The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems by Bryan D. Jones and Frank R. Baumgartner. Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 2005. 304 pp. Cloth, \$70.00; paper, \$25.00.

Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones revolutionized the study of agenda setting with their punctuated equilibrium model of policy change. Their view of policy change as proceeding through processes of positive feedback and periods of stasis brought on by negative feedback provided a compelling alternative to the traditional incrementalism models. Their most recent book, *The Politics of Attention*, represents the development of their punctuated equilibrium model of policy agenda setting; they have integrated findings from a wide variety of policy areas into a general model of policy change.

Building on Bryan Jones's previous work on political psychology and the organizational basis of political institutions, *The Politics of Attention* provides an institutional logic for the pattern of systematic under-reaction and over-reaction that drives the punctuated equilibrium model. Policy-making institutions are, in the authors' view, information-processing mechanisms. Political organizations have to interpret signals from their environment in order to create policy outputs. However, policy-making organizations are disproportionate information processors. Systematic biases in the processing of information lead to "a pattern of extreme stability and occasional punctuations" (p. 5).

The book explores the theme of disproportionate information processing and its effects on the outputs of political organizations through a variety of analytical techniques. The most novel form of analysis is stochastic process modeling (p. 115). In this form of analysis, a policy process is analyzed on the basis of the distributional characteristics of its outputs. Institutions characterized by disproportionate information processing should also be characterized by a non-normal distribution of outputs, wherein there are a larger-thanexpected number of small and large changes—and a smaller-than-expected number of medium-sized changes. The authors find that institutions near the beginning of the policy process—such as stock markets and mass media—are characterized by output distributions that are closer to normal than those of institutions near the end of the process—such as congressional committees and the president. The authors argue that the greater mal-distribution is evidence of greater institutional friction in these terminal political institutions (such as the presence of multiple veto points) than in the input processes that are characterized by competitive markets.

The discussion of information processing leads the authors to next consider the question of policy responsiveness. The book tackles the question in two ways. First, the authors consider "issue intrusion" (p. 209). The authors find that issue intrusion requires objective conditions indicating a severe problem combined with the relatively high weighting of the specific indicators that indicate severity. This finding draws attention back to the essential attention orientation of policy change. Second, the book explores the correlation

between public attention to problems and congressional attention to the same problem areas. The correlation pattern suggests some manner of agenda congruence coexisting with crowding and spillover effects (p. 269). As a whole, Bryan Jones and Frank Baumgartner see in their analysis of the dynamics of agenda congruence and issue intrusion a hope for policy representation even in the presence of disproportionate information processing.

The diverse approaches to the study of policy change are a major strength of the text. Individually, the various assessment techniques have significant flaws. For example, the stochastic process technique has difficulty with testing multiple potential causes of "inertia," because it is essentially a univariate analytic technique. The correlation analysis of agenda congruence is limited by the problems of cross-time correlation analysis. Together, however, the diverse methods provide compelling evidence. In the end, the book illustrates the continuing development of the punctuated equilibrium model of policy change and the diversity of issues that the model provides leverage in explaining.

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American Voter Turnout: An Institutional Perspective by David Hill. Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 2006. 183 pp. \$22.00.

David Hill provides a comprehensive overview of how voter registration laws, electoral competition among states and within single-member districts, and the separation of powers affect voter turnout in the United States. The recent history of and academic literature exploring these institutions are aptly synthesized in the book. As an inexpensive paperback, the book is an attractive supplement to an upper-level undergraduate or graduate elections course. Scholars familiar with the literature will not find groundbreaking research, but might find enticing historical and scholarly nuggets buried in the text, as I did.

Hill begins with familiar questions about U.S. voter turnout: why is it lower than that in other democracies and why is it declining? Unfortunately, the comparative question is unanswered because Hill "relies solely on the effect of institutions in the United States" (p. 32). Have recent turnout rates "steadily declined" (p. 3)? Sam Popkin and I argue that contemporary turnout declines are attributed to the rising voting-ineligible population [Michael P. McDonald and Samuel Popkin, "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter," *American Political Science Review* 95 (December 2001): 963–974].

Hill is familiar with the research and uses my state-level turnout measures in his analysis, but the research is mentioned only in footnotes. Nor do the chapters address turnout declines. Voter registration laws have generally been relaxed, so why isn't turnout going up? Single-member districts and a federal government have existed since the country's founding, so how can these institutions explain declines? The book's introduction would have been better