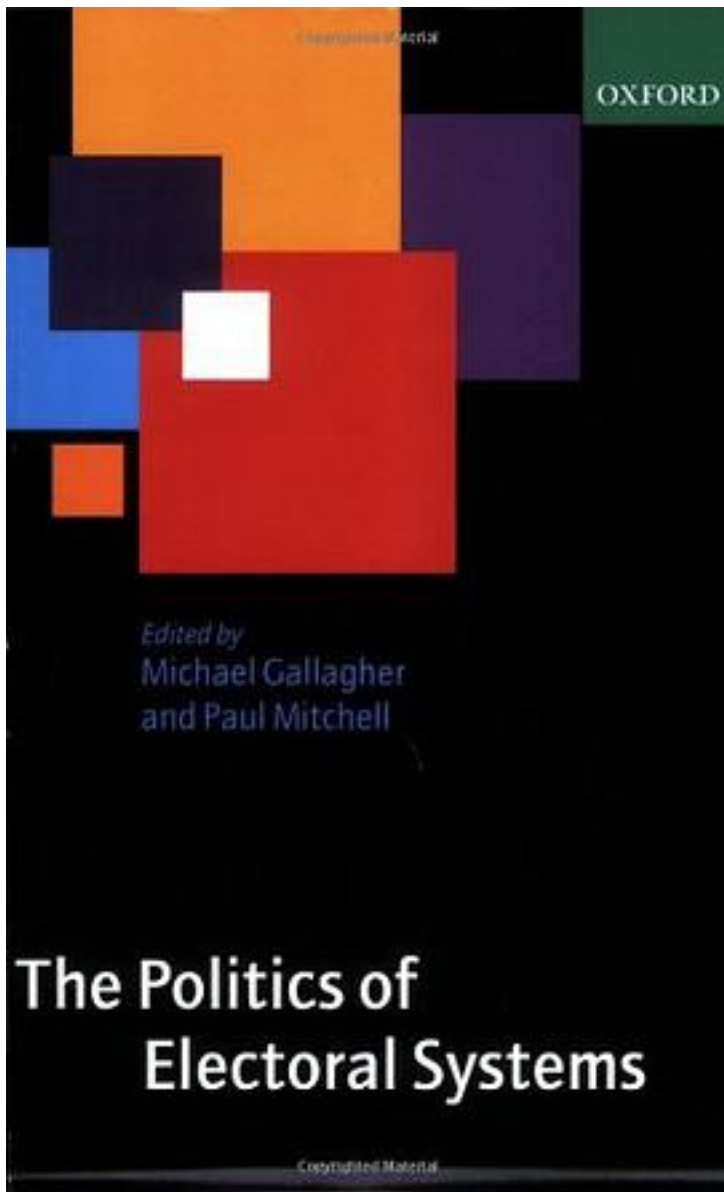


The Politics of Electoral Systems



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Electoral systems matter. They are a crucial link in the chain connecting the preferences of citizens to the policy choices made by governments. They are chosen by political actors and, once in existence, have political consequences for those actors. They are an important object of study for anyone interested in the political process, and in this book we subject them to systematic analysis. In addition to some comparative chapters, the book contains full accounts of the operation of electoral systems in 22 countries: France, the UK, Germany, Italy, Israel, Spain, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, Ireland, Hungary, Russia, Australia, Canada, India, the USA, Japan, New Zealand, Chile, and South Africa. The book provides detailed analyses of the operation of a diverse set of electoral systems in their national context. Each chapter explains how the electoral system really works in the given country, examining the strategic incentives the system provides to voters, candidates, and parties. All country chapters have a common format and structure. Successive sections analyse: the institutional context; how each electoral system was chosen historically; how the current electoral system operates (the rules, mechanics, and ballot structure); and the political consequences of the current system (the impact on the party system, the internal life of parties, and the impact on parliament and government formation). Each country chapter then contains a final section which focuses on the politicization of electoral institutions. In recent years many countries have changed their electoral systems, either entirely or in part so there is a strong focus on the processes of electoral reform, both historically and prospectively. The book concentrates on the real world 'politics', as well as the 'political science' of electoral systems. The book will be of interest to those concerned with the practical political business of electoral reform. The book contains a wealth of evidence about the performance of various kinds of proportional representation and of non-PR systems. This will be invaluable for anyone interested in the question: 'What would be the best electoral system for my country?'

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