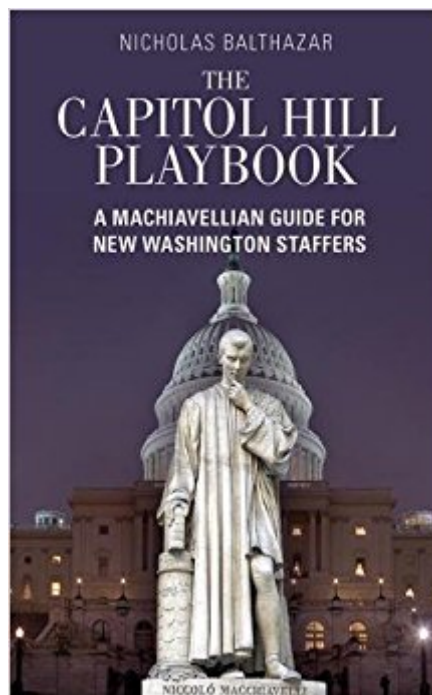




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# The Capitol Hill Playbook: A Machiavellian Guide For Young Political Professionals



## Synopsis

In presenting the ideal skills, abilities, and qualities of a successful politico, *The Capitol Hill Playbook* speaks to today's generation of staffers like no other book before it. Weaving together Renaissance-era political philosophies and contemporary illustrations, Nicholas Balthazar enlists the help of Niccolò Machiavelli, author of the venerable political treatise *The Prince*, and Baldassare Castiglione, author of *The Book of the Courtier*—the authoritative account of Renaissance court life—to demonstrate two models of political life and their applicability today. Balthazar offers readers a path between these two methods, exploring the mechanics of working for elected officials but also discussing the philosophies behind contemporary political work. *The Capitol Hill Playbook* answers all the questions a newly hired staffer might want to ask: Why do politicians run for office? Why is devotion so important in politics? Why must a staffer be a good communicator? Why are friendships such an essential and elusive part of political life? How do you win a political knife fight? Why should a political staffer never wear a bow tie to the office? And more! A provocative and informative read, *The Capitol Hill Playbook* will be indispensable to any political aspirant and, with an intriguing look back to the Renaissance, reveals how politics today has both changed and remained the same through the centuries.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Nicholas Balthazar is a veteran political staffer with experience that includes work in Congress, the

White House, and on the state level. He has worked side-by-side with several well-known politicians on numerous election campaigns and policy initiatives throughout his career. He lives in Washington, DC.

This book is more about the 'why' of politics than the 'how'. For example, though it often explains 'how' to do things, the focus is rather on why doing things a certain way is important. The title is a bit deceiving. It's part history, part memoir, part advice book. If you are new to the world of politics, the book is filled with important things to know. I wish I had had this book before I started my career. The book may be helpful to seasoned politicians, but it is essential to new politicians.

Great book and good information you can actually use, while still being engrossing for any history/poli sci buffs. Loved the chapter on how to win an office war.

I was hoping for an insightful book based on methodology and psychology. Instead I get a book heavily based on conjecture and supposition. This book is written as its intended audience was to impress high schoolers. Do yourself a favor, stick to reading the Prince.

The Capitol Hill Playbook is highly recommended for students of political science, history, media studies and literature, as well as those who want to learn about human nature. The author's grasp of history, both Renaissance and contemporary, is one of the book's great strengths. The use of Castiglione's Book of the Courtier balances out Machiavelli's more cynical Prince. He deftly navigates between these Renaissance texts and the contemporary political world, following well-selected quotations with examples that are quite relevant. Rather than writing a purely Machiavellian book, however, Nicholas Balthazar instructs his ideal modern courtier in diplomacy and tact. His unblinking pragmatism links his approach with Machiavelli's while stripping away the piety and hypocrisy intrinsic to politics. Finally, it is clear and accessible without being oversimplified, a delicate balancing act and an important book for anyone considering a life of public service, whether in the spotlight or behind the scenes.-Dr. Elizabeth A. Pallitto

One of the smartest people I've ever known said to me, "Most books only have one or two good ideas. A really good book might have three good ideas." This is a three-idea book. Balthazar fills his book with observations and ideas guaranteed to be useful to those wishing to enter the political field. Perhaps one of the worst things for this book is that its target audience is unlikely to ever pick it

up because they're the least aware they need its help. This book will best serve those raised outside of politics who do not spend much of their time people-watching. If you've lived around DC your entire life and enjoy thinking about why people act the way they do, many of the observations in this book (though by no means all) might have already occurred to you. However, even if you truly have thought of all the ideas in this book, and the most it does for you is to remind you of certain things you should be actively thinking about all the time, it will have done its job of guiding you and still prove very useful. To illustrate this advice, Balthazar fills the book with short blurbs from history. If you like learning about interesting people in the past, those bits make this already easy-to-read book even easier. If you know anyone who is either just trying to enter politics or who has just entered, this book will be immensely useful.

I'm fairly new to Capitol Hill and found the book to be very helpful, enjoyable and easy to read. Having clerked for a judge after law school, I also noticed a lot of similarities--which had escaped me before--between the role of a law clerk and the that of a legislative assistant/aide. Had I read this book before I clerked, I would have probably approached my clerkship differently and more successfully.

This book is trash. Balthazar presents claims as facts, but they are only loosely based on history. For example, if Roosevelt hadn't had this personality flaw, his staffer would have failed in his career. Balthazar makes many predictions about the course of history using if-statements and then directs folks in their careers based on those ifs. Little is given in the way of explanation for those opinions. He also gives lots of advice for what to be or not to be, but does not give direction for how to be that or not to be that. TL;DR: If you want to waste your time reading someone's poorly backed opinions, save your money and find a blog.

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