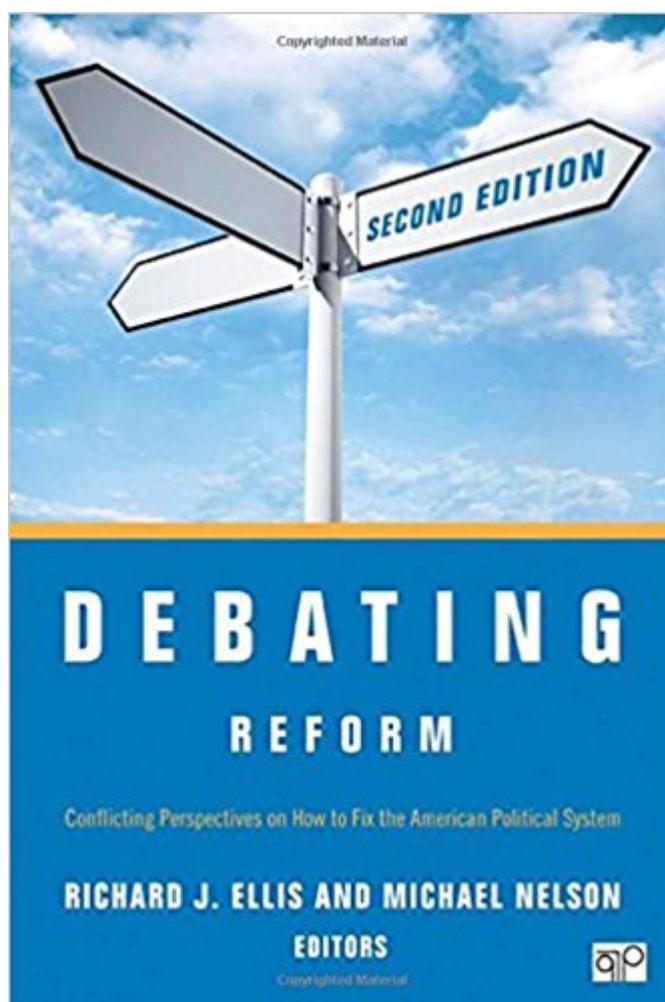


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# Debating Reform: Conflicting Perspectives On How To Fix The American Political System, 2nd Edition



## **Synopsis**

Getting students to engage in debate always makes for a lively classroom. Yet when students only parrot partisan lines, an instructor is left to question if there is real pedagogical value in the exercise. Ellis and Nelson offer a fresh take on the traditional debate-style Reader. With pieces written specifically for this volume by top scholars in the field, each pro or con essay considers a concrete proposal for reforming the political system, from making it easier to amend the Constitution to adopting compulsory voting. By focusing on institutions, rather than liberal or conservative public policies, students tend to leave behind ideology and grapple with claims and evidence to draw their own conclusions and build their own arguments. Students will explore how institutions work in their American government text, but this reader helps them to understand how they can be made to work better.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

The book does a good job of introducing students to the idea that institutions are choices and that institutional choices shape political outcomes. I like this as an alternative to the usual debate books, as institutional design is a key focus in my class. -- Mack Mariani \* 1e for 2e Survey \* Debating Reform is an outstanding text. It triggers debate on some of the most important issues surrounding the structure of our government. I like how it includes a brief explanation of the issue's background and then includes two well written essays offering a compelling arguments on both sides of the issues. The collection of authors is an esteemed cast of scholars well versed in their particular

subject. The students have responded very positively to this book. It provides great topics for discussion on a weekly basis. -- Brian Frederick \* 1e for 2e Survey \* I love the idea of having students connect to a general topic (like federalism) using contemporary policy questions because it gives them something concrete to think about. Students tend to respond fairly favorably. The question about the drinking age and the issue of non-citizens voting in elections tend to be especially popular. -- Molly W. Andolina \* 1e for 2e Survey \* I liked that it wasn't the usual pro/con on the issues of the day. Most of these are new topics for students, and they help to clarify the core concepts of the introductory course. -- William Cunion \* 1e for 2e survey \* The book is an excellent addition to the introductory American politics course. It covers a wide range of issues that provide focal points for class discussion, and it facilitates in-depth consideration of how institutional frameworks affect outcomes. In the past, I've usually been unimpressed by readers that take a pro/con approach since they tend to oversimplify complex issues. The selections in the Ellis and Nelson book generally avoid this oversimplification, and the competing perspectives encourage students to think about how both current rules and potential reforms would affect incentives and choices. My students generally have expressed positive views of the book. It has been a productive tool for starting class discussion, for short writing assignments, and as a starting point for a larger research paper that I assign. -- Scott Meinke \* 1e for 2e Survey \* The book is the best 'pro-con' type book that I have seen on the market, as it organizes each chapter around a singular and provocative idea, rather than a simple policy topic. It also discusses material at a higher level than most such texts, avoiding falling into stock arguments about why one policy is better than another, to instead argue points that are grounded in the empirical literature. Chapters that address important issues that students may not have thought about or encountered before (especially chapters on the Bureaucracy, Interest Groups, and Political Parties) are especially helpful." -- Christopher Ellis \* 1e for 2e survey \*

Richard J. Ellis is Mark O. Hatfield Professor of Politics at Willamette University. His books include *The Development of the American Presidency* (2015; 2nd ed.); *Debating Reform: Conflicting Perspectives on How to Fix the American Political System* (with Michael Nelson, 3rd ed., 2016); *Judging the Boy Scouts of America: Gay Rights, Freedom of Association, and the Dale Case* (2014); *Judging Executive Power: Sixteen Supreme Court Cases That Have Shaped the American Presidency* (2009); and *Presidential Travel: The Journey from George Washington to George W. Bush* (2008). In 2008 he was named the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching Oregon Professor of the Year. Michael Nelson is Fulmer Professor of Political Science at Rhodes

College. He is also a senior fellow of the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia and senior contributing editor and book editor of the Cook Political Report. His recent books include Resilient America: Electing Nixon in 1968, Channeling Dissent, and Dividing Government (2014), which won the Richard e. Neustadt Award for Best Book on the American Presidency and How the South Joined the Gambling Nation: The Politics of State Policy Innovation (with John Mason; 2008), which won the V. O. Key Award for outstanding book on southern politics. More than fifty of his articles have been reprinted in anthologies of political science, history, music, sports, and English composition.

Needed for school

I really only read the parts I needed to read for my class. It was fine, but not something I would have chosen to read.

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