



Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do

By Andrew Gelman

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This expanded edition includes new data and easy-to-read graphics explaining the 2008 election. *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State* is a must-read for anyone seeking to make sense of today's fractured political landscape.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

As the 2008 election season reaches its peak, media pundits will speak gravely of the deep ideological divisions reflected in a political map of red and blue states, but according to Gelman (statistics & political science, Columbia Univ.), much of the analysts' glib assessments is misguided and does little to advance our understanding of why Americans have voted as they have. He crunched U.S. survey and election data as far back as 1952; compared his data where appropriate to similar data from Mexico, Canada, and other countries; and discovered that the economic status of individuals and the economic conditions of each state as a whole lead to two different conclusions: on the one hand, the less wealthy a voter is, the more likely the voter is to cast a ballot for a Democrat; the better-off the voter, the more likely he or she is to vote Republican. Yet states with a higher average income are more likely to support a Democratic presidential candidate. He discovered that wealthy voters in a poor state (e.g., Mississippi, with many poor) consistently support Republicans, while Connecticut, with many wealthy, regularly backs Democrats. Ohio is near the center of income distribution and alternates between the parties. This seeming paradox is lost on the media's talking heads because they focus only on the state-level data, leading them to the simplistic red-blue paradigm, ignoring the importance of individual voters' decisions. Gelman finds that the above relationships hold on a county level as well. After examining other factors such as religiosity and cultural values for clues to explain voting behavior, he offers suggestions about how the Democratic Party can improve its chances in the 2008 election. This is a fascinating, well-written, and thoroughly researched work that deserves a wide audience. Highly recommended for all libraries.—Thomas J. Baldino, Wilkes Univ., PA
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Review

"Gelman and a group of fellow political scientists crunch numbers and draw graphs, arriving at a picture that refutes the [idea] . . . of poor red-staters voting Republican against their economic interests. Instead, Gelman persuasively argues, the poor in both red states and blue still mostly vote Democratic, and the rich, nationally speaking, overwhelmingly vote Republican."--**Leo Carey, *New Yorker***

"Commentators on both the left and the right have theorized about why working-class Kansas farmers and latte-sipping Maryland suburbanites vote against their economic interests. . . . The real paradox, [Gelman] says, is that while rich states lean Democratic, rich people generally vote Republican; while poor states lean Republican, poor people generally vote Democratic."--**Alan Cooperman, *Washington Post Book World***

"This is the *Freakonomics*-style analysis that every candidate and campaign consultant should read."--**Robert Sommer, *New York Observer***

"Gelman works his way, state by state, to help us better understand the relationship of class, culture, and voting. The book is a terrific read and offers much insight into the changing electoral landscape."--**Sudhir Venkatesh, *Freakonomics blog***

"[T]his book already analyzes far more data than do most. On that note, it is worth lauding another of this book's strengths: its rich graphical presentation of evidence. Its numerous figures often allow the reader to see the data and to draw one's own inferences, and they render the book accessible to those with little statistical training."--**Gabriel S. Lenz, *Public Opinion Quarterly***

"Although the book is stronger on description than interpretation, it raises important questions and presents its findings in a clear and readable fashion that encourages replication, critique, and elaboration. . . . *Red State, Blue State* shows that much can be learned from applying serious quantitative analysis to popular ideas. It debunks popular misconceptions, but also reveals the limitations of most academic analyses."--**David L. Weakliem, *International Review of Modern Sociology***

From the Back Cover

"This impressive social science analysis stands much political punditry on its head. So far as voting goes, the question is less why poor Americans are victims of false consciousness than why affluent Americans in wealthy states are traitors to their class."--**Morris P. Fiorina, author of *Culture War?: The Myth of a Polarized America***

"I enjoyed reading this book. I learned a lot about political misconceptions and counterintuitive properties of elections--my view of political data will never be the same."--**Nassim Nicholas Taleb, author of *The Black Swan***

"Andrew Gelman has turned his eagle-eyed research on the American voter into an excellent book, *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State*. If you ever doubted the value of empirical research, this book will change your mind. It's full of novel, data-driven results."--**Bryan Caplan, author of *The Myth of the Rational Voter***

"The divide in American politics is about more than the ideological distance between the two parties. Through careful statistical analysis, Andrew Gelman solves the mystery of how Democrats can do so well in certain places where rich people live, yet still not be the party of the rich. This book will help people on all sides to see politics more clearly, and it will require all of us to toss many pieces of conventional wisdom into the dustbin."--**E. J. Dionne Jr., author of *Why Americans Hate Politics***

"Occasionally, there are books providing insights into the political process that force a basic change in the way people think about elections. This is one of them. The author makes clear that while North-South or red-blue divides reflect both 'have versus have-not' conflicts and the more recent liberalization of the upscale 'creative class,' the state-by-state reality is much more nuanced and complex. This volume points the way to whole new lines of research and is essential reading for those interested in the future of American political parties."--**Thomas Edsall, Columbia University, political editor of the *Huffington Post***

"Andrew Gelman has been poring over data trying to get at the driving forces at work in American politics. His findings suggest that the divides in America run deep and are linked to an ongoing, internal battle between two increasingly distinct American economies."--**Richard Florida, author of *The Rise of the Creative Class***

Users Review

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Kathryn Cannon:

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