



The Political Culture of the New West

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From wildcatting Texas oilmen to Colorado rock climbers, from hipster capitalists to populist moralizers, westerners have proven themselves to be a highly individualistic breed of American—as much in their politics as in their vocations or lifestyles. This first book on the landscape of the American West's politics looks beyond red state/blue state assumptions to explore how westerners have expanded the boundaries of the political and emerged as a harbinger of America's electoral future.

Representing a wide range of specialties—popular culture, business history, the environment, ethnic history, agriculture, and more—these authors portray a politically heterogeneous region and show how its multiple traditions have strongly shaped the nation's body politic. Viewing politics as more than cyclical electioneering, they draw on historical evidence to portray westerners imaginatively rethinking democratic practice and constantly forging new political publics.

These twelve essays move western political history beyond the usual discussions of elections and parties and the standard issues of water, progressivism, and states' rights. Some explore claims to western authenticity among those associated with western conservatism—not just regional heroes like Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan, but farmers and evangelicals as well. Others examine the transformation of the West's minority communities to reveal a liberalism that celebrates diversity and articulates claims for social justice. The final chapters reveal the complexity of contemporary western political culture, challenging longstanding assumptions about such notions as space, nature, and the liberal-conservative divide.

Here then is the paradox of western politics in all its enigmatic glory, with frontier individualism going head-to-head with multiethnic diversity in debates over divergent views of "western authenticity," and wild cards put into play by counterculturalists, cyber-libertarians, fiscally conservative gun-toting Democrats, and environmentalists. *The Political Culture of the New West* shows how westerners have expressed themselves within a complex, often contradictory, and constantly changing political culture—and helps explain why no electoral outcome in this part of America can be predicted for certain.

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