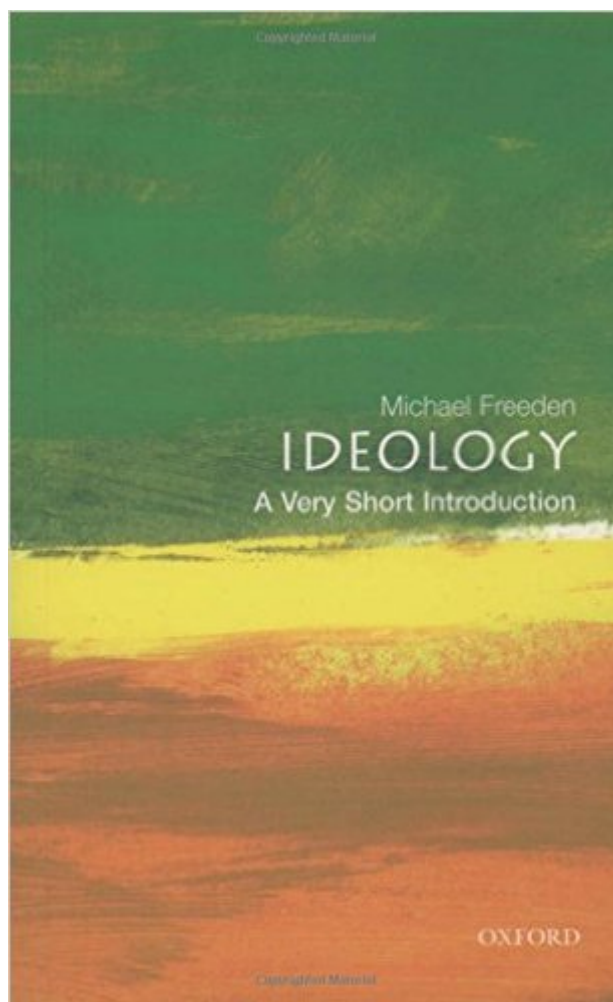


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Ideology: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

Ideology is one of the most controversial terms in the political vocabulary, exciting both revulsion and inspiration. This book examines the reasons for those views, and explains why ideologies deserve respect as a major form of political thinking. It investigates the centrality of ideology both as a political phenomenon and as an organizing framework of political thought and action. It explores the changing understandings of ideology as a concept, and the arguments of the main ideologies. By employing the latest insights from a range of disciplines, the reader is introduced to the vitality and force of a crucial resource at the disposal of societies, through which sense and purpose is assigned to the political world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I should note first off that Prof Freeden's definition of ideology is different than my own. The core of his definition is that ideology is a set of political ideas, beliefs, and opinions that are communicable and influential. Whereas my own definition is that an ideology is a belief system, often dogmatic. (Distinguished from a religion only in that there is no mystical element.) I would agree with the sociologist who said that ideology is a "systematic misrepresentation of reality." So in reading this book I had to constantly make the mental conversion to the author's definition. (The author believes the view of ideology as being dogmatic is obsolete.) The author makes a good case for his own definition. By that definition, ideology is a necessary part of politics. "They offer decision-making frameworks without which political action cannot occur." He analyzes ideology from different angles:

language, macro ideology vs micro ideology, the separateness of ideology from political philosophy, the emotional appeal of ideology.... This is all interesting stuff. The book is not a quick read, not if you want to get as much as you can out of it, but it's definitely not a dry read either. Another mental conversion for American readers: Freeden refers constantly to liberalism and conservatism, both of which he views as ideologies. But British liberalism and conservatism are different than the American versions. British liberalism stems from John Stuart Mill and libertarianism, with elements of humanism and pluralism added. In the US, liberals owe more to Teddy Roosevelt's "Square Deal" than to J S Mill, with liberalism being more about trying to increase social/economic/political justice/fairness in the world -- and disagreeing on how to accomplish that.

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