

Montesquieu's Science of Politics: Essays on The Spirit of Laws

By David W. Carrithers, Michael A. Mosher, Paul A. Rahe

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Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws* is one of a handful of classic works of political philosophy deserving a fresh reading every generation. The product of immense erudition, Montesquieu's treatise has captured since its first printing (1748) the imagination of an impressive array of intellectuals including Rousseau, Voltaire, Beccaria, Madison, Hamilton, Jefferson, Herder, Sieyès, Condorcet, Robespierre, Bentham, Burke, Constant, Hegel, Tocqueville, Emile Durkheim, Raymond Aron, and Hannah Arendt.

In what constitutes the only English-language collection of essays ever dedicated to the analysis of Montesquieu's contributions to political science, the contributors review some of the most vexing controversies that have arisen in the interpretation of Montesquieu's thought. By paying careful attention to the historical, political, and philosophical contexts of Montesquieu's ideas, the contributors provide fresh readings of *The Spirit of Laws*, clarify the goals and ambitions of its author, and point out the pertinence of his thinking to the problems of our world today.

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Editorial Review

Review

For over two centuries Montesquieu has been viewed as an indecipherable genius? a great analyst of political facts who rarely gave away his own values. But in this lucid and intelligent set of essays, readers will find a different Montesquieu. Here the author of *The Spirit of the Laws* appears in all his colors as the most important expositor, in his time and ours, of a *liberal* science of politics. (Daniel Gordon, University of Massachusetts at Amherst)

Montesquieu's classic work is universally admired but less well understood. Over the years Montesquieu has been all things to all people: a constitutional monarchist, a liberal Anglophile, an enlightened cosmopolitan, a scientific sociologist. This collection will aid our understanding of the generosity and esprit of the author of *The Spirit of the Laws*. (Steven B Smith, Yale University)

This book is essential for future Montesquieu studies and will be highly useful to upper-division undergraduates, graduate students, researchers, and faculty. (*CHOICE*)

A superb volume. . . A valuable collection of essays from some of the leading Montesquieu scholars writing today, which clearly establishes the depth and breadth of Montesquieu's political science. It is difficult to put together a collection of papers on a single philosopher that can at once appeal to the general reader and yet present challenges and insights to the specialist. This volume succeeds brilliantly on both fronts. A reader new to Montesquieu will find comprehensive and lucid analyses of his political thought; the Montesquieu specialist will find intriguing insights and challenging arguments, not to mention a lively critical debate in the volume's endnotes. (*History of Political Thought*)

Were there no other reasons to place this volume high on any Enlightenment (and related subjects) reading list, his [Carrithers'] introduction would constitute sufficient cause. The remainder of the book does, however, afford plenty more. (*English Historical Review*)

This notable volume, explicitly and its quality, stands as an encomium to the monumental significance of Montesquieu's work. From the very outset in the editorial introduction by David Carrithers, the achievement of Montesquieu, the sovereign importance of discerning his decisive meaning, and his crucial emphasis on moderation in all things pertinent to human affairs is impressed on the reader with great cogency. This volume will educate the novice and will be valued by the learned. (Joseph Cropsey, University of Chicago)

About the Author

David W. Carrithers is professor of government at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. **Michael A. Mosher** is professor of political science at the University of Tulsa. **Paul A. Rahe** is professor of history at the University of Tulsa.

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