



California Politics: the Fault Lines Of Power, Wealth, and Diversity

Edgar Kaskla

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California is full of myths and legends, but its political system shouldn't be. In this refreshingly critical take, Edgar Kaskla brings an analysis of power - how it is distributed, how it is used, and to what end - to bear on California's political system and the many troubling issues it currently faces. Starting from the premise that California is in deep crisis politically, economically, culturally, and environmentally, Kaskla traces the state's economic and political development as a process controlled by and for the elite, be they land barons, the Hollywood glitterati, or Silicon Valley execs. Kaskla focuses on what he calls growth machine politics - elites and their land use as promoters of development and redevelopment - to show students how the gap between the rich and poor in California continues to widen. As minority communities increase in size, as the cost of campaigning in the state balloons, and as the state's debt crisis mounts, the socio-economic and cultural issues at play in California add up to a real threat to democratic governance. Kaskla clearly outlines how each of the state's institutions are organized, but also shows how they are affected - indeed distorted - by a host of serious economic and social inequalities. Not one to mince words, Kaskla is in places irreverent, but his text is thoroughly researched and well argued, never crossing the line into the polemical. Tables, figures, maps, and lists for further reading help reinforce the book's substantive points and critical approach, and a host of student and instructor ancillaries help with study, review, and preparation.

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