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Book Review: The Spirit of Compromise: Why Governing Demands It and Campaigning Undermines It, by Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson

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Gutmann, Amy. **The spirit of compromise: why governing demands it and campaigning undermines it**, by Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson. Princeton, 2012. 279p ISBN 0691153914, \$24.95; ISBN 9780691153919, \$24.95.

"Compromise is difficult, but governing a democracy without compromise is impossible." So begins this excellent, much needed corrective to the contemporary political scene, which eschews compromise in politics in favor of war analogies. Today people often see adversaries as enemies, politics as a religious battle to the death, and compromise as a four-letter word; Gutmann (Univ. of Pennsylvania) and Thompson (Harvard Univ.) hope to change that. They present a reasonable, clearly argued critique of the contemporary scene and offer a reform agenda to return the US to a more pragmatic, give-and-take system of compromise, accommodation, mutual respect, and principled prudence. They walk a fine line, and their arguments are sophisticated. They realize that at times one should take a principled stand against compromise (a profiles in courage type of stance) yet bemoan the fact that so many politicians today see nearly every issue as do-or-die matter on which no compromise is possible. This excellent book should be required reading for every member of Congress, and deserves a wide readership among the voting public.

—M. A. Genovese, *Loyola Marymount University*

Summing Up: Essential. All readership levels.