

# Queen's Court



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著者:Nancy Maveety

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As frequent swing vote and centrist voice, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor helped shape many of the Supreme Court's landmark decisions and opinions under the leadership of William Rehnquist. Indeed, many argue that her overall impact and influence was greater than that of the Chief Justice himself. Nancy Maveety now takes a closer look at what might justifiably be known as the O'Connor Court, in which the voices of individual justices came to the fore. She describes how policy leadership was subdivided among these eminent jurists in a way that fostered an individualist conception of judicial power. And she explains how this distribution of power contributed to a proliferation of concurring opinions--and, in polarizing issues like *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* or the Michigan affirmative action cases, decisions that sidestepped precedent-setting principles. Maveety's book is the first to look beyond the conventional wisdom that O'Connor's centrism gave her de facto control over a court notorious for its disunity, providing instead a more precise and systematic analysis of her influence. Maveety seeks not only to assign a definitive meaning to "the Rehnquist Court" but also to identify its historical importance for the constitutional order and the conception of judicial power within it--situating O'Connor squarely at its center. Maveety describes the attributes that distinguish this Court from its predecessors and suggests how O'Connor's five years on the Burger Court

foreshadowed her emergence as an accommodationist. Then, as the Court became more polarized under Rehnquist, there evolved the individualized behavior and rule-of-thumb jurisprudence that came to characterize O'Connor's decisionmaking. What resulted were carefully circumscribed decisions like Bush v. Gore or Hamdi v. Rumsfeld that provide fewer precedents for lower courts. Queen's Court ultimately reveals that the importance of the Rehnquist years extends from the substance of constitutional law to the institutional operation of Court decision-making--and that O'Connor was vital to those changes.

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