

Jones, Bryan D. **The politics of attention: how government prioritizes problems**, by Bryan D. Jones and Frank R. Baumgartner. Chicago, 2005. 316p bibl index afp ISBN [0226406539](#) pbk, \$25.00. Reviewed in 2006mar CHOICE.

The authors' theme is the management of information by the policy system, a topic that has become increasingly critical as the flood of data inputs threatens to inundate policy makers. They analyze the policy process in the framework of an "information processing system," canvassing some 50 years of data and exploring how information is supplied and prioritized. The deluge of policy inputs--"signals"--is controlled and pared down by individual and institutional considerations, and an agenda established, though the insertion of new information has the capacity to shock or disrupt an existing agenda. The huge diversity of inputs, and the overlapping political institutions and constituencies they address, make for a process that is "messy, inefficient and costly," but essential in the effort to preserve political rights and broad participation. The authors conclude that the agenda of policy-making institutions does align with the broad interests and priorities of the public. When it comes to prioritizing, Congress is able to juggle the broadest range of issues at any given time. An important and timely work. **Summing Up:** Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates, graduate students, and general readers with an interest in the American policy process. -- *M. C. Price, Texas A&M University--Kingsville*