
This is a really useful and important book for anyone working or especially teaching in the field of employment studies. Combining a variety of disciplinary approaches, John Budd draws out the full complexity of the ways in which scholars have chosen to attend to the issue of work. Each of the 10 substantive chapters approaches work in a slightly different way: as a curse, freedom, a commodity, citizenship, disutility, fulfilment, a social relation, caring, identity, and finally service. Each of these chapters is concerned both to define these conceptualizations as well as to explore their intellectual roots. Overall, the book cannot avoid being an excellent example of interdisciplinary writing, but what is especially pleasing is the way that Budd does not shy away from showing the tensions between academic and political viewpoints within each of his chapters.

In some ways, The Thought of Work travels within a well-worn groove of academic writing. I suspect that many of us who teach work in schools of sociology or management will start our introductory lecture with a brief account of how work and the meanings that attach to it have changed across the years. Often, teachers draw on the handful of published readers on work that have been compiled, or more directly will use P. D. Anthony’s (1977) The Ideology of Work, which maps out a similar terrain to that of Budd’s volume. Anthony was writing in a different era to our own where work was arguably taken for granted more than is the case now. Since the publication of The Ideology of Work, the Western economies have undergone profound change and upheaval. Simple assumptions about identity and meaning have given way to more complex readings of economic life.

The Thought of Work is an interesting hybrid of a book, and I think this is what it makes it an important addition to the study of work. First and foremost, Budd writes very well in a relaxed style where he carries theory lightly — yet, at the same time, he has not produced a simplistic account of his subject matter. The book can be used in a number of ways and at different levels to teach about work. It is, for example, an excellent way to introduce students to the general subject matter of economic life. Importantly, it invites the reader to think in theoretical, conceptual and at times philosophical ways about work. From the beginning, then, we are engaged in a thoughtful historical reflection on the meaning and nature of labour, and how this has changed and been contested. However, the power of the book is that one could imagine it as a volume around which you could design a number of seminars or indeed a whole course, with singular or multiple chapters forming the basis for a lively discussion. The Thought of Work lends itself to this, as each chapter is roughly 20 pages in length and forms a discrete essay that can in turn underpin a debate. Such is the nature of Budd’s writing, that the book could be used at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels with neither audience feeling lost nor patronized.

The Thought of Work marks an interesting contrast to a recent trend in academic publishing where, as teachers, we are left with a choice of either a comprehensive textbook or a volume of ‘key terms’. Budd’s book is neither of these things, and because of that it invites discussion and comparison rather than structure student responses to the point where they simply parrot back a line. The volume is also introduced and concluded by useful and substantive chapters that are important interventions in their own right.

The Thought of Work is self-consciously pitched at a wide audience in both social sciences and humanities. This is a real strength and one that opens up the study of work in a welcome and creative way. Students are shown the value of using a combination of
different approaches to explore economic life. The book does not duck from showing disagreement and difference between traditions, exposing the reader to the mess of social thought, and the legitimacy and value of intellectual conflict. Budd and his publishers are to be congratulated on producing a text that will be an invaluable resource for teachers and students of sociology, philosophy, management and business, as well as other disciplines. The book deserves to be a staple on any self-respecting critical reading list on work and employment. *The Thought of Work* is part of a real renaissance in the interdisciplinary study of work and is to be applauded.

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**Reference**


With his book *Quiet Politics and Business Power*, Culpepper refreshingly extends the focus of research in comparative political economy beyond employer preferences, towards the means by which managers get their way in the political arena.

The book starts with a straightforward empirical puzzle and equally straightforward answer. Culpepper asks why some non-liberal market economies (France, Japan) experienced an increase in takeover bids since the 1990s, while others (Germany, Netherlands) did not. Drawing on secondary literature, Culpepper first offers a standard ‘varieties of capitalism’ explanation: managers’ preferences varied across countries due to cross-national variation in the strength of labour. However, instead of stopping there, he goes on to ask, more provocatively, why managers in all four cases got what they preferred, regardless of whether they wanted the removal or the fortification of barriers to unsolicited takeovers.

The answer to this second puzzle, neatly captured by the term *quiet politics*, constitutes his main argument. Business power is high where political salience is low. According to Culpepper, elected politicians and the media care mainly about issues that mobilize voters, and many corporate governance issues are too boring or too complex for voters to care. As a result, politicians and journalists have weak incentives to acquire independent expertise, and this opens the door to business lobbyists, who can tell them what to think and what to do. It seems obvious why this should worry us, and Culpepper states it clearly. Political contestation fades where issues are of low salience, and this suggests a democratic deficit.

Salience is hard to measure, and some may object to Culpepper’s exclusive reliance on newspaper coverage, but his empirical findings are plausible. Between 1996 and 2006, takeover regulation made the headlines less often than pension reform, and it seems likely that, during the period in consideration, voters in Germany, France, Japan and the United States did in fact care less about takeover regulation.

I am less convinced by his explanation as to why voters cared less about takeovers, and why, more generally, some issues are less salient than others. The answer matters because it affects the assessment of whether and why quiet politics is a problem for democracy. Culpepper suggests that takeover regulation ‘is a complex issue, not easily