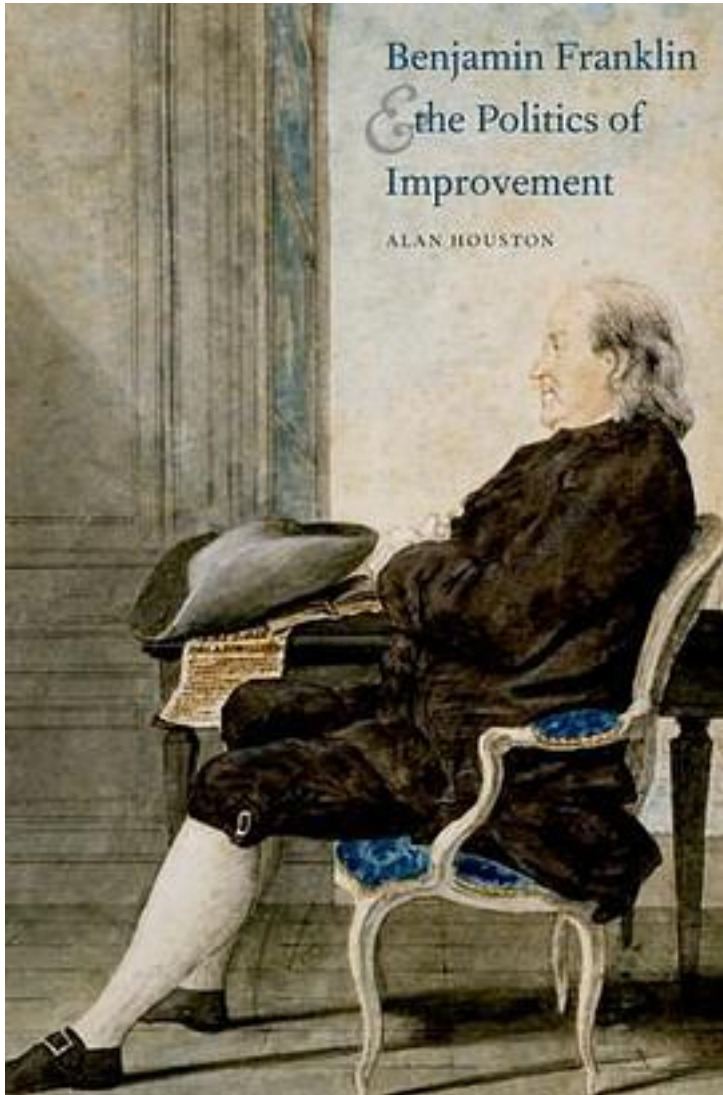


# Benjamin Franklin and the Politics of Improvement



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This fascinating book explores Benjamin Franklin's social and political thought. Although Franklin is often considered "the first American", his intellectual world was cosmopolitan. An active participant in eighteenth-century Atlantic debates over the modern commercial republic, Franklin combined abstract analyses with practical proposals. Houston treats Franklin as shrewd, creative, and engaged - a lively thinker who joined both learned controversies and political conflicts at home and abroad. Drawing on meticulous archival research, Houston examines such tantalizing themes as trade and commerce, voluntary associations and civic militias, population growth and immigration policy, political union and electoral institutions, freedom and slavery. In each case, he shows how Franklin urged the improvement of self and society. Engagingly written and richly illustrated, this book provides a compelling portrait of Franklin, a fresh perspective on American identity, and a vital account of what it means to be practical.

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