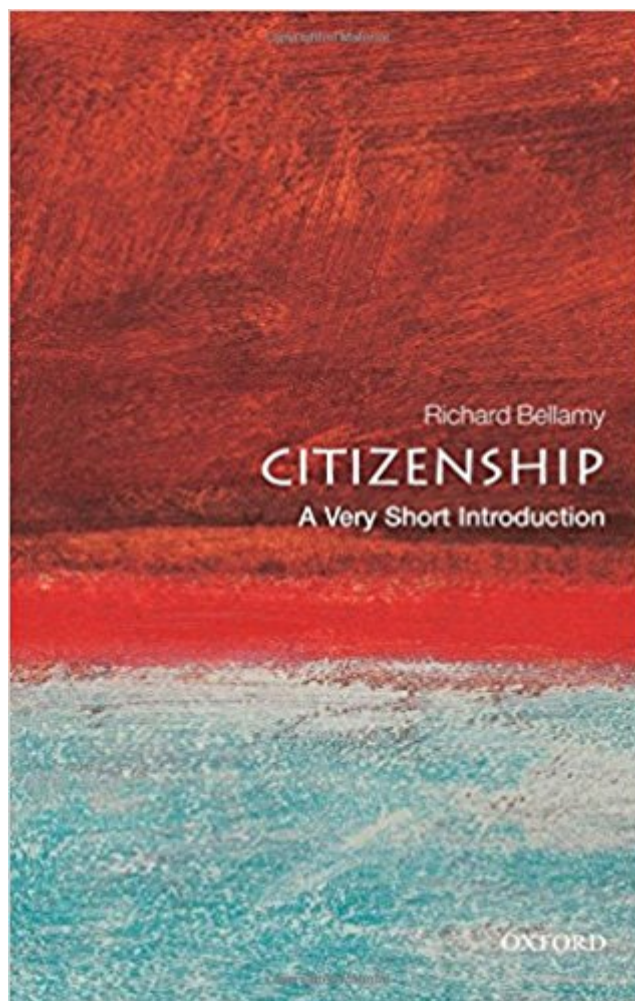


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Citizenship: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

Interest in citizenship has never been higher. Politicians of all stripes stress its importance, as do church leaders, captains of industry and every kind of campaigning group--from those supporting global causes, such as tackling world poverty, to others with a largely local focus, such as combating neighborhood crime. In this brilliant, compact introduction, Richard Bellamy offers an eye-opening look at an idea that is as important as it is rare--the prospect of influencing government policy according to reasonably fair rules and on a more or less equal basis with others. Bringing together the most recent scholarship, the book sheds light on how ideas of citizenship have changed through time from ancient Greece to the present, looks at concepts such as membership and belonging, and highlights the relation between citizenship, rights, and democracy. Bellamy also examines the challenges confronting the very possibility of citizenship today, the impact of globalization, the desirability of "global citizenship," the teaching of citizenship in schools, citizenship tests for immigrants, and the many different definitions and types of citizenship in modern society. About the Series: Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

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Customer Reviews

One can only hope that well-argued...tracts like this will remind governments and voters that

citizenship involves duties as well as rights. * Mark Garnett, TLS * [Bellamy] advances a distinct and provocative view of citizenship. * Mark Garnett, TLS * Citizenship is a vast subject for a short introduction, but Richard Bellamy has risen to the challenge with aplomb. * Mark Garnett, TLS *

Richard Bellamy is a Professor of Political Science and Director of the School of Public Policy at University College, London.

as described, good price and fast ship

Last semester of college and I'm reading it.

Written for the "A Very Short Introduction" series of Oxford University Press, Richard Bellamy's "Citizenship" (2008) offers a challenging introduction to the nature of citizenship and to why it is important. Bellamy, Professor of Political Science and Director of the School of Public Policy at University College, London, has written widely on citizenship, political philosophy, and government. Although a "short introduction", Bellamy's book is difficult and learned. It also presents Bellamy's own informed understanding of citizenship rather than rehashing the literature for beginners. Due to its brevity, the book does not develop its arguments as fully or clearly as it might. Bellamy has the lecturer's habit of outlining and presenting his points (i.e. this is so for three reasons, 1, 2, 3) and not elaborating. The book also includes a great deal of repetition and cross-referencing from chapter to chapter which tends to make it ponderous. Thus, Bellamy's study is not an easy "very short introduction" but rather requires close reading and attention. With its difficulties, the book offers an insightful understanding of citizenship. Bellamy argues that citizenship is closely connected to participation in government and to democracy. The crux of modern citizenship, for Bellamy, is the right to vote. He points to a growing apathy and skepticism about democracy and voting in developed countries such as the United States and Great Britain and seeks to combat this regrettable tendency by explaining the value of citizenship. In his opening chapter, Bellamy offers an exposition of the nature of citizenship which he expands upon in the remainder of the work. Bellamy argues that citizenship is primarily a political (rather than legal) concept and that it has three components: membership, rights, and participation. He offers the following somewhat cumbersome definition. "Citizenship is a condition of civic equality. It consists of membership of a political community where all citizens can determine the terms of social cooperation on an equal basis. This status not only secures equal rights to the enjoyment of the

collective goods provided by the political association but also involves equal duties to promote and sustain them -- including the good of democratic citizenship itself."The crux of citizenship is participation in the political process with the goal of defining the nature of rights and providing for their implementation. Rights, in this analysis, are not abstractions but instead are correlative with the duties of individuals to participate in the process. The definition of citizenship needs a definition of who are entitled to be citizens and of what entities. Bellamy offers a historical overview of various concepts of citizenship beginning with the Greeks and Romans. He discusses the ways in which the concept changed slowly with the development of the modern state. The class of citizens gradually expanded from free men, in the Greek polis, to include those without property, women, and people of minority nationality in a community. He offers a telling observation about this expansion: "there has been a general reversal of assumptions; instead of private autonomy being the basis of public autonomy in the political realm, political participation and the regulation of the private sphere have become the guarantees of personal freedom". He argues that feminism, for example, can better be viewed as part of a long-term trend towards inclusion in the concept of citizenship as opposed to a separate, distinctive ideological position. Bellamy discusses the tension that arises between a state-based concept of citizenship on the one hand and the rise of globalization and multi-culturalism on the other hand. He argues for the importance of state citizenship largely on grounds that individual participation and feeling of responsibility becomes remote in a larger arena. He also argues that a sense of nationalism and cohesiveness is important to guard against despotism. In his concluding chapter, Bellamy discusses how democracy, a two-party system, and a voting electorate, whose members must choose between parties offering positions on a host of issues (rather than deciding each issue by itself in a referendum, for example) increases the value and the worth of participatory democracy. Bellamy concludes: "Citizenship informs and gives effect to central features of our social morality. It underlies our whole sense of self-worth, affecting in the process the way we treat others and are treated by them. It stands behind the commitment to rights and the appreciation of cultural diversity that are among the central moral achievements of the late 20th and early 21st centuries." Bellamy has written a rewarding, brief book for readers with a strong interest in citizenship and government. There is no reason why a "very short introduction" is necessarily easy. A readers guide to the book may be found online which poses provocative questions that it is the goal of the book to help the reader think about and answer. Robin Friedman

That the subject of citizenship, itself, might serve as a field of academic inquiry caught me by surprise. I think citizenship is vital for understanding our predicament in 21st century America.

Unfortunately I didn't get time to finish reading this book so I feel constrained to give it five stars and comment on what I read (the first 50 pages) which was well-written, insightful, instructive. If and when I finish this book, I'll update this review.

Richard Bellamy sees three components to citizenship: (1) membership -- who is a citizen? He thinks citizenship is linked with democracy, since democracies require broad acceptance, legitimacy, trust, and solidarity among citizens to function properly. (2) rights -- I was somewhat confused about his sense of this term, but I like his idea that citizenship is a "right to have rights" although I think there's more to it than that. I have a sense of a right as a sphere of possible future action that others acknowledge you can do, and the boundaries between spheres I think of as "laws". (3) participation -- citizenship means taking part in the political process in an equal way with others. He writes: "Citizenship is a condition of civic equality. It consists of membership in a political community where all citizens can determine the terms of social cooperation on an equal basis. This status not only secures equal rights to the enjoyment of the collective goods provided by the political association but also involves equal duties to promote and sustain them -- including the good of democratic citizenship itself." He sees the same problems with citizenship that I see: "...increasing numbers of citizens do not bother participating. They either feel it is pointless to do so or are happy to free-ride on the efforts of others. They are mistaken." Mr. Bellamy sees a temptation undermining citizenship in democracies: "...that we will be tempted to shirk our civic duties if we feel we can enjoy the collective goods and the rights they provide by relying on others to do their bit rather than exerting ourselves." The cost of being informed is real and now, while the benefit is illusory and later; so, why bother with citizenship duties? This is another take on the famous problem of the commons -- how to motivate people to contribute to something which benefits everybody but involves a personal sacrifice now?

Mr. Bellamy discusses citizenship in Athens, then Rome, and today. Athenian citizens participated directly, and he wonders whether the time commitment for citizenship duties diverted talent away from the private sphere. Roman citizenship was more of a legal matter. He suggests modern democracies have three stages of development: (i) nation-building stage, run by the elite, building the legal and administrative structure. (ii) commercial & industrial stage, with unified transport systems, markets, freedom of contracts & equality before the law. (iii) nation-making stage, where education, language, army, popular press help form a national consciousness. The three stages make a "people", with equal protection of the laws, a community of interest, and shared values & obligations to each other. He shows how T.H. Marshall saw Britain as undergoing a succession of class struggles culminating in social rights (unemployment insurance, health care) and notes how social rights can sometimes clash with property rights. The trend today in modern democracies is towards "legal citizenship".

That's as far as I got. I'd like to comment about my understanding of citizenship. I see citizenship as a relation between a person and the state with specific benefits (police protection, rights, legal protections and so forth) and specific duties (voting, being informed about current events, military service if summoned, obeying laws, paying taxes, participation in local government.) It should be freely chosen by a person with witnesses present in a formal ceremony. It's like a contract between a person and the state that can be broken by either party. Further, I think citizenship entails a commitment to other citizens to protect each other if government became tyrannical. I realize that not everybody will want to be a citizen or have the ability to serve in this capacity, so I think there should be in society, at least, two categories of persons: citizens and non-citizens. I elaborate on my thinking in my book "Common Sense II" (below) and in the article "History of citizenship in the United States" (below); both are free and readable on the Internet now as google "knols". Overall, a good book (first 50 pages), well-written, an excellent introduction to an important topic, and while I can't attest to the quality of the whole book, what I did read suggests a quality publication. Thomas W. Sulcer Author of "The Second Constitution of the United States" (free on web; google title + Sulcer)

This is a great little introduction for students and other curious people on what modern citizenship is, where it came from, and how its meaning have changed in response to globalism and multiculturalism. Bellamy starts by discussing the Greek participatory model of citizenship, and the Roman model of rights-based membership in an empire. He outlines the effects of race, ethnicity, and gender on membership and belonging, and discusses the tensions between the idea of universal human rights and the necessary local level of enforcement by sovereign states. Last, he suggests the need for a more participation-based model of democratic citizenship. This is a great foundation for further study and discussion.

Good book, good content, good price. I would like to order the other titles.

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