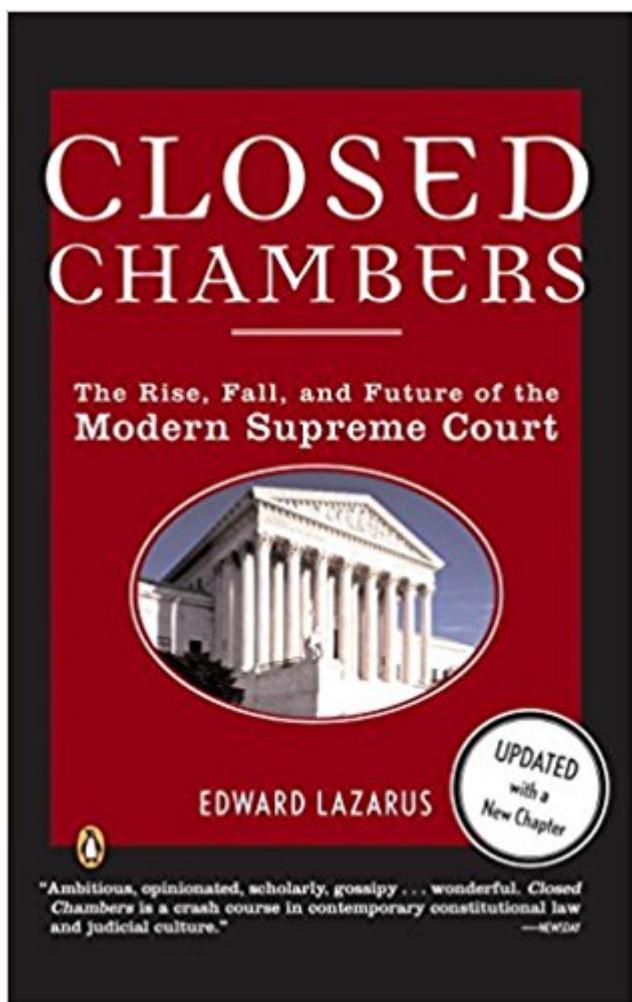


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Closed Chambers: The Rise, Fall, And Future Of The Modern Supreme Court



Synopsis

When *Closed Chambers* was first published, it was met with a firestorm of controversy "as well as a shower of praise" for being the first book to break the code of silence about the inner workings of this country's most powerful court. In this eloquent, trailblazing account, with a new chapter covering *Bush v. Gore*, Guantanamo, and other recent controversial court decisions, Edward Lazarus, who served as a clerk to Justice Harry Blackmun, presents a searing indictment of a court at war with itself and often in neglect of its constitutional duties. Combining memoir, history, and legal analysis, Lazarus reveals in astonishing detail the realities of what takes place behind the closed doors of the U.S. Supreme Court "an institution that through its rulings holds the power to affect the life of every American.

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Customer Reviews

Edward Lazarus, a former Supreme Court clerk to Justice Harry Blackmun, spills the beans on an institution that values silence. Nobody is supposed to understand what happens behind the scenes of the high court--that's why the justices rarely speak to the media--but Lazarus tells all he knows from his time as a top aide to Blackmun in the Supreme Court's 1988 term. There's a lot of legal theory and history, but it's well presented and usually focuses on touchstone issues in U.S. politics; cases involving abortion, the death penalty, and racial preferences receive sustained treatment in these pages. There are gossipy bits, too, revealing unflattering details about several current justices. Sure to be one of the more controversial books of the year. --John J. Miller --This text

refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Part memoir, part constitutional history, this volume by a former law clerk to Justice Harry Blackmun reflects both his own experience at the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1988-89 term and substantial and original research. Lazarus, now a federal prosecutor in Los Angeles, is a fine writer who makes accessible the legal esoterica behind the compelling struggles about such issues as the death penalty, abortion, and the role of race in the law. But his story is really a lamentation over, in his view, inconsistent and irrational adjudication, driven to an unprecedented degree by ideology and the manipulation practiced by unprincipled law clerks. Justices Kennedy and Brennan come in for particular attack on these grounds, while Justice Souter warrants his praise. Whether Lazarus is right or wrong in his assessment, this book is big news?few law clerks write such behind-the-scenes accounts. The clarity and authority with which he writes makes his contribution to the literature on the Supreme Court even more valuable. Recommended for all libraries.?Cynthia Harrison, George Washington Univ., Washington, DCCopyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It is about time that someone brings sunlight to the inner workings of the Supreme Court. In spite of his decidedly liberal political leanings, Lazarus provides an objective look at the inner workings of the supreme court circa 1988. Lazarus does an excellent job of showing how the polarization of the Court has been detrimental to the pursuit of justice, just as the polarization of Congress has been detrimental to the legislative process. Although non-lawyers may find his writing a bit technical, particularly on esoteric legal issues, they will nonetheless appreciate his candid views on the justices' decisionmaking process. And finally a challenge to the critics who believe that Lazarus has betrayed his employer: Please explain why we are not entitled to know how the highest court in the land makes its decisions. Congress has public hearings that are broadcast on CSPAN. The President receives more media attention than any other person in the world (absent the late Princess Di) and his minions will write dozens of tell-all books after he leaves office. Why should the Court be exempt from scrutiny? If the justices are embarrassed then maybe they should change their ways.

The Supreme Court is a body that is so important, but about which so little is known. Even, I think, the intelligence agencies are more public about the manner in which they operate. This book changes all that. I enjoyed it thoroughly. It is erudite yet still compelling. It has persuaded me to

pursue a law degree.

Lazarus does a great job explaining complex legal issues without dumbing them down and Justice Blackmun really comes alive on these pages. He's like one of those great fictional characters: you might have never heard of him before, never gave a damn and now you do. Totally captivating in some parts: no mean feat for a legal non-fic. The section on capital punishment should be required reading for all Amnesty International members (especially the non-American ones). Thank you Mr. Lazarus!

Exactly what I expected. Significantly useful for my angloamerican law studies.

Excellent condition

Perhaps the best, most well thought out, and easiest to read account of what the supreme court is all about.

This book is an important look at how the nation's highest court, and one made up of unelected individuals, influences our lives. The personalities, and the conflicts that arise, between members of the court, and the partisanship, e.g., Marshall saying that if he died, rather than giving the Republicans another seat on the court, to prop him up and keep on voting, shows how the court can be as divided as the nation on issues, such as civil rights, abortion, elections, and so on. It also gives one pause to know how much clerks of the justices have an impact on the people who sit on the high court, often using some of their own view, in editing and writing of judicial opinions. A book people ought to read, to better understand the U.S. Supreme Court. It also should give pause to all of us; considering we don't elect the Justices; we elect the people who appoint and confirm or deny their appointments. Considering the egos of some (e.g., a certain Italian-American Justice) and considering how their decision affect our lives; far beyond Acts Of Congress, or Executive Orders, one shudders to think about how they impact all of our lives with their opinions [e.g, when and how they will decide the health care law issue].

I finally got around to reading this book nearly 10 years after I bought it. Man, did I miss out. The book is extremely easy to read and well written. While the author was a former Blackmun clerk - and the liberal perspective shows through - it shows through in a very balanced, very thoughtful way.

Partially autobiographical, and mostly expository, the book explores the shift of the court from the Warren court through the Berger and Rehnquist eras to the court makeup that predominated the early part of the 21st Century. Using the twin pillars both abortion rights and capital punishment as the lens by which to examine these changes, the author does a masterful job of weaving storytelling with jurisprudential scholarship. A great work that I wish I had read much sooner.

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