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Dean Logan's Blog

Eagerly Anticipated New Book by RWU Law Prof Traces Arc of American Conservatism

Posted by David Logan on 10/03/2011 at 03:56 PM

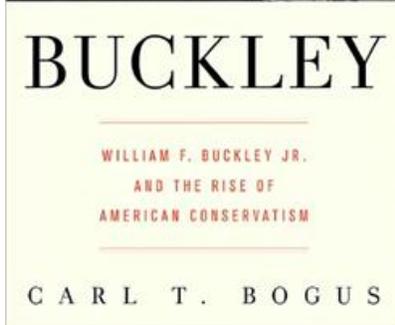


One of the most eclectic scholars on our very strong faculty is Carl Bogus, who is nationally-known for his progressive views on the history of the Second Amendment and gun control policy. Carl makes the provocative argument that James Madison wrote the Second Amendment to assure the South that Congress could not subvert the slave system by disarming state militias, which the region relied on for slave control. He has spoken about and debated both the constitutional and public policy aspects of gun control at law schools, colleges, and other venues across the country, appeared on national radio and television shows, testified before Congress, and been cited by the U. S. Supreme Court more than once. See, e.g., *District of Columbia v. Heller*, 554 U.S. 570 (2008) and *McDonald v. City of Chicago*, 130 S.Ct. 3020 (2010).

Carl also has been a powerful critic of “tort reform,” and his book [**Why Lawsuits Are Good for America**](#) made a splash when it was published. Carl has spoken about tort reform issues on national radio and television shows, before bar associations, and at many law schools, including Harvard, Vanderbilt, and Connecticut.

Now Carl has turned his keen intellect on what appears be an unusual topic for a liberal law professor: the intellectual history of the modern conservative movement. But if you really know Carl, you aren’t surprised

by this project, given his restless intellect. Nor are you surprised that conservatives, as well as liberals, are interested in what he thinks. Over the years, Carl has appeared before both the Federalist Society's national lawyers' convention and its national student symposium, and **National Review Online** posted his article "[A Liberal Reads the Great Conservative Works](#)" on its website, where it garnered a great deal of attention.



So we eagerly anticipate the late October release of [Buckley: William F. Buckley Jr. and the Rise of American Conservatism](#). Here are some of the strong initial reviews:

LIBRARY JOURNAL

★ Carl T. Bogus, *Buckley: William F. Buckley Jr. and the Rise of American Conservatism*, Bloomsbury Press

The erudite and entertaining provocateur William F. Buckley was a founding father of modern conservatism. Bogus (law, Roger Williams Univ.; Why Lawsuits Are Good for America) hasn't written a straight biography but circles his subject as he tells the story of the conservative movement's origins. Despite the handicaps of being both a lawyer and an academic, Bogus is a first-rate writer. He clearly and fairly explains the competing philosophies of different conservative sects—Burkean conservatism, libertarianism, Ayn Rand's objectivism. His penned portraits of Whittaker Chambers, William F. Buckley Sr., Russell Kirk, and others are sharp and revealing. He has a deep conversance with the material, yet he wears his knowledge lightly. The entire book is lucid and flows beautifully. The only flaw: Bogus sometimes loses focus explaining background material—yet those tangents are done so well they are worthwhile diversions. VERDICT: This is an insightful book that will please anyone interested in midcentury American history and politics. Anyone serious about political philosophy will learn from it.

Highly recommended.—Michael O. Eshleman, Kings Mills, OH

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

This thoughtful blend of biography and intellectual history harks back to a time when conservatism was dominated by proud and profound intellectualism. When William F. Buckley (1925–2008) launched the National Review in 1955, mainstream “conservatism was not merely out of favor,” but denigrated by Democrats and many Republicans as well. With Ronald Reagan’s election in 1980 and the country’s fundamental shift to the right, “the modern conservative movement finally reached the political mountaintop,” in large part thanks to Buckley’s re-articulation of the conservative agenda. Bogus (Why Lawsuits Are Good for America) charts Buckley’s ascent—the moneyed outsider who couched his blistering critique of the Eastern liberal establishment in peerless prose (“a sharp sword in a velvet scabbard”)—and his critical interventions in bringing the GOP back from the brink, for example, he was instrumental in marginalizing such fringe elements as the John Birch Society. (Bogus is markedly less admiring of Buckley’s early and strenuous opposition to the civil rights movement.) The final third of the book wobbles a bit, with summations of the cold war and the Vietnam War and a focus on lesser lights at the National Review. But despite disagreements with much of his subject’s political philosophy, Bogus vividly encapsulates how radically Buckley “changed America’s political realities... a feat so great that it is almost impossible to overstate.”

Professor James Patterson of Brown University, a preeminent scholar of mid-twentieth century American history, and winner of the Bancroft Prize, had this to say about Carl's book:

“
I found this book to be well-written, well-informed, and fair minded. Carl Bogus is very solid on the various forms of conservatism in the 50s and 60s and Buckley’s role in defining his version. He also includes terrific, lengthy passages on Vietnam, civil rights, Reagan, Mayor Lindsay, Ayn Rand, and Russell Kirk.”

You can learn more about Carl’s book (or pre-order it) from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or from [Barnes & Noble](https://www.barnesandnoble.com).