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Review of "Politics and Public Policy in the Contemporary American West" by Clive S. Thomas

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Politics and Public Policy in the Contemporary American West. Clive S. Thomas, Ed. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1991. xiii + 589 pp. Maps, tables, figures, notes, references, bibliography, and index. \$19.95 paper (ISBN 0-8263-1251-9).

Clive S. Thomas has edited a fascinating collection of works in *Politics and Public Policy in the Contemporary American West*. Scholars of public policy, especially those in the 13 states west of the 100th meridian, now have an excellent resource in Thomas' edited work.

Thomas sets the stage of the book by identifying ten enduring characteristics of western politics (p. 8). Those characteristics include political pragmatism, political individualism, direct democracy, regionalism and sectionalism, candidate-oriented elections, weak political parties and strong interest groups, weak political institutions, the dominance of economic development, dependence on government, and the paradox between myth and reality of western development. These characteristics are illustrated frequently throughout the text.

The book is divided into four topics: influences on the West; political participation in the West; state and local government institutions and public policy in the West; and intergovernmental relations in public policy in the West. Each section is thoroughly covered. Indeed, the thorough nature of the chapters are well suited for utilization in a seminar setting. Students should be encouraged by the authors productive and meaningful research.

Perhaps the most interesting and important section is the last. Waste and Thomas provide the overview of western intergovernmental relations. What follows are five marvelous essays on environmental politics. Given the battle over scarce resources, particular water, these chapters are of extreme importance to academics and policy makers. Fairfax and Cawley contribute two strong chapters and illustrate the tension between "federal supremacy"

and the growing sophistication of state land and natural resource statutes. With the many related land use issues, ranging from nuclear waste to energy, this tension needs thoughtful resolution. Fairfax and Cawley certainly have much to offer.

Despite the strength of the last section, further attention could be given to the judicialization of environmental policy. The courts have been extremely active in this area, and a chapter analyzing the many cases would only make this strong section even stronger.

In closing, this book strangely resembles the nature of Heidenheimer, Hecko and Adams' *Comparative Politics* (1990) in that public policy is illuminated by comparative studies. Thomas and his authors have done outstanding work. A second volume could further address the seemingly countless substantive policy issues. I am certain that this work will be of great importance in many public policy classes. Peter Longo, *Political Science Department, University of Nebraska at Kearney*.