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Who Rules America? Power, Politics, And Social Change



Synopsis

Drawing from a power elite perspective and the latest empirical data, Domhoff's classic text is an invaluable tool for teaching students about how power operates in U.S. society. Domhoff argues that the owners and top-level managers in large income-producing properties are far and away the dominant figures in the U.S. Their corporations, banks, and agribusinesses come together as a corporate community that dominates the federal government in Washington and their real estate, construction, and land development companies form growth coalitions that dominate most local governments. By providing empirical evidence for his argument, Domhoff encourages students to think critically about the power structure in American society and its implications for our democracy.

Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages; 5 edition (July 5, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0072876255

ISBN-13: 978-0072876253

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 0.4 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 15 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #250,630 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #67 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > United States > Local #576 in Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Political Science > Political History #593 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > United States > National

Customer Reviews

There are several editions to this book, but the first edition is worth the read. Domhoff suggests that there is a power elite consisting of members from upper class backgrounds and others selected by a network of upper class members that guide the nation. He basis this premise on data collected from the Social Register.

I had this book 45 years ago and someone stole it. I have for years sought to find it again, I finally found it at .com. It is a book that was use as a textbook at a local University in the 1960's. There is much to be learned from this book explaining our political system and that of many other forms of government. We seek the truth, and the truth will surely set us free.

Who rules ? follow the money and find the power. This book does that as well as any on how politics works. If you want to know read this book. It is eye opening. look past the authors slant and you will unravel alot of detail. excellent read.

LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVEI even made my own power network
(http://prezi.com/2gstbh04sxed/house-ofcards/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy)

A classic. Would have preferred a more consistent and broad focus on the families and individuals who actually hold all that wealth.

Excellent analysis

Excellent & quick!

Who Rules America Now?G. William Domhoff is a professor of psychology and sociology at the University of California. He has written numerous books and articles on the subject of social and political power. Domhoff examined the American power structure and presents evidence that a fixed group of privileged people dominate the American economy and government. Less than one percent of the population occupies key positions in the corporate community and dominate government through special-interest lobbying, policy planning, and candidate selection. Chapter 1 says the purpose of this book is to present evidence that the social upper class is a ruling class by its dominant rule in the economy and government. It has its basis in banks and large corporations, shapes the social and political climate, and dominates the federal government through a variety of methods and organizations. The evidence in this book challenges the conventional wisdom of American social science so this book will proceed step-by-step in providing empirical evidence on how each part of the system works (p.3). A social class is made up of families, not individuals (p.6). One way to measure power is still "who benefits" (p.11). Another is the percentages of leadership in businesses and government (p.12). Given conflicts over issues, "who wins?" is policy decisions is an indicator. The purpose of Chapter 2 is to show the existence of an upper class as a set of interrelated social institutions (schools, clubs, resorts, and social activities) that produce a distinctive life-style. Marriage patterns identify families and social cliques of great wealth (p.18). A separate educational system provides and outlook and life-style (p.24). These boarding schools were

developed in the late 19th century (p.25). [This was when corporations created a super-rich class.] Is there a hidden agenda in volunteer work (p.39)? Extravagant social activities provide a demonstration of their rank (p.53). Chapter 3 will that the primary financial basis for the upper class is the most important corporations, commercial banks, investment banks, and corporate law firms that form the corporate community (p.56). A Family Office handles financial transactions and legal matters for the super-rich (p.60). Holding companies can serve the same functions (p.63). Page 77 explains the power of corporations over the great majority of Americans. Chapter 4 explains how the upper class develop their policies and how they shape public opinion through foundations, university institutes, and lobbies (or "non-profit organizations"). The Council on Foreign Relations in the 1940s and 1950s decided that South Vietnam was to be defended "at all costs" (p.87). [Presidents only followed orders.] Foundations push the policies of corporations (p.95), not for the greatest good for the greatest number (p.103). Chapter 5 tells how the power-elite selects candidates through large campaign donations. What Domhoff calls collusion on page 120 is an example of the power-elite fixing the election; they do control the major parties. The expense of campaigns tilts their control toward the super-rich (p.122). Regulatory agencies are controlled by the entities they regulate (p.131). Chapter 6 discusses local power structures who seek to increase the value of their land and buildings through intensifying land use and creating population growth. They usually try to attract capital investments. "Urban Renewal" is where many small properties are acquired by law to sell to millionaire developers (p.164). Big landowners are most concerned with local real estate values (p.173). The Greer-Hansen proposal explains how taxpayers would enrich big corporations (pp.175-176). Urban renewal is part of a general struggle over the control of land (p.181). Those who are on Congressional committees act to favor their constituents (p.194). [I once read that the big landowners of NY city controlled its government since the 18th century.] In Chapter 7 Domhoff comments on the likely criticisms of this book. The Pluralists will object to his claim that "who benefits" as a power indicator. Those who acquire the largest share of goods, services, and opportunities are the ones with the most power. Wealth and income inequality, representatives in government, and influence on specific issues testify to a class system. Marxists will object to the personalities and individualistic emphasis. But history shows the effects from a personality change in Russia or China. Elitists will claim the "power-elite" who occupy offices and institutions are the rulers. But who chooses the people for these offices? Domhoff says a wide variation in wealth and income indicates a ruling class, since income and related inequalities have declined in countries with strong labor unions and "cohesive social democratic" parties (p.221). Domhoff discusses what people believe is based on how they accept his arguments (p.222). A study is only as good as the

known facts, and all is not known. The last paragraph describes the power elite as those who own private wealth and corporate stock, are in power in corporations and the federal government, win on issues like the tax structure, labor law, and consumer and environmental protection. Domhoff does not mention control of the media to influence or control people's thinking. Newspapers and the broadcast industry have become more concentrated since this 1983 book was published.

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