

their days were numbered by the end of the decade. GC show that the moniker of “moderates” works better in terms of tactics than in terms of ideology because Gingrich was joined in his efforts by ideological moderates who also yearned to exercise the powers of the majority party. Gingrich’s two-step process of becoming the Speaker—which had to go through the intermediate stages of gaining a position in leadership (even if by only two votes), challenging Republican leader Michel enough but not too much (and eventually propelling his retirement), and developing a game plan for the 1994 elections—is documented in chapter 4. GC label Gingrich as an “entrepreneurial insider” during this phase of his career.

Chapters 5 and 6 document Gingrich’s two congresses as Speaker of the House. What GC make clear is that, through the force of his personality and diligence in knowing his members, Gingrich at first led a unified conference (GC label this congress, “Promise and Pitfalls”). However, Gingrich’s lack of organizational abilities and personal foibles caught up to him in the second congress (what GC call “a failing speakership”). Indeed, Gingrich failed so sufficiently that some on his leadership team even contemplated a coup. After the Democrats gained seats in the 1998 elections, he felt enough pressure that he resigned.

In the conclusion, GC try to put Gingrich into a broader perspective. They suggest that his party entrepreneurialism was better suited to obtaining majority-party status for the Republicans than for organizing the House of Representatives. They seem to imply that gaining this status was mostly due to the type of leader he was than to whom he was as a person: “Gingrich was never going to be able to run the *entire* federal government from the House of Representatives, let alone *all* of society in a conservative direction” (p. 166; emphasis added). Although I agree that he could not run the *entire* government from the House, the policies passed in the last six years of the Clinton presidency were more conservative than they would have been had Gingrich not led the Republicans into the majority. Let us not forget that after the 1994 elections, Clinton declared that “the era of big government is over,” a statement we could not imagine him making when he secured the White House in 1992.

Having spent way too much of my career thinking about Newt Gingrich, I am a big fan of this book. First, it is packed with stories that were new to me. GC’s digging through archival material and interviewing the major players (now with a bit more perspective) made for a thrilling read. Second, the authors make a claim for the ground that political scientists usually cede to historians in producing the second draft of history. Third, they use the tools of political science to offer perspective on a complex person operating in a time of change. If I have a quibble with the book, it is only that I wish GC had done more of that, especially in the conclusion. On the fourth page of the conclusion (p. 168), they ask, “Were these feats

accomplished because of Gingrich’s entrepreneurial deeds, or would those outcomes have come about without them?” In answering this question over the next 20 pages, they seem to settle on the idea that Gingrich is partially but not entirely the cause of those outcomes: they show that polarization was already occurring by the time Gingrich entered the scene, the House was already becoming a more contentious political institution, conservatism was ever so gradually becoming more popular before Gingrich and his presence did not disturb that trend, and the public’s perception of difference between the parties does not line up with Gingrich’s timeline. Although their answer is certainly fair and their assessment is true, I wish that they had used a bit more of social science to get us to a more precise understanding of how responsible Gingrich was for the transformation of American politics in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

In my own work (*The Gingrich Senators*, 2013), I argue that Gingrich transformed the Republican conference in not only the House but also the Senate. A former student had an occasion to ask Gingrich about my argument. He is said to have responded, “I think the author gave me too much credit.” I hope you will forgive me for pushing Green and Crouch to come up with a bit more evidence that Gingrich deserves a great deal of credit (or blame) for transforming American politics in ways that still resonate strongly today.

Demagogues in American Politics. By Charles U. Zug.
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In *Demagogues in American Politics*, Charles Zug makes an original and striking argument about a traditionally reviled form of political leadership and rhetoric. He contends that demagoguery, although subject to excess and abuse, is not inherently bad. In fact, it can be a legitimate mode of provocative communication, bringing attention and urgency to neglected causes, social interests, and a political community’s highest “substantive goals and aspirations” (p. 3).

The book’s nine chapters are arranged into two major parts. The first part develops Zug’s philosophical and historical account. After an introduction and overview (chapter 1), chapters 2–5 trace the evolving form and meaning of demagogues from “Greco-Roman antiquity” (p. 18) to modern political regimes, including the American republic. In the second major part, Zug applies and develops his theory alongside a series of absorbing case studies involving demagogues on the Supreme Court (chapter 6), in Congress (chapter 7), and in the presidency (chapter 8). The concluding chapter serves as a brief coda.

In the early chapters, Zug associates demagogues with “appeals to the passions and prejudices of one’s audience” (p. 2) and with orators whose power is tethered to identifying an authoritative people “whose unified will constitutes the common good, and whose collective judgments about all aspects of policy therefore cannot be scrutinized” (p. 3). From this point of departure, the author explores how the meaning of (and danger posed by) demagoguery varies along several dimensions, especially (1) political regimes (namely, classical polities and modern constitutional republics) and (2) particular governing institutions within these regimes. Across these contexts, Zug considers the ways in which demagoguery can assume good and bad forms.

Classical regimes, seeking to cultivate the moral excellence of leaders and citizens, view demagogues as figures of bad character who betray the common good and degrade the virtue of the populace. In comparison, modern regimes do not eliminate demagogues or fret about their personal ethics. Instead, we incentivize these figures to behave in ways that redound to our advantage, in part by placing them in institutions that promote accountability to other officials and the public. Thus, when “routine negotiation and deliberation” (p. 7) break down, the rhetoric and tactics associated with demagogues can advance the public interest and common good by galvanizing leaders and the public alike and otherwise fostering deliberation and other republican goals.

Zug concedes that there is some tension in both identifying demagogues as disruptive figures who appeal “to non-rational sources of public motivation” (p. 68) and seeing them as compatible with the hallmarks of modern constitutionalism such as securing domestic tranquility. Our leaders’ successful navigation of this opposition is critical in evaluating whether demagogic figures can be considered good or bad demagogues. Because exchanging ideas and “reason-giving is...fundamental in a community of free and equal human beings” (p. 61) good demagogues must ultimately persuade others through their rhetoric, however heated, and offer “an adequate argument for why the Constitution’s own structure and principles require” (p. 86) departures from traditional forms of communication. In contrast, bad demagogues rely on emotion and provocation to distract us from flaws in their underlying reasoning.

Zug insists that a modern demagogue, good or bad, must be an actual government official with “formal political power at his or her disposal” (p. 9). This is, in part, because today’s political orders have shifted “the burden of speaking publicly in politically suitable ways from the general public to officers of the state” (p. 4). In addition, focusing on constitutional officials gives us standards for judging demagogues. The US Constitution’s structure, formal powers, and general aspirations give us “implicit criteria for evaluating the public speech” (p. 15) of these leaders. For example, federal judges should be more constrained by institutional speech norms than members of

Congress and should refrain from using their rhetoric for overtly partisan reasons or “to gauge public opinion or to sway it in their favor” (p. 78).

The inventive case studies that make up the second part of Zug’s book examine a variety of historical demagogues who have occupied each of the major branches of national government. He compares seemingly unlikely figures like Samuel Chase and Antonin Scalia, or Franklin Roosevelt and Donald Trump. These cases flesh out our understanding of good and bad demagogues and the ways in which their institutional responsibilities and historic challenges inflect their rhetorical choices. For example, he argues that Rep. Adam Clayton Powell’s “insults, exaggerations, and deliberate provocations” (p. 121) in the House were mostly justified tactics to move a resistant and “oftentimes hostile white audience” (p. 124) to recognize the realities of entrenched racial discrimination.

This book is undoubtedly one of the most sophisticated and nuanced treatments of demagoguery available. Zug’s theoretical framework helps us delineate the features and preconditions of good and bad demagogues and compels us to take seriously leaders’ institutional obligations—how “different jobs require different kinds of speech” (p. 10). His thesis is both hard to refute and urgent: demagoguery is not an oddity or a perversion of American politics but an endemic feature of our republic and one that can potentially invigorate our national discourse and constitutional politics. He treats his subjects with a welcome generosity, concluding, for example, that U.S. Senator Huey Long’s critique of American politics possesses an “underappreciated sophistication” (p. 143).

At the same time, in calling itself *Demagogues in American Politics* this book promises somewhat more than it delivers. Zug focuses on officeholders at the federal level, yet the universe of American demagogues stretches much wider. We might identify Father Coughlin or Charles Lindbergh as important demagogues and, in more recent years, figures like Alex Jones. Of course, Zug might respond that *constitutional* officers have unique responsibilities to guide our national conversations—generating rhetoric we can judge through standards arising from their official duties. But if that is the case, why spend an entire chapter considering the status of Daniel Shays, who was not even a soldier at the time of the insurrection that bears his name? Moreover, many state officials take oaths to support the Constitution, an obligation that arguably makes them suitable for inclusion in this project. Zug may have practical or theoretical reasons for not considering these different figures, but he should make the case directly, especially given our fear that in an era of negative partisanship and populism, demagoguery is likely coursing through the republic.

Some readers may also leave this book with lingering questions about what are the core elements of demagoguery. We have a good sense of how the classical and modern

conceptions differ and how good demagogues diverge from those who rely “on hope and emotion at the expense of coherent argument” (p. 155). But at different points in the book, the author associates demagoguery with “hyperbole,” “norm-breaking,” and rhetoric that is “personalistic” or “provocative and divisive” (p. 109). Are these all equally constitutive of demagoguery? Do demagogues generally flatter the “unreflective prejudices and desires of the people” (p. 67), or is that only a byproduct of bad leadership? At several points, Zug indicates that demagogues defend their rhetoric as a response to political crises, but can good demagoguery be used for more routine constitutional maintenance?

Again, Zug’s interest in exploring the “range of meanings that demagoguery can have” (p. 77) is part of what makes the book so analytically powerful. But this definitional openness raises the question of what unifies the concept across its different manifestations and substantive tensions. There seems to be some irreducible competition, for example, between the imperative that a good demagogue must provide reasonable claims with “empirical evidence and argumentative rigor” (p. 163) and our understanding that part of what distinguishes demagogic power is its capacity for invective, divisiveness, and emotion. Without a more vivid account of what demagoguery is, one wonders whether good demagogues are, to some degree, anti-demagogic.

Thomas Brackett Reed: The Gilded Age Speaker Who Made the Rules of American Politics. By Robert J. Klotz.

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To understand the modern House of Representatives, a scholar should know about Thomas Brackett Reed. Reed was among the most impactful House members in its history serving as Speaker of the House in the 51st (1889–1891), 54th (1895–1897), and 55th (1897–1899) Congresses. Speaker Reed established parliamentary reforms, known as “Reed’s Rules,” that transformed the House of Representatives from a filibustering body toward a partisan-majoritarian one.

Robert Klotz’s engaging new book on Thomas Brackett Reed adds missing context essential to a full understanding of both the man and Congress during the Gilded Age. Drawing on library archives and other primary sources, Klotz gives a rich history of Reed’s Rules. Additionally, Klotz analyzes and builds on political science theories of legislative organization integrating these insights into a highly readable history of Reed’s Rules. This book will interest scholars of Congress, American political development, and political leadership.

Klotz begins the book with a brief overview of Reed’s legislative philosophy of power politics for partisan ends.

Reed believed that the House majority party should control the agenda and, thus, be held accountable for legislative outcomes. Congress should be a governing institution, a place of action. His philosophy discounts legislative deliberation and position-taking and elevates majoritarian responsiveness. Reed’s leadership style fit well with his philosophy. Klotz captures Reed’s character—his physically domineering nature, his wry (sometimes withering) wit, and his sharp commentary on minority partisans.

The book gives an engaging account of Reed’s rise to congressional power. Reed was a product of a one-party Maine legislature dominated by Republicans. He methodically moved from the State House to State Senate and then to the Attorney General of Maine. Reed’s ambition led him next to run for a vacant U.S. House seat in 1876, and his transition to the House of Representatives gave him an early socialization to party leadership. Reed gained a national stage on the Potter Committee defending the 1876 election of Rutherford B. Hayes over Samuel Tilden. His prosecutorial style in cross-examination and his sharp, sardonic exchanges with opposing partisans showed his promise as a party leader. Reed’s political skills fit with the Gilded Age’s partisan political times of contested party elections, party machines, the patronage system, the lingering partisan press, and the sectional divides of the post-Civil War.

The book focuses on Reed’s appointment to power first as the Republican minority leader in the 50th Congress and then as Speaker of the House in the 51st Congress. Reed was principled but practical. As the Republican minority leader, he was a skillful obstructionist using diverse dilatory tactics to prevent House Democrats from advancing floor legislation. Reed served early in his tenure on the Rules Committee, further exposing him to the importance of House procedure. During the Gilded Age, House Republicans were generally the more progressive party advocating higher taxes (tariffs), greater federal spending, and broader social freedoms. Correspondingly, the Democrats generally advocated for smaller government, lower taxes, and less social change. After Republicans won a narrow majority in the 1888 election, Reed returned for the 50th Congress lame duck session again as minority leader, again working with Republicans and Democratic factions to prevent Democratic party action. Reed won the Speakership over his rival, William McKinley, on the second ballot largely by winning support from northeastern Republicans and the western Republicans being split.

In the 51st Congress’s first session, now Speaker Reed was poised to challenge existing parliamentary rules of the House operating under a rare and tenuous Republican unified government. Reed didn’t follow custom by first proposing House rules for the 51st Congress; instead, he baited Democrats to obstruct on a vote over a West Virginia contested election. On this roll call, the Republicans failed to produce a quorum majority given member