of New Haven never compromised or had compromised their "democratic creed" by the mayor's efforts. While interesting and certainly relevant to today's socio-political issues - especially his section on the levels of integration of immigrant minority groups into the political process - certainly a broader framework of understanding needs to be considered to understand American democracy and electoral politics as a whole. As expected Dahl is quick to remind the reader that New Haven has to be considered in a broader context of the entire United States. Even so, this work contains a number of concepts and frameworks that can be applied to a holistic understanding of the ever-evolving pluralistic nature of American politics and power.

Great product for the money

Good

This book continues to be the best example of an application of "Decisional Method" research on Community Power which tends to yield an answer of Pluralism in the way New Haven Connecticut was governed. Now, how much Dahl's results matter to you is another case--many believe his results are faulty due to the use of the Decisional method. The method itself is considered to be of limited use. The polar opposite of this book is Floyd Hunter's (1953) "Community Power Structure." Hunter used a "Positional" method and determined that the elite govern in Atlanta. Dahl's book is good for what it is, but it is not what experts on local political power believe now. To get a well-rounded education on local political power, read Hunter. To get up-to-date, read Stone (1989) Regime Politics (used Decisional and positional approaches together), and read Logan and Molotch (1987) Urban Fortunes. [Revised edition] 2007.

There are a number of approaches toward explaining who has power in a community or some other political unit. Among these: elitism, pluralism, participatory democracy, representative democracy, technocracy, and so on. The basic text on pluralism? Robert Dahl's case study of New Haven, CT, published first in 1961. His argument was that, in this city, decision making power was divided among different groups. One set of groups was involved in, for instance, urban development. Another set in education policy within the city. Still another set of groups with respect to political nominations and elections. No single elite dominated across these issues. Hence, in his judgment, power was divided. Elected officials, too, had a role to play. The city's mayor, Richard Lee, was at

the head of an "executive-centered coalition."The central importance of this case study is its elaboration of pluralism, the politics of competing centers of power, in action. As such, it remains a classic in the world of political science.

First-rate analysis of the dynamics of power in the shaping of an American city. The analysis benefits from the specificity of having chosen a single city: New Haven, CT. But the results of the analysis would be enlightening to the process of understanding the function of power in any community. The scholarship is of the highest quality; the discussion is insightful and thought-provoking. A great resource for those aspiring to shape/influence direction of community growth.

another well done piece by dahl. he brings you into the everyday runnings of an american city and lets people see how politics can run and ruin everything.

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