

Baumgartner, Frank R. **Agendas and instability in American politics**, by Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones. Chicago, 1993. 298p bibl index afp ISBN [0-226-03938-2](#), \$47.50; ISBN [0-226-03939-0](#) pbk, \$14.95. Reviewed in 1993sep CHOICE.

Baumgartner and Jones posit a "punctuated equilibrium" model of political agenda setting in the US whereby long periods of relative stability are shaken by short periods of intense change. In this model, consensus on policy options devolves slowly, and a new consensus emerges rapidly to take its place. Emerging policy images effectively redefine issues as both public issues and ones amendable to human action. The attractiveness of these policy images drives media attention, which in turn, leads to heightened levels of issue salience with the general public. Public concern drives heightened congressional attention and is likely to open windows of political opportunity for policy adoption. Therefore, patterns of issue adoption in US politics rely on how issues are framed and presented, and on political institutions--as they seek out public consensus. To test their process model, the authors consider the relationship between the presentation and framing of a number of issues, and the various institutional and quasi-institutional political actors that shepherd, channel, and adopt policy positions. This is a very worthwhile and sophisticated attempt to combine many (largely theoretical) works on agenda setting and test them empirically. The author's empirical investigation as well as the attempt to construct an overarching theory of agenda setting is promising and important. Informed general readers; graduate; faculty. -- *D. R. Imig, University of Nevada, Las Vegas*