This first book by Richard M. Gamble, history professor at Palm Beach Atlantic University, explores part of the reason why America chose in 1917 to invest so many young lives in a largely European conflict then called the Great War and now known as World War I. It is a remarkable study of progressive Christians on a mission to reform the world and remake it in America’s image. Gamble redefines at least one significant source of America’s identity—Progressive Christianity and its influence on the Progressive polity. Indeed, he ventures that the Progressive movement originated within the framework of Christian Protestantism and advanced to the political arena much later in the history of the era. He strongly suggests that it was Christian leaders who drove the political leadership toward Progressivism rather than the other way around. This unsettling fact may be Gamble’s most controversial conclusion.

The War for Righteousness is a more important work than its publication with a small press like Intercollegiate Studies Institute Books would indicate. It is an important work for historians, Christian theologians, and even public administrationists, but it has not been as widely distributed as it should be. Why? Could it be that no scholarly discipline wanted to face the perceived controversy of religion’s role in public policy in a country that prides itself on a strict, constitutionally mandated, and operationally real separation of church and state, and even more so today than ever before in history, now that we find ourselves arguing the constitutionality of the “one nation under God” clause of the Pledge of Allegiance? Was the role of the Progressive ministers of the time merely an aberration in history? Did it not happen at all—or was it just a figment of Gamble’s imagination or his belief system expressing itself, or is it simply a worldview that is not popular to consider today?

If this book is not more widely read by those interested in studying the Progressive Era, Gamble’s thesis will fall into obscurity along with a book with a limited publication budget. That eventuality would be a loss to our under-
standing of the role of religion not just in this country but on the international stage, including but not limited to our understanding of why Muslim extremists continue to fight on in the Middle East. This connection may seem a stretch of intellectual hubris, but as one reads Gamble’s book, one cannot help but wonder whether the Christian theology that was a significant contributing and driving force behind America’s ideological motives for involvement in Europe during the years 1914–1918 parallels the Muslim influence on Middle Eastern conflicts across the region and throughout the world today. Religion can and does drive a public policy agenda and enlist the support of a previously apathetic mass of the population.

If I were teaching a public administration history course today that emphasized the Progressive Era as a period when the discipline was growing, I would, without reservation, adopt this book and spend considerable lecture time reflecting on Gamble’s research so as to allow ample room for discussion without crossing the line into the dark and dangerous waters of bringing theology into the classroom. Certainly, one would not want to have to defend oneself against that accusation. Gamble never predicted that his book would be of value to public administration. However, policy has been and may continue yet today to be significantly influenced by organized religion and politically active religious leaders. Gamble’s book proves this beyond the shadow of argument.

There is no doubt that the Falwells and the Robertsons, the Moral Majority and the Rainbow Coalition, Catholics and others always seem to get their views on the national agenda and before the press. However, in keeping with the long-held philosophy of separation of church and state, Americans have not sent Jerry Falwell or Pat Robertson to the White House even though both campaigned for the job. So it would appear that Americans want a religious voice heard, but not a religious leader in the White House—an interesting dichotomy of public sentiment.

The Protestant clergy were “progressive” in their thinking on “theology, politics and foreign affairs,” and their influence went far beyond their pulpits. They were literate and educated and wrote widely in both secular and religious journals, magazines, and newspapers. They spoke in public forums of both religious and citizen groups. They organized smartly into respected political-action groups and became adept at lobbying their global worldview. These organizations were so influential that they took on the form of social and political movements claiming large memberships of socially and politically active people.

Gamble writes, “the Progressive clergy viewed the war as a chance to achieve their social gospel objectives—expressing an expansive, interventionist spirit to save the world for Christianity and modernism.” He goes on to observe, “They seized upon the war as an opportunity to reconstruct the churches, America, and the world according to the imperatives of the social gospel. Their peacetime crusade became a wartime crusade” (p. 47).

Does Gamble’s interpretation have implications for an understanding of events in today’s world? By another name, but by the same definition, the Protestant conversion of the world for Christianity sounds like the Muslims’ modern-day jihad.

The Progressive clergy viewed the war as God’s plan for humanity: “to rid the world of wickedness and make a way for new, modern ideas and launch every country on a path to prosperity” (p. 48). The same rhetoric continues to
be used today to justify American intervention in world affairs to save people and introduce them to a better way of life under democracy and capitalism—twin ideals within which Christianity weaves itself.

Gamble quotes the British historian Herbert Butterfield, who wrote that in 1914 “each nation told its people, that our enemy is worse than the rest of human nature and that his wickedness demands utter destruction” (p. 4). This is almost the same wording used to justify dropping two atom bombs on an already defeated Japan in order to force an unconditional surrender. It even has echoes in today’s U.S. Army Special Forces war cry, “Kill ’em all, let God sort ’em out.”

The Progressive clergy played a large, pivotal role in turning the Great War into a “War for Righteousness” worthy of involvement and sacrifice. “Religion helped Americans define themselves, their enemies, their purpose and their future.” Gamble traces this belief from the first Puritan settlers in the New World, “bringing a Puritan sense of mission, a community of visible saints charged with a world-redeemptive mission” (p. 9).

America was sanctified to engage in a worldwide mission to reform the world and embrace the goals of modernism, prosperity, and community spirit under the common banner of a Protestant ethic. This Christian rhetoric was soon adopted by the politicians of the time, who generated policy initiatives that put America squarely in the role of world leader, kept it there throughout the remainder of the twentieth century, and seem to be solidly fixed in the first decade of the twenty-first century. This expectation was reflected in Woodrow Wilson’s 1917 war message in which he proclaimed that America was intervening for the sake of “a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free” (p. 149).

In the final analysis, the final chapter on the views of the Progressives has not been written. As Gamble concludes, “The immediate failure of the War for Righteousness of 1914–1918 did not quench the progressives’ zeal for their social gospel imperatives.” He further postulates that “with righteousness only postponed, the question remains whether the progressive mind ever truly abandoned its perpetual war” (p. 252).

—Michael W. Popejoy
West Palm Beach, Florida

Hope in the Dark:
Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities

BY REBECCA SOLNIT
New York: Nation Books, 2004

“The times they are a-changing”—the familiar words of Bob Dylan immediately evoke visions of a period in history when change was almost visible and tactile. In Hope in the Dark, a short book with a wide reach, cultural critic and self-described “grazer in ideas” Rebecca Solnit encourages her readers
to see change differently. Solnit tells the story of imperceptible change highlighting the contemporary “mundane” that was yesterday’s impossibility. Her account celebrates the perseverance and patience of citizens and activists whose efforts have changed our world slowly, incrementally, and often without recognition (the “untold histories” in the subtitle). An activist with progressive inclinations, she nevertheless offers readers of many different political persuasions new ways of thinking and alternative visions.

Solnit’s writing is lyrical and engaging; she tells stories and anecdotes full of optimism and finds glimmers of silver in the most ominous clouds. Her book is made up of a series of short chapters, each presenting a vignette of a historical incident or pursuing an innovative way of thinking about history. The style of presentation makes the book an ideal read for those whose time is limited; it can be enjoyed either as a collection of “bite-sized” essays or as a complete work. Solnit stresses the interplay of culture and politics, and highlights the importance of symbolism and ideas as catalysts of change. She takes her title, in part, from Virginia Woolf, who wrote during World War I, “The future is dark, which is on the whole, the best thing the future can be.” Solnit reads “dark” here not as gloomy or menacing, but as inscrutable and unknown. Thus, hope is more than an emotion that gets us through hard times. In finding “hope in the dark,” Solnit issues a call to action—a vision of, and a gamble on, a better future; thus the “wild possibilities” in the subtitle.

Rejecting the idea that history unfolds in a linear fashion, Solnit describes it in the opening chapter as “a crab scuttling sideways.” She suggests that the quest for cause-and-effect relationships is often not as simple as we presume it to be. Effects are often indirect, separated by time and intervening events from their causes (which are not always as apparent as we might like). Here she presents a recurring theme: Activism often seems unrewarding because the goals advocates set are often not achieved in the immediate. Nonetheless, the impact of protesters and campaigners frequently transcends their self-perceived failure. Solnit elegantly illustrates this idea by recounting the story of a dejected member of the Women’s Strike for Peace who questioned her own efficacy on a dreary rainy morning standing outside the Kennedy White House to protest nuclear testing. Years later, Solnit says, she heard Dr. Benjamin Spock, a high-profile spokesperson on the issue, relate how he had been inspired to get involved after seeing a crowd of women standing with placards outside the White House in the rain.

Solnit gently but persistently questions the way we look at the world. She challenges the viewpoint of the media as well as that of the activists with whom she is a kindred spirit. Two pictures of children, one a wide-eyed and endearing earthquake orphan, the other a tragic victim of bombing in Iraq, provide her with a way to illuminate her perspective of the media. Solnit contrasts the image of the earthquake survivor as a “poignant picture” with the one of the Iraqi boy injured by U.S. bombs as “news.” She suggests that the latter is news because it highlights what went wrong and tells us about “our own effect in the world.” Meanwhile, Solnit critiques activists for too often telling tales of doom, for emphasizing the negative, and for being “puritans” concerned with demonstrating their own “virtue” rather than seeking positive outcomes. She challenges advocates of change to imagine great possibilities,
to believe in the power of individuals and in the culmination of numerous small acts that transform the collective imagination.

The second section of the book is devoted to what Solnit describes as a “count down” to the outbreak in 2003 of protests all across the globe opposing the impending war in Iraq. She considers five events to have hailed the birth of a new millennium, beginning with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Having been born in the year the wall was erected, its demise was one of the many events she thought were unimaginable in her lifetime. From the tumultuous events in Eastern Europe, Solnit takes us to Mexico in 1994 and the emergence of the Zapatista resistance to the North American Free Trade Agreement and its encroaching global capitalism. She highlights the use of poetry and cultural symbols in all these instances, as well as the non-violence and democratic organizational structure. Solnit movingly asserts that their guns of carved wood served the demonstrators more effectively than real weapons, and she notes that their words and images traveled around the world, inspiring other marginalized groups. Solnit’s next stop is the protest in Seattle against the World Trade Organization. Here she is inspired by the use of the Internet to organize a global protest and leaderless movement of small groups from diverse backgrounds. Significantly, she maintains that progressives began to address problems and tensions within the movement at this time, considering issues of “us” as well as of “them.” Activists began to organizationally replicate the direct democracy of the Zapatistas; gone were the charismatic leaders and masculine dominance of earlier protest movements. Internal divisions dissipated as “teamsters” (labor union members) marched with “turtles” (environmentalists).

Solnit also finds hope in the tragedy of 9/11. She suggests that the outpouring of cooperation and solidarity in the immediate aftermath of the event offered great potential for change. A sense of world citizenship began to develop in unison with a changing perspective as citizens became engaged with the public realm in juxtaposition to their usual isolated and privatized individual selves. Accordingly, a great opportunity to develop community values out of the disaster was lost when Americans were encouraged to return to shopping malls and to “spy” on their neighbors. In Solnit’s tale, however, the communal ties and potential for a changed outlook that were unrealized in 2001 laid the groundwork for the coming together of massive demonstrations against the Iraq war in 2003. Organized largely via the Internet, these were the largest protests in history. Involving people from all seven continents, they were the antithesis of the “with us or against us” attitude of the Bush administration. Solnit describes the protest marches as “bodies speaking by walking.” While they did not prevent the war, these expressions of opposition perhaps delayed it, allowing Iraqis to prepare or evacuate. Further, the demonstrations dampened the “shock and awe” strategy by showing that the cost in world opinion and unrest would have been too high.

The final section of the book focuses on developing alternative ways of seeing change and history. Solnit asks us what it means to save. If we work to “save” an endangered species, at what point can we go home—when is the saving complete? This question is used to illuminate how all too often we see history as a series of events with an end—we set goals and feel we can “go home” when they are (or are not) achieved. Solnit’s response is that it is always too soon to go home, because
history and change are continuing processes. Therefore, we need to foster a view of citizen engagement and political action as everyday events, not simply as responses to a crisis. A single local farmers’ market may say little about food production and distribution. Thousands of them indicate growing awareness of eating as a moral act and agriculture as a system of power. Solnit also reminds readers to consider the “tools” that historic activists have provided. To this end, she emphasizes various modes of action, non-violent protest, the use of music and culture as forces of opposition, and patterns from the past that can promote change in the future. An illustration here is the protest movement around a nuclear site in Nevada, the events of which were incorporated into a statement by a Kazakh poet. His words triggered a parallel movement in opposition to a nuclear site in Kazakhstan.

The power of words is a central theme in the narrative. For example, Solnit very precisely uses the term “corporate globalization” (rather than the common parlance of “globalization”) to describe what she considers to be an unjust international order. Additionally, she points out that it was not so long ago that we did not have terms for domestic violence, hate-crimes, racial profiling—such additions to our lexicon are the result of individual actions imperceptibly creating cultural change. She also asks us to look through history and see not only the events, but things that were prevented as well, activist victories marked by what did not happen rather than what did. We are also encouraged to see the positive potentialities in things we often see as negative, such as how the giant corporation that promotes Viagra unintentionally saved the endangered caribou whose antlers used to be sought as an aphrodisiac.

This is a little book with a “big heart.” The narrative meanders, but then so do historical processes of change, in Solnit’s view. Despite its overtly progressive political stance (and occasional “new age” lapses), the book contains insights for a larger audience. Throughout, it cautions against the perils of perfectionism, inflexible schemas, narrow definitions of success, and binary thinking. Solnit’s account of an emerging rapprochement between environmentalists and western ranchers is especially telling in this regard. Moreover, the book counters the impression that few means are open to those who wish to contribute to the shaping of public values. Solnit manages to effectively demonstrate the impact of individual, often anonymous, acts. She shows that we can change the world, although it may be hard sometimes to see how. These sentiments echo the lyrics of the musician and activist Jackson Browne, who muses, “somewhere between the time you arrive, and the time you go, may lie a reason you were alive, but you’ll never know . . .”

—Susan Orr
University of Florida
Selling Out: How Big Corporate Money Buys Elections, Rams Through Legislation, and Betrays Our Democracy

BY MARK GREEN
New York: Regan Books, 2004

It is no secret that the political system has been compromised by economic interests. The disdain for politicians and the political process that has been so evident in recent years is closely tied to the backroom politics that have bred unhealthy marriages between elected officials and special-interest groups. In Selling Out, Mark Green plunges into the dark world of corporate politics to reveal the true depth of this crisis. In this informative work, he leads the reader through the seven circles of corporate-political sin, emerging with an array of solutions for reforming the system that has taken democracy captive.

A veteran player in the political field, Green compiles thirty years of experience in political campaigning and public advocacy into Selling Out. His experience as a mayoral candidate in New York City makes the book not merely a critical analysis but, much more, a practical guide to sweeping politics clean of corporate interest. While the subject of ethics is not treated directly, it is implicit in every aspect of the book. Officials who spend hours a day on fund-raising activities, spend millions of dollars to buy their way into public office, or betray voters to protect corporate interests are surely suffering from ethical deficiencies.

Selling Out begins with three chapters that examine the historical and legal framework that has led to the current crisis, followed by three chapters that expose the horrifying results of corporate influence on American democracy. The last two chapters present case studies of reform models from local and state political systems and present well-defined solutions for releasing democracy from the grip of corporate money.

In the opening chapter, Green notes that “Selling Out is a book about how big money is sabotaging our democracy—and how to stop it” (p. 3). He goes on to imply that “the scandal of strings-attached money corrupting politics and government is the most urgent problem in America today—because it makes it harder to solve nearly all other problems” (p. 4). In order to comprehend the contemporary predicament, an overview of the historical and legal precedents is necessary.

To be sure, money in politics is not a recent invention. Green takes the reader back to the time of George Washington, when the practice of “treating” was common among political candidates, and continues through the developmental stages of American democracy, showing how money has always influenced electoral processes, as well as policy development. Throughout the nineteenth century, political corruption worsened, and the use of money to buy influence, votes, and political favors led to the Pendleton Act of 1883, “one of the earliest efforts to reform the political money system” (p. 37).

In the second chapter, Green traces...
the thread of scandal and reform through the twentieth century, highlighting key events like the passage of the Federal Corrupt Practices Act of 1925, the Hatch Act of 1940, and the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971. Each of these represented a reform attempt to eradicate economic interests from the political system. Throughout this valuable history lesson, Green also demonstrates the continual decline of political ethics, as officials became more and more willing to sacrifice the public interest for personal gain.

One of the recurring themes in Selling Out, introduced in chapter 3, is the lasting impact of the Supreme Court’s 1975 decision in Buckley v. Valeo, which “defined campaign finance rules in the last quarter of the twentieth century” (p. 55). The decision, along with the 1974 amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act, paved the way for a new assault on electoral processes by corporate money in that it launched Political Action Committees (PACs) “as the dominant players of campaign finance in the 1980s” (p. 61). Buckley halted attempts by Congress to reduce the influence of money in politics, and opened the floodgates for the pay-to-play democracy known today. Green reiterates throughout the book the essentiality of overturning Buckley in order to truly reform campaign finance laws.

In addition to Buckley, the third chapter also touches on the savings and loan scandals of the 1980s, and the increased influx of soft money in electoral politics. By this point, Green has painted a clear image of the terribly damaging relationship between corporate money and democracy. The evidence is clearly supported by research and statistical information provided by a number of credible organizations, including Common Cause and Public Citizen. The link between corporate interests and electoral processes is clearly delineated with descriptions of how economic interests have violated the basic principles of democracy.

The undeniable influence of money in the political process is a corrupting force because it induces candidates and elected officials to prioritize corporate interests above the interests of the constituencies they represent. The costs of campaigning have grown so great that candidates who are not independently wealthy are dependent on money coming directly or indirectly from corporations. This has limited political activity to those who can pay their own way through multi-million-dollar electoral campaigns or are willing to compromise their independence by accepting corporate money. The ethical implications for democracy are apparent. If the current tendency continues, offices will only be held by the super-rich or the super-indebted.

Despite the frightening landscape of campaign finance, Green also discusses at some length the development and passage of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA). After seven years of legislative gridlock, the passage of McCain-Feingold on November 6, 2002, represented “the most significant reform since 1974” (p. 81). The BCRA met with considerable opposition from both parties, and was finally passed in a form much less ambitious than its original presentation. Despite the resistance, which resulted in considerable restructuring of the landmark legislation, the BCRA did manage to limit soft money donations, restrict issue advocacy by special-interest groups, and set ceilings on hard money contributions by individuals.

After structuring the first three chapters to describe the problem of corporate
influence in politics, Green continues in chapters 4 and 5 by effectively illustrating the results. He likens the fund-raising competitions in campaigns to the arms race of the cold war era. Candidates must turn to deep-pocketed donors in order to compete, and dedicate excessive time to fund-raising activities. When officials are attempting to raise tens of thousands of dollars a day for reelection campaigns, little time is left over for the work they were elected to perform. Although officials are ethically accountable to the public that sent them to office, they are more apt to chase dollars then to defend the common interest. The system creates “part-time legislators and full time fundraisers.”

As the costs of campaigns continue to rise, incumbents are left with a lopsided advantage. Green argues that incumbents are benefited by campaign infrastructure, as well as a direct line to PACs and wealthy donors. Incumbents are rarely outspent, and rarely lose, closing the doors to many aspirants. Reelection of incumbents has climbed at an alarming rate, challenging the basic premises of participatory democracy. The relationship between corporate money and incumbent reelection is clear—money has become the most determining factor in campaigns at all levels.

In the fifth chapter of Selling Out, Green gets to the climax of the mounting horror story: decreased civic participation and increased corporate influence in policy development. He notes that “as special-interest dollars in elections go up by the millions, voter participation goes down” (p. 150). Among established democracies, voter participation in the United States ranks dangerously close to the bottom. The apathetic reaction of the public is a product of the disgust and frustration from watching democracy auctioned off to the highest bidder. Most voters feel that their vote does not count for much, when compared with the influence of PACs and corporate contributors.

In addition to the public withdrawal from civic activities, special-interest money also molds policy development. In chapters 5 and 6, Green exposes the manipulation of the democratic system by key industries and also profiles a number of key players in the high-stakes game of political chess. In particular, he reveals the intrusive persuasion of the airline, automobile, tobacco, energy, and healthcare industries by exposing the not-so-hidden connections between campaign donations and policy development.

Beyond the persistent demands of the most powerful industries, Green also focuses on significant actors in this tragic production, such as Representative Tom DeLay of Texas, Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi, former California governor Gray Davis, and Senator Jon Corzine of New Jersey. Each of these figures has contributed in some way to the proliferation of money in the political process. Also profiled are Senator Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, Bruce Ratner, president and CEO of one of New York’s largest real estate developers, and a major donor to democratic candidates, James C. Callaway, a wealthy Houston oilman and former head of the Democratic Committee’s Victory Fund, and Representative Jim Leach of Iowa, who have all fought to sever the ties between money and democracy. This section is quite engaging, and the personalized stories add a compelling element to the book.

The final two chapters are dedicated to solutions, focusing on reform models in New York City, Maine, and Arizona before making final suggestions for reform. Green compares the campaign finance model used in New York
City with New York State’s system, demonstrating the value of the comprehensive reform program enacted by Ed Koch while mayor of New York in 1988. The reformed campaign finance systems in New York, Maine, and Arizona have improved competitiveness, reduced spending limits, strengthened administrative oversight, and bolstered voter education. Green’s experience in New York City’s reformed system illustrates the feasibility of reforms that ultimately strengthen democracy.

Mark Green concludes Selling Out by suggesting a series of practical solutions to the crisis:

A comprehensive campaign finance reform program is ideally suited to achieve the conservative goals on which our economy and society are built—competition, efficiency, accountability, open markets, and market integrity. Specifically, four reforms would restore our electoral democracy by elevating voters over donors: spending limits, public financing, a restructured enforcement agency, and free broadcast time and mailings. (p. 270)

Selling Out is an essential read for public administrators who value integrity and the ethics of public service. It describes how and why democracy has been constricted by money. The problem is clearly and thoroughly defined, with supporting evidence that leaves little room for doubt. Not only does the book portray the threat that corporate money poses for democracy, it also draws a detailed blueprint for change. As a veteran of the political battlefields, Green has witnessed the disfigurement of the political system resulting from corporate greed, and he has developed a rescue plan. Selling Out challenges America to renew the ethical foundations of its political system by snatching democracy from the clutches of corporate interests and returning it to the people.

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Ethics and Global Politics: The Active Learning Sourcebook

BY APRIL MORGAN, LUCINDA JOY PEACH, AND COLETTE MAZZUCCELLI
Bloomfield, Conn.: Kumarian Press, 2004

Ethics and Global Politics is an active-learning resource book intended for the undergraduate educator teaching ethics in international relations. The book is organized into two parts. The first part consists of three “toolkits,” and the second contains ten learning modules. The goal of the book is to provide students with skills that will assist them in understanding and working their way through the often-competing interests of ethics and politics.

Toolkit 1, “International Relations Theories and Pedagogical Approaches,” defends the active-learning approach and cites research showing “that educational outcome depends to a large degree on how much of themselves students put into what they study” (p. 15). In addition, the toolkit explains what it
means to develop a “theory of mind” and expand that to a “global theory of mind” as a way to think about international conflict (Toolkit 1, be it noted, is targeted to instructors and not students).

Toolkit 2, “Kant, Mill, and Sound Ethical Arguments,” discusses what it means to present a sound ethical argument and the need for consistency. The discussion provides skills and philosophical argument to enhance students’ thinking skills. Toolkit 2 additionally examines the varying definitions of the word “good” and different ethical theories, focusing primarily on the deontology of Kant and the consequentialism of Mill. The book examines the strengths and weaknesses of both, with a touch of cultural differences playing into the mix. Toolkit 3, “The United States Is Not the Globe,” provides a look at some normative differences around the world that are often overshadowed by Western ideals of what is best for a country. The intent is to provide alternative perspectives when approaching international events.

The second part of the book is made up of ten learning modules that focus on different international issues and challenge students to construct ethical solutions to real problems in global politics. With the exception of Toolkit 1, all of the toolkits and modules are organized the same way. They each offer an introductory explanation of the section’s intent and objectives, a miniglossary with key terms, step-by-step directions for teaching the section to students, copy-ready student handouts, discussion questions, a debriefing exercise, a selected bibliography, related Web sites, and endnotes where applicable.

Ethics and Global Politics, as its subtitle states, is a sourcebook for active learning, but it is grounded in ethical theory that would be just as appropriate for traditional passive teaching. Its most important contribution is that of teaching ethical decision-making skills that can be applied not only to international issues but to domestic issues involving competing cultural values. It is an attempt to think critically in examining issues of social injustice, and to think beyond the ethnocentric thinking that Western cultures often impose on others.

As a teaching tool, Ethics and Global Politics is well organized and consistent in the layout of each module. For the instructor it is user-friendly and provides many different ethical scenarios that would be applicable for an international relations course. Although intended as a guide for instructors, it is a compelling read for anyone interested in exploring ethical issues.

From a practitioner’s perspective, the most thought-provoking sections are Toolkits 1, 2, and 3. Toolkit 1’s discussion of developing a theory of mind, and ultimately a global theory of mind, aptly notes the need to expand one’s approach to an issue by considering how others may be approaching the same issue. This is especially important when dealing with ethical issues that involve competing cultural values. Achieving a global theory of mind helps to prevent a narrow-minded ethnocentric approach. Working to achieve such a state requires the opening of one’s mind, realizing there are many other ways of approaching the same issue. Every practitioner should understand the concept, and this toolkit is a useful introduction.

The first tool set in Toolkit 2 is a good discussion of what constitutes a sound ethical argument. The discussion provides a framework for those who have never received guidance in what it means to argue philosophically. The second tool set is one of the most important sections, for it discusses ethical theories based on the works of Mill and Kant. In addition, it correctly notes the competing definitions of the simple
word “good.” The question of what is “good” lies at the heart of most ethical debates, and the fact that there is no clear agreement on a definition of “good” exemplifies how people can approach and resolve ethical dilemmas in completely different ways. The surprising, and disappointing, facet to this section is the complete exclusion of classic Aristotelian virtue ethics. Ironically, the tool set begins with a short discussion of how “the Western philosophical tradition is usually identified with the ancient Greeks” (p. 45) but never mentions Aristotle. One understands that so small a section cannot cover every possible ethical theory, but virtue theory should have been included with the discussions of consequentialism and deontology to simply provide an additional tool. The primary purpose of this book is to teach ethics as related to world affairs, and many of the students for whom it is intended may never have been exposed to the most important ethical theories. For that reason, it would be more beneficial to provide at least a short introductory paragraph on theorists other than Kant and Mill. This would give greater meaning to the questions in the “Concluding Thoughts” section: “Are you a Kantian? A Utilitarian? . . . Maybe you like different aspects of both moral theories” (p. 56). What if a reader supports neither theory? Someone unfamiliar with ethical theory may believe that Kant and Mill are all there is to choose from. Even though it is acknowledged that this tool set is but an introduction on ethical theory, it is almost too brief. If the book were expanded to give it more substance, the suggested books for further reading could easily be expanded as well to provide additional resources.

Toolkit 3 provides a thought-provoking look at what it means to have “good life” and “good government.” Its title, “The United States Is Not the Globe,” is quite timely given the current U.S. involvement in controversial world affairs. The need to consider perspectives from different cultures and religious traditions is a critical part of developing a global theory of mind. Such a thought process is useful for everyone, not just those directly affected by ethical issues. And with increasing cultural diversity, the ability and willingness of practitioners to consider differing perspectives is a critical component of ethical decision-making.

The ten teaching modules, though targeted toward instructors for use in classroom exercises, provide good case-study-type scenarios that will afford any reader an opportunity to think critically about current global issues and apply some of the information. Practitioners interested in expanding their decision-making skills, especially in regard to issues that include competing cultural values, will find this book a good addition to their personal libraries. Instructors teaching ethics in international relations will find it to be invaluable if they subscribe to the benefits of active learning over traditional passive-learning techniques.

Ethics and Global Politics is not only thought-provoking but interesting to read. Its intent is to provide the fundamental skills for an understanding of ethical affairs throughout the world. The authors do not suggest that they have all the answers, but they encourage critical thinking and the application of differing values to help solve problems. Skills of this type are of use to anyone faced with ethical issues, so the benefit of this book outside the classroom is apparent.

—Robyn Dombroski
Willowick, Ohio
The Price of Government: Getting the Results We Need in an Age of Permanent Fiscal Crisis

BY DAVID OSBORNE AND PETER HUTCHINSON
Cambridge, Mass.: Basic Books, 2004

What is it that any of us wants when we step into a government office to get information, file a form, obtain a permit, or ask what the law requires? And what does it take to provide those services most effectively in the face of vastly limited resources and significantly escalating need? In The Price of Government: Getting the Results We Need in an Age of Permanent Fiscal Crisis, David Osborne (who co-authored the best-selling Reinventing Government with Ted Gaebler in 1992) and Peter Hutchinson offer a provocative and highly worthwhile read for anyone whose calling it is to ensure that governmental institutions and the services they deliver are open, accessible, and worthy of the public’s trust.

As “the ultimate payoff,” the authors note, customer satisfaction with public services is not only a value in itself but a key factor in shaping citizens’ confidence in government. Citing research in both the United States and Canada that identifies a strong positive correlation between the two, they conclude that “since measures of confidence in government have been falling for several decades, this link establishes service quality as an important influence on civic health” (p. 209). Noting the “worst fiscal crisis since World War II” (p. 1) for U.S. government at the local, state, and federal levels and the “bankrupt ideologies of the left and right,” Osborne and Hutchinson outline how governments have no choice but to “face the fiscal music,” offering them a way to turn the crisis “into an opportunity to wring far more value out of our public institutions” so that an “immensely frustrated” people can get “a government that is worth what they pay” (pp. xii–xiii).

Osborne, and Hutchinson’s book presents a new benchmark for improving how government works, based on the premise that “the frontier of reinvention has moved on” (p. xiii). They advance their latest approach to flexible, innovative, and entrepreneurial government by using illustrations from across North America to describe how services considered vital can survive, and indeed thrive, in an era of continuing significant fiscal crises.

Embraced by elected officials in Iowa, Minnesota, Washington state, Charlotte, North Carolina, and most recently Los Angeles, “budgeting for outcomes” is a process the authors describe as intended to turn the budget process on its head in two ways. First, it focuses on the results citizens demand and the price citizens are willing to pay for those results, rather than the programs that exist and the costs they incur. Next, it inverts the process by drawing a bottom line based on the price citizens are willing to pay for government, and decides to “buy only those programs that deliver the results we want and leave the rest behind” (p. xiii). Only through such an approach, they assert, will administrators be able to
“cut government down to its most effective size and shape...squeeze more value out of every tax dollar...and reform how government works on the inside (its management systems and bureaucratic rules) to improve its performance on the outside” (p. xiii).

The book’s first sections detail “smarter budgeting” and offer lengthy discussions about the ills of most current budget processes, thereby setting the stage for the prescription in its remaining sections. One author describes, for example, a series of “deadly deceptions” widely practiced in many current budgeting processes, and points out that simply borrowing, employing creative accounting, selling off assets, and “nickel and diming” employees with symbolic gestures—such as ordering the unscrewing of every other light bulb in its government buildings, as the state of Missouri did in 2003—do not address the fundamental issue. Instead, Osborne and Hutchinson assert that decision-makers must truly understand the nature of the budget problem, and urge them to see the fiscal crisis as an opportunity to reinvent how agencies work. For those who are engaged in the daily practice of public administration and routinely face decisions about allocating resources under significant constraints, this discussion is apt to feel a bit like a primer on a fiscal climate that most practitioners understand all too well. Nonetheless, the discussion of whether the problems are short- or long-term, cyclical or structural, driven by revenue or expenses or both, provides a bleak yet well-grounded reminder of the budget difficulties that plague governments today.

It is in this early section of the book that a blueprint for a new budgetary paradigm begins to emerge. In explaining how to set the “price of government” and priorities, the authors note that while there is no “right” price of government, there is an “acceptable price,” and determining it is the job of elected officials obtaining agreement from all sources. Osborne and Hutchinson make the case that the typical budget debate errs in focusing on programs rather than results, and they point to the role of advocacy groups in organizing around making sure that money continues to flow to them and the programs they care about. But in reframing the key question in the budget process from how to trim a given percentage to how to spend the percentage that remains, a “conceptual shift” occurs that “changes the game from defense to offense and the politics from appeasing advocacy groups to delivering results that citizens value” (p. 63). In budgeting for outcomes, “Last year’s number is not an entitlement...instead, the starting point is an agreed-upon price of government, and the objective is to buy results” (p. 65).

To do this, outcome goals that make priorities clear must be identified, specific indicators of success must be articulated to provide focus on the results an agency will be pursuing, and adequate performance data—and particularly data on effectiveness—must be developed and tracked. “Without measuring, how can you really know whether student achievement has increased, or whether the health of citizens has improved?” (p. 71). Here, for agencies whose mandates are to help deliver “ethics,” “clean” campaigns, “openness,” “accountability,” or a restored “trust in government,” the discussion becomes particularly provocative. These institutions are often established directly by citizen initiative, with both broad and specific mandates that clearly tell elected leaders of the results citizens demand, but by their very nature these results are difficult to measure. In
contrast to the agencies that, for example, fix potholes, field emergency calls, or issue licenses (where efficiencies can be readily identified and tracked by analyzing production, response, or wait times), measurements to meaningfully gauge “clean campaigns,” “more ethical decision making,” or “government accountability” have yet to emerge and find broad application. How, then, can the explicit voter mandates pursued by these institutions be adequately championed in this new budget paradigm? How can these important services survive, much less thrive, when achievement is so critically tied to measurable results? In the face of a permanent fiscal crisis, how can citizens know whether the “good government” they have expressly chosen to pursue is indeed worth what they are willing to pay for it?

While the answers to these questions remain elusive, Osborne and Hutchinson offer guidance to those who shape how services can be more effectively provided. In doing so, they introduce another key theme—“smarter sizing.” They observe that too often the measure of executives’ “toughness” is how many positions have been eliminated, and they conclude that “for them, size does matter.” Instead, the lessons in these chapters underscore the importance of sustaining a strategic view in planning and administering service delivery. In their discussion of the “right work, the right way, with the right staff,” the authors conclude that “the challenge isn’t downsizing: it is rightsizing” (p. 134).

The first step toward rightsizing in any organization, they tell us, is to ask two key questions: (1) does this work contribute in some way to producing one of the desired outcomes?, and (2) who is the customer? In budgeting for outcomes and focusing on results, “everything should be done for a customer, or it should not be done at all” (p. 136). The next step is to “do the work right.” Examples include substituting technology for people and paper in processes that are repetitive, routine, and require only limited adaptation to changing circumstances. For some readers, the illustrations of public sector layoffs as computers and the Internet have sparked technological advancements may strike a familiar, if less than comforting chord. Using those advancements to tailor the delivery services when citizens want them and how they want them, however, is precisely the point. Abandoning a “one size fits all” approach to customer service “rightsizes services to suit the customer” rather than the administrative needs of a bureaucratic system.

The authors cite various administrative systems in Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada that “have already been thoroughly reinvented” along the lines they advocate, but divided executive and legislative branches make such reform more difficult in the United States. Although deeper reforms fail to garner the attention or action necessary to implement change, and “most proposals simply languish in legislatures that are more interested in the headline issues of the day” (p. 267), Osborne and Hutchinson point to shorter-term measures that strategic-minded administrators can pursue, working with the resources they have and “reforming how government works on the inside to improve its performance on the outside,” to “eliminate needless rules, regulations, paperwork and procedures” (p. 267) that help give citizens the government they want at a price they are willing to pay. Here The Price of Government focuses on “using flexibility to get accountability,” and on steps to “make administrative systems allies, not enemies” (pp. 227–271).
Emphasizing that control systems created for budgeting, accounting, purchasing, personnel, and auditing can create “colossal waste” (p. 246), Osborne and Hutchison take head-on the notion that it is time to think differently about administrative systems, how they are structured, and what they are designed to achieve. They note that most systems were designed to facilitate bureaucracy as an antidote to corruption and the “administrative chaos” that preceded it. They argue that today, however, this design creates unneeded conflict because “organizations want better results while these administrative systems want greater control” (p. 247). Citing systems “based on the assumption that compliance with process rules will produce behavior consistent with the norms that citizens want—norms such as fairness, equity, lowest costs, and decisions based on merit” (p. 247), Osborne and Hutchinson declare victory because those systems did their job: “Corruption in government today is minuscule compared to what existed in the early twentieth century. The bad news is that we are still shackled with systems from the horse-and-buggy era.” They continue, however: “Although there have been many successful reforms over the past decade, too many administrative systems still hamstring employees, ignore results, and generate colossal waste” (p. 247). New administrative systems, they conclude, must encompass norms that include fairness and integrity while delivering timeliness, equity while delivering quality, and decisions based on merit while delivering cost-effectiveness and value for money.

Although written for a wider audience than the public officials who are immersed in the daily challenge of delivering government services effectively, The Price of Government is a timely and thought-provoking work worthy of close examination by administrators at all levels of government. For those who also seek a creative and change-inspiring blueprint for doing more with less that shakes up standard practices to get government closer to “the ultimate payoff,” The Price of Government is a valuable work that is designed to deliver.

—LeeAnn M. Pelham, Los Angeles City Ethics Commission