

## PREFACE

The essays in this book respond to several of the perennial, fundamental questions in American politics. Although the electoral success of today's politicians, the disposition of current legislative proposals, and the consequences of last term's Supreme Court will figure not at all in the pages that follow, the questions taken up by these essays have an enduring currency. Even a casual reading of the daily newspaper attests to the vitality of such ideas as original intent, separation of powers, and tyranny of the majority. These ideas raise questions—the questions addressed here. They also are at the core of those myths that inform the thinking of many Americans about politics. These myths are the popular narratives that impart meaning to the American experience and define for many what it is to be an American. The approach to these myths will be critical, not celebratory. The evidence adduced and the arguments made on their behalf will be carefully examined.

Many books and journal articles have been written in response to each of the questions addressed. My essays can only mine the major seams of evidence and assay the principal arguments relevant to an answer to these questions. Much that is said in them could be qualified or developed in more detail and thereby could more fully disclose the truth of the matter. This would require volumes not essays to accomplish. I have proceeded, nonetheless, despite the limitations of the essay form, out of the recognition that neither the general public nor college undergraduates are likely to read much of the vast literature or to have devoted much time to hard thinking about these fundamental questions.

It is for them that this book was written in the hope that they might begin the journey from assertion to argument.

Many others have labored in the fields turned over once again in this book. The lengthy endnotes are the measure of my indebtedness to them. I welcome the opportunity as well to thank my colleagues at the University of Northern Colorado: Brook Blair, John Loftis, and Bill Agan, who read one or another chapter, and particularly Stan Luger and Gail Rowe, who read them all. Thanks are also due to my friends Carl Hunt and Gil Matthijetz, who read the chapter on the market. Their efforts to save me from error are much appreciated. The errors in fact or interpretation that remain are mine alone. Finally, I am grateful to my wife, Andra, for saving me on more than one occasion from sending the manuscript into deepest cyberspace or deleting it altogether, to my editor at Potomac Books, Hilary Claggett, for her interest in and support for the book, and to the staff of the Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, for help in obtaining materials.