

# Religion and Politics in the United States

*Kenneth D. Wald*

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Religion and Politics in the United States, Fifth Edition, offers a comprehensive account of the role of religious ideas, institutions, and communities in American public life. While maintaining that religion is too politically potent to be left out or consigned to the margins in accounts of American politics, Wald and Calhoun-Brown also argue against the common tendency to treat religion as the dominant force in politics today. Early topics include the nature and persistence of religion in the United States, its contribution to the Founding, and the continuing debate over the role of religion in government and law. Following a discussion of how religious factors encourage political action, the book concludes by discussing basic political attitudes and behavior among members of mainstream American religious

traditions and minority religious communities defined by ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation. The new edition greatly expands coverage of various religious minorities with a new chapter on politics and religion among African-Americans, Latinos, Muslim Americans, Latter Day Saints (Mormons), and other faith traditions. There is larger focus on how religion influences the politics of local communities.

Religion and Politics in the United States is among the premier texts on the subject, expanded and improved in this edition. Clear and comprehensive, I can think of no better introduction to the place, promises--and perils--of faith in the American political process. (Green, John C.)Wald and Calhoun-Brown have updated and extended one of the leading texts in religion and politics. This timely new volume uncovers one of the most important yet understudied phenomena in American life: how citizens' religious beliefs and institutions both promote and constrain their involvement in politics. As religion emerges at the center of debates in American politics, now more than ever this volume is critical to students as they attempt to unravel the complexity of religion as both a diversionary and liberating force in the body politic. (Fredrick Harris)The fifth edition of this classic text does something I thought would be impossible: it improves on the original. The new coverage of religion, gender, and sexual minorities is a nice addition to an already comprehensive text. The book is an indispensable introduction to the topic of religion and politics, and is highly recommended for political scientists, sociologists, and anyone who wishes to know more about this important topic. (Wilcox, Clyde)About the AuthorKenneth D. Wald is Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Florida, Gainesville. He is co-editor of the Cambridge University Press Series, "Religion, Politics, and Social Theory," and a member of the editorial board of the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion. Allison Calhoun-Brown is associate professor of political science at Georgia State University. Her research and teaching interests include public opinion, religion and politics, and African American politics. She is a past chair of the Religion and Politics section of the American Political Science Association and has published her research in journals such as American Politics Quarterly, The Journal of Politics, and the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion.