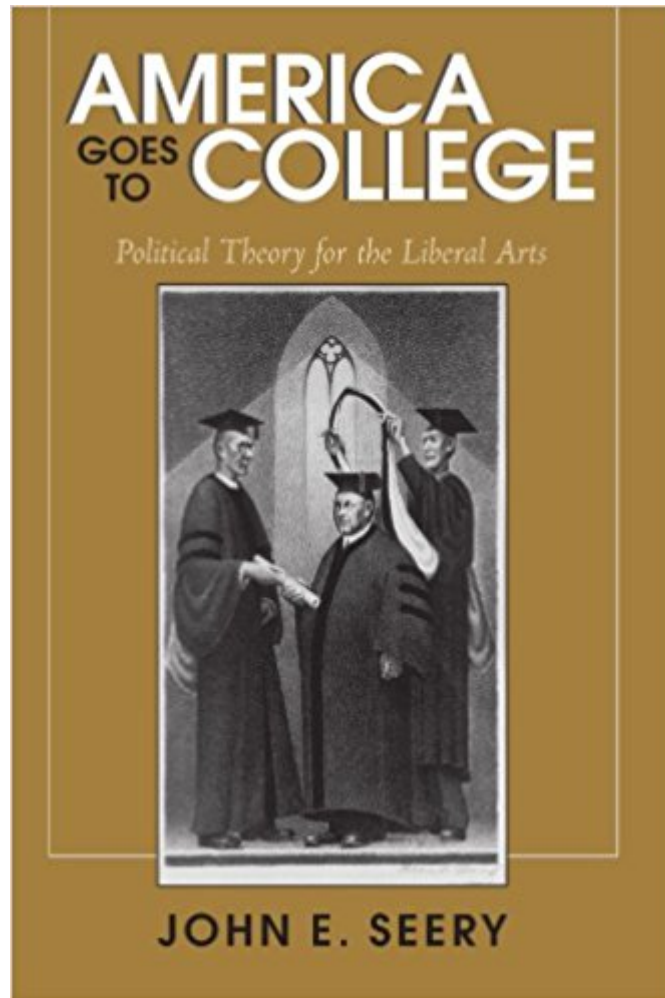




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America Goes To College



Synopsis

A rallying cry on behalf of a distinctly American institution of higher learning--the small liberal arts college--*America Goes to College* combines broad-based scholarship with personal narrative and reflection. In a highly entertaining manner, John E. Seery showcases the precarious successes of a well-rounded liberal arts college education, while at the same time signaling some of the dangers that loom on the horizon. Seery contends that the liberal arts are best pursued within the face-to-face interactive setting, characteristic of the small college classroom, as opposed to the large university lecture hall. Moreover and more provocatively, he identifies political theorists as the proper custodians and practitioners of the liberal arts tradition as it unfolds today. It is the unfettered freedom of the small liberal arts college, where vision and practice can actually coincide, that makes it the embodiment of the advantages of the American higher education system--a national treasure deserving of support.

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Customer Reviews

"A rallying cry on behalf of a distinctly American institution of higher learning--the small liberal arts college--*America Goes to College* combines broad-based scholarship with personal narrative and reflection. In a highly entertaining manner, John E. Seery showcases the precarious successes of a well-rounded liberal arts college education, while at the same time signaling some of the dangers that loom on the horizon. Seery contends that the liberal arts are best pursued within the face-to-face interactive setting, characteristic of the small college classroom, as opposed to the large university lecture hall. Moreover and more provocatively, he identifies political theorists as the

proper custodians and practitioners of the liberal arts tradition as it unfolds today. It is the unfettered freedom of the small liberal arts college, where vision and practice can actually coincide, that makes it the embodiment of the advantages of the American higher education system—a national treasure deserving of support." --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

John E. Seery is Professor of Politics at Pomona College. He is the author of *Political Theory for Mortals: Shades of Justice, Images of Death*; *Political Returns: Irony in Politics and Theory, from Plato to the Antinuclear Movement*; and coeditor (with Daniel W. Conway) of *The Politics of Irony: Essays in Self-Betrayal*.

America Goes to College is a strong collection of essays -- not all of which are pertinent specifically to the liberal arts college life -- whose varying subject matter is a delight to read. Above all, they aim to convince us that in a world that is becoming evermore specialized and technical, liberal arts educations should not be phased out, but rather they should be encouraged. Specialization breeds separation, and in turn society is losing its common ground. Be it engineers and English profs or Democrats and Republicans or even Western capitalists and Islamic fundamentalists, the current trend pits those with different perspectives against each other and unwilling to relate. Liberal arts educations work against this problem, for they encourage dabbling in non-career related pursuits--from the physics major in the studio art class to the political theory prof playing sax in the band--and thus help to create a common forum of interaction and experience. Writes Seery: "I want you to evangelize, I want you to spread the word. If you can't find passion and conviction about what went on here, you will never awaken to the rest of life. So hereby, starting today with you, I pronounce the next century to be the Pomona Century. You've got to make it happen. If you must, make Pomona College and liberal arts education into a religion. Let only the eager, thoughtful, and reverent leave here. This is a community of faith" (Seery 152). More to the point, Prof. (or should it be Rev.?) Seery wants to evangelize the gospel of the Liberal Arts. In a world that is becoming more and more specialized, Seery believes in the necessity of developing well-rounded individuals who are just as capable of advancing a discussion on cell biology as they are of advancing one on Islamic fundamentalists. As Seery sees it, why not take tangents in our education? *America Goes to College* opts to celebrate the non-specialist rather than sneer at them, as he accuses many university scholars of doing. As a professor of political science (and in such capacity, a self-proclaimed guardian of the liberal arts tradition), he notes that he nevertheless finds himself teaching classic texts in order to institute an awareness of precedence and develop a more rounded

agreement of thought. Students, explains Seery, benefit from an education that attempts to offer a more comprehensive view of the life, rather than to focus on a narrow track and ignore everything else as "not what I'm majoring in." Particularly important, writes Seery, is the small classroom, in which student-professor dialogues, as well as student-students ones, are more apt to occur and develop. University-style lectures promote order-taking; the liberal arts education promotes the self-directing graduate, the one who is capable of taking his education, and then his life, into his own hands. The goal of a liberal arts education is to learn the ability and understand the value of seeing the full panorama, not just the point straight ahead. In a world in which too many people increasingly carry themselves like horses with blinders over their eyes, Seery's America Goes to College is a welcome vision.

Much in the same way that the apostles probably wouldn't have bothered to read the Bible, having heard the good word straight from the horse's (Jesus's) mouth I have yet to read this book. That said, I am at this moment taking Professor Seery's Classical Political Theory class at Pomona College, and find it scintillating. The class, not the man...i mean...ughhh...must not succumb to metrosexuality...I think I'm going to check this book out of the library, now that I've got all worked up about it. But I recommend that you--yeah, YOU--buy it off !

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