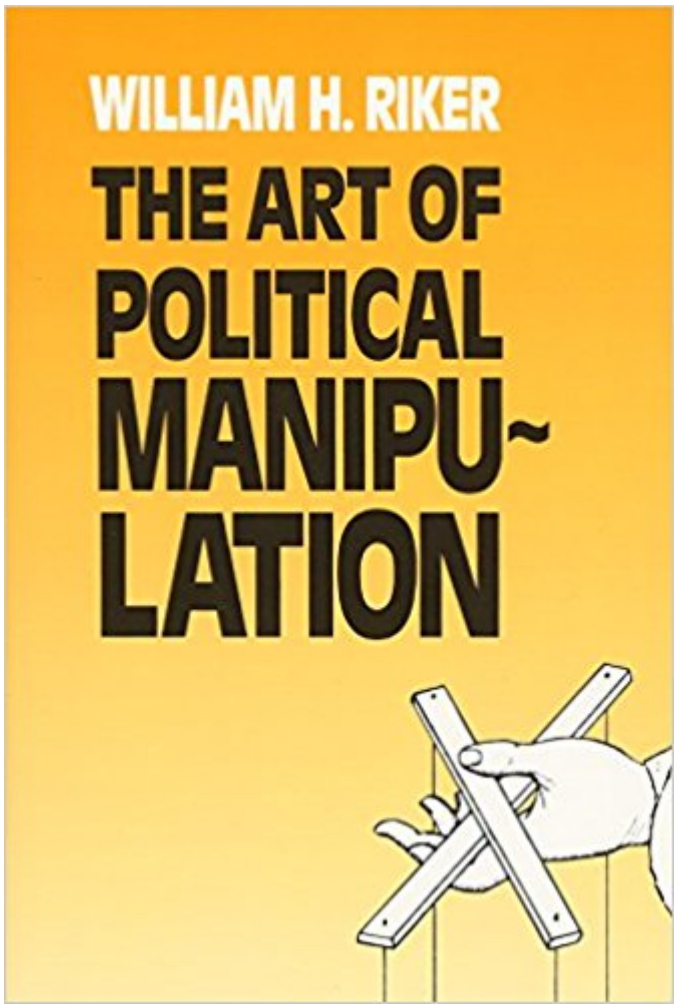
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The Art Of Political Manipulation



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Synopsis

In twelve entertaining stories from history and current events, a noted political scientist and game theorist shows us how some of our heroes we as well as ordinary folk have manipulated their opponents in order to win political advantage.Ã Â The stories come from many times and places, because manipulation of people by other people is universal: from the Roman Senate through the Constitutional Convention of 1787, to the Congress, state legislatures, and city councils of twentieth-century America.The results of manipulation are not trivial, as we see, for example, in RikerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s account of LincolnÃ¢â ¬â„¢s outmaneuvering of Douglas in their debates and in his description of the parliamentary trick that defeated the Equal Rights Amendment only six years ago in the Virginia Senate.The tales can be enjoyed by anyone. For the scholar, they are held together by a concluding chapter in which Riker discusses the feature of politics that all of the manipulators exploited and sketches out the new political theory that explains why manipulation works the way it does.PrefaceLincoln at FreeportChauncey DePew and the Seventeenth AmendmentThe Flying ClubGouverneur Morris in the Philadelphia ConventionHeresthetic in FictionCamouflaging the GerrymanderPliny the Younger on Parliamentary LawTrading Votes at the Constitutional ConventionHow to Win on a Roll Call by Not VotingWarren Magnuson and Nerve GasExploiting the Powell AmendmentReed and CannonConclusion“A useful and entertaining informal essay on political tactics that will have direct utility in the classroom.Ã¢â ¬Â•—Douglas W. Rae, Yale UniversityWilliam H. Riker is Wilson Professor of Political Science at the University of Rochester and a former president of the American Political Science Association. He is the author of numerous books, including Theory of Political Coalitions, a classic in the field.

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Customer Reviews

Helpful book to gain political knowledge in self study class. I used information from chapters to help write a term paper. The kind of book you keep in your library as reference source.

Real old book--not very good.

The first and most important thing to understand about this book is that it is NOT a political psychology book. Anyone looking for that will be sorely disappointed. This is a book dealing primarily with the manipulation of voting rights and practices to achieve a given result. It is difficult to imagine the average reader getting excited about the subtle implications of what order certain proposals, etc. are voted on in. However, the author is obviously enthusiastic, and to an extent, it is catching. If you read carefully enough (and it should be noted that it is a dry subject, so it can be slow going), the games played become clear, and it can be exciting-- up to a point. This book is organized as a series of case studies, beginning all the way back in Classical Greece, moving up through the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, and on to modern-day club voting and Congressional vote-trading. This last example is probably the most useful to the modern reader, as it does provide a useful explanation of the utility and even necessity of what is commonly seen as "sleazy politics". This book is lacking in the explanation of theory or conclusion, either in the realm of the morality of the sort of manipulation presented or in the theory of practice. Riker’s one stab at theory comes in the form of coining a new word to cover the art of voting effectively. The examples given, however, are well-explained, and can be useful to anyone involved in parliamentary procedure. It should be noted that this IS an important subject, and provided an important impetus toward the development of modern parliamentary procedure.

I read this when I was in high school, I not only found it easy to comprehend (which says alot given the state of education in this country), but narrated quite well. Riker provides both access to the material without requiring a graduate degree, but provides new material to even those with graduate degrees. A must read for those who wish to know how bills really become or don’t become laws.

Riker’s work has become a classic in political science. His "heresthetic art" essentially means that politicians structure the choices available to suit their desires and preffered outcomes. While this should not shock anyone, Riker does provide examples where politicians did this that may surprise those unfamiliar with the legislative process.This book has limited applicability, however, due to its rational-choice assumptions. Riker assumed that people will react rationally to the choices they are presented with; however, knowing that some politicians are trying to manipulate the system, won’t others try and do the same thing? What prevents them from succeeding; or, in other words, why do some people win while others lose?Riker can’t explain many political outcomes in which both sides act strategically to suit their own goals. He leaves out the crucial role that institutions play in shaping political outcomes, and thus his analysis is incomplete.

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