

Biography of E. J. Dionne and Summer Reading Outline



Considered among the best of America's new crop of columnists, E.J. Dionne combines his passions for people and politics with his keen intellect to deliver reasoned analysis that is followed by a wide circle of policymakers nationwide -- on the left, right, and center. He can be heard offering political commentary on NPR's news programs.

Dionne began his twice-weekly op-ed column for *The Washington Post* in 1993. In 1996, it was syndicated by The Washington Post Writers Group, and he now appears in more than 90 newspapers in the United States and abroad.

Dionne joined *The Post* in 1990 as a reporter covering national politics. His best-selling book, *Why Americans Hate Politics* (Simon & Schuster), was published in 1991. The book, which *Newsday* called "a classic in American political history," anticipated all the major themes of the 1992 campaign. It won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize and was a National Book Award nominee.

Dionne also spent 14 years with *The New York Times*, reporting on state and local government, national politics, and from around the world, including stints in Paris, Rome, and Beirut. *The Los Angeles Times* praised his coverage of the Vatican as the best in two decades.

He has been a frequent commentator on politics for NPR, CNN, and NBC's *Meet the Press*. His second book, *They Only Look Dead: Why Progressives Will Dominate The Next Political Era* (Simon & Schuster), was published in February 1996. The New York Times Book Review called it "a luminously intelligent and quietly passionate polemic that deserves to alter the terms of American political debate."

In 1998, Dionne edited *Community Works: The Revival of Civil Society in America* (Brookings Institution Press) and has co-edited *What's God Got To Do With the American Experiment?* (Brookings Institution Press, 2000) with John J. DiIulio Jr. His third book, *Stand Up Fight Back: Republican Toughs, Democratic Wimps, and the Politics of Revenge* (Simon & Schuster), was published May 2004.

In 1996, in selecting Dionne as recipient of its annual Carey McWilliams Award to honor a major journalistic contribution to the understanding of politics, the American Political Science Association said: "We honor Mr. Dionne as one of Washington's finest journalistic thinkers and for his insightful daily contributions to the political discourse of our nation. ... His tireless efforts uplift the public ... in a time that cries for reasoned debate, not more negative ads, rumor, or simplistic sound bites." In 1997, he was named among the 25 most influential Washington journalists by the *National Journal* and among the capital city's top 50 journalists by the *Washingtonian* magazine.

Dionne grew up in Fall River, Mass. He graduated summa cum laude with a B.A. from Harvard University in 1973 and received his doctorate from Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar. In 1994-95, he was a guest scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center. In May 1996, Dionne joined The Brookings Institution as a senior fellow in the governance studies program. He began teaching at the Georgetown Public Policy Institute as University Professor in the Foundations of Democracy and Culture in the fall of 2003.

He lives in Washington, D.C., with his wife, Mary Boyle, and their three children.

Summer Reading Outline

Why Americans Hate Politics (E.J Dionne)

Terms, People, Concepts and Ideas by Chapter

Take notes and write questions for clarification when reading this text. Read before coming to class in August.

Chapter 1: Freedom Now

- ❑ The New Left was a reaction to the political status quo (the liberal establishment)
- ❑ The failure of liberal promises
- ❑ Emphasis on participatory democracy
- ❑ The emergence of the counterculture, feminism, and conservatism's reaction to the New Left.

Chapter 2: The Virtues of Virtue

- ❑ The origins of neoconservatism
- ❑ The liberal abandonment of neoconservatism
- ❑ The law of unintended consequences
- ❑ Neoconservatism's break from traditionalism (comparison of Goldwater and Reagan)
- ❑ The neoconservative "drift to the right"

Chapter 3: Not Black and White

- ❑ Liberals bear as much responsibility for "white backlash" as do the conservatives who gained politically from it
- ❑ How do each of the following apply to the statement above (check each off as you identify the concept or idea):
 - the Black Power Movement
 - the Moynihan Report
 - Black reaction to white resentment
 - the politics of "false choices"
 - William Wilson's central idea in his book, *The Truly Disadvantaged*.

Chapter 4: Family Politics: Feminism and its Enemies

- ❑ Feminism's roots in the Progressive Era
- ❑ The economics of feminism
- ❑ Liberalism's alienation of feminists
- ❑ False choices as they apply to family values

Chapter 5: The Lost Opportunity

- What was meant by the “vital center”?
- Dionne’s view of Jimmy Carter as the manifestation of the vital center ideology
- Reasons for Jimmy Carter’s success in the 1976 presidential election
- Jimmy Carter and special interest groups
- Perception of a failed Carter presidency. Why?
- Reagan’s defeat over Carter in 1980 presidential elections “mistakenly” referred to a defeat of liberalism.

Chapter 6- Conservatism's Contradictory Origins

- Before the 1940s, conservatism had little credibility as a serious political ideology
- During and after the 1940s it began to gain support and philosophical credence
- Eventhough conservatism was emerging as a valid political philosophy it still was considered, in some circles, to be a reactionary political viewpoint.
- This perception changed in the 1950s due to the likes of the following:
- (Put a check mark next to each after you know what their contribution was)

Friedrich A. von Hayek
Richard Weaver
Russell Kirk
Frank Meyer
William F. Buckley Jr.

How did these men legitimize neo-conservatism? Give evidence to support.

Chapter 7- Moderation is No Virtue

- Characterize Republican presidential leadership between the 1950s and the 1970s
- Use the following to explore the above point:
 - (Put a check mark next to each after you know what their contribution was)
 - Eisenhower’s moderation
 - Barry Goldwater and fusionism
 - The rise and fall of Richard Nixon
 - Gerald Ford’s attempt to carry out the New Republican ideology

Chapter 8- Hell Hath No Fury

- The development of fundamentalism as an opposition to modernism
- Trace the legitimacy of fundamentalism as a political philosophy by studying:
 - J. Gresham Machen and fundamentalism’s beginnings
 - Fundamentalism and the Great Depression
 - Mainline and fundamentalist religion in the 1950s
 - The Election of John Kennedy and fundamentalism
 - Jerry Falwell, the Moral Majority, and Ronald Reagan

Chapter 9- The Demand for Supply Side

- ❑ John Maynard Keynes (Keynesian “demand-side” economics)
- ❑ John Baptiste Say (“supply-side” economic theory)
- ❑ How did these diametrically opposed economic ideologies factor into the political climate of the late 1970s and most of the 1980s? (Carter and Reagan years)

Chapter 10- Politics Without Government

- ❑ Identify and describe the adversarial relationship between libertarianism and traditional conservatism during the 1960s and 1970s.
- ❑ Cite events, persons, and sources which illustrate the philosophical clash between these two points of view.

Chapter 11- Balancing Acts

- ❑ During the Reagan years, conservatism experienced difficulties finding consensus in the following areas:
 - ❖ federal budgetary goals
 - ❖ foreign affairs
 - ❖ social issues
- ❑ Explain how the following have illustrated that difficulty in finding consensus:
 - David Stockman’s economic vision
 - Social Security
 - The invasion of Grenada
 - U.S. support of the Lebanese Christians
 - The Iran-Contra Scandal (“privatizing” foreign policy)
 - The Webster decision (abortion rights)
 - 1986 mid-term elections: a shifting in the political tide
 - Three lessons the conservatives learned

Chapter 12- One Nation: Divisible

- ❑ Examine the bitter nature of the 1988 presidential campaigns
- ❑ Focus on the inter-party (general election) as well as the intra-party (primary elections) rivalries in 1988
- ❑ Show the differences "among the various candidates involved in this election.
- ❑ George Bush’s first two years in office gave democrats political opportunities congressionally (mid-term elections 1990)

Chapter 13- The Politics of the Restive Majority: Healing Public Life in the Nineties

Politics as characterized as both a “dread and a yearning” (James Morone)

- ❑ The similarities and differences between the *Left in the 1960s* and the *Right in the 1980s*
- ❑ myopic views of both the left and right
- ❑ moralism
- ❑ a sense of the “public good”
- ❑ “the public’s interest depends on the private virtue” (James Wilson)
- ❑ racial tensions
- ❑ family life and feminism
- ❑ steps to “reward the middle class” for the work they perform
- ❑ global considerations in the post-soviet era
- ❑ what Americans want of their political system