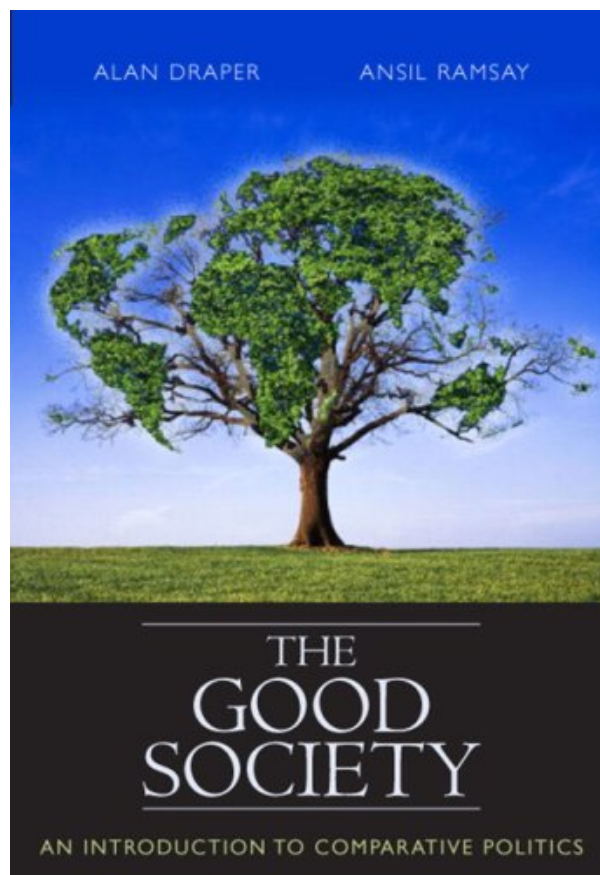
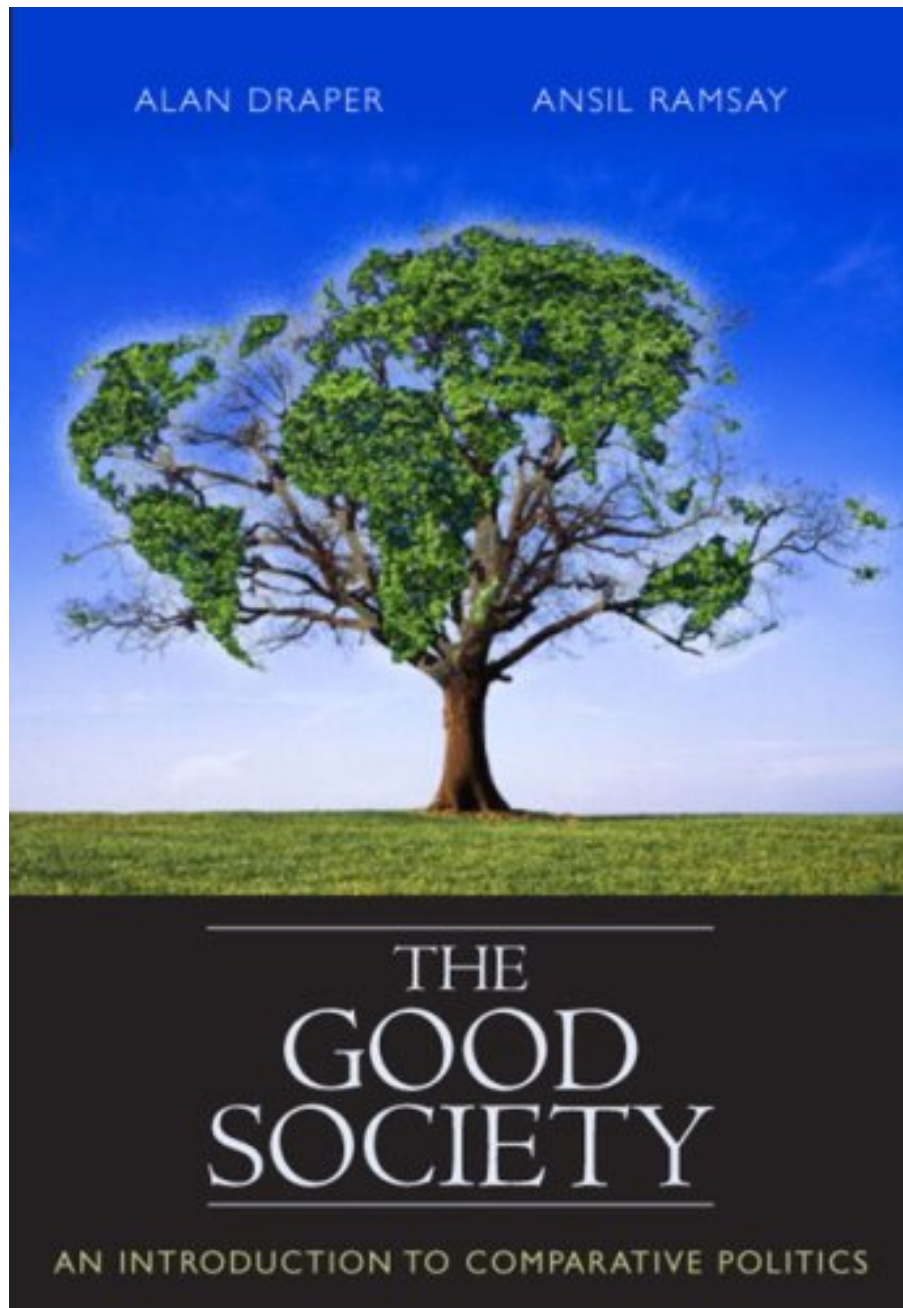


THE GOOD SOCIETY: AN INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS BY ALAN DRAPER, ANSIL RAMSAY



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Review

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Combining thematic and country approaches to show students what comparative politics is really about, *The Good Society* organizes itself around a key question—why are some countries better than others at improving their citizens' lives? This brief survey offers a focused look at political institutions and uses in-depth country studies to compare how different institutional arrangements yield different political results. By concentrating on how politics affects citizens' lives, *The Good Society* offers a uniquely relevant introduction to comparative politics that goes to the heart of the field and helps students develop a critical point-of-view.

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An instructor's review

By PolProf

I use this book as a required text in my course and found the first reviewer's experience interesting to read, from a student perspective that is. In my 15 years of university-level teaching at public universities in the Northeast I find that students in Intro to Comp Pol routinely hate just about every text I have ever tried, and yet my course receives excellent evaluations. So what gives? First, I agree with that reader that there are some proofreading errors in this text, one of which s/he identified and another in the map on the inside cover of the book where Niger and Mali are switched inexplicably (ouch!). That's almost unforgivable for a geography stickler like me. However, that said, human beings do make errors, so before the much needed 2nd edition comes out, are there any redeeming characteristics to this text?

What I like about it is that it doesn't try to cover 700+ pages of factual content about 14 or 15 country cases + theoretical chapters as do so many "leading" textbooks in this field (see for example Almond et al's Comp Politics Today-A World View). Been there, students also hated that. Instead it explains what scholars mean by the "capabilities approach" to measuring development, carefully building a theoretical basis for judging why some societies appear to perform better on certain indicators than others. It does a nice job of describing "types of capitalism" in a way that undergraduates with no previous experience reading Peter Hall or Esping-Andersen can understand. And it has some useful groupings of "regime types" for non-democratic societies as well. For me, students who read this book with care will come away with a nice general overview of how different countries may be grouped together as "types of..."; how we might set about actually measuring and quantifying different concepts of import (wealth, health, education, quality of life, etc); and learn just enough juicy details to make them curious about reading the case studies in greater depth in future classes in the subject. For me, that's about the most I hope to get from an Intro-level text that I teach to majors and non-majors alike.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Quiet useful...

By Ali Caglar Akgungor

My students often have problems in using "classical" textbooks of the comparative politics area. American literature concentrates mostly on forms, and comparative "analysis" turns around institutions and procedures. Books such as Almond's manual deserves respect but they make students forget the main objective of the course. Often, students just memorize each country's institutional structure to give a so-called comparative account of what they read, just as they would compare some consumer goods in a shopping guide. This book have some problems, including the chapters arrangement however it focuses on a series of very important questions: What is a good life as a citizen, what is a good society, and which political systems are better in ensuring a "good life"... Thus, students are encouraged to think about advantages and disadvantages of different systems. I observed that the course made sense for most of them using this approach. Of course, one may always prefer memorizing didactic texts... My opinion is that we don't have the right to waste neither students' time & energy, nor ours. Serious lecture doesn't mean boring lecture.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

isnt a stand alone book

By Michael

Hard to follow in some places but seems like an alright book to accompany a college level course. Give you many opportunities to practice concepts though.

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