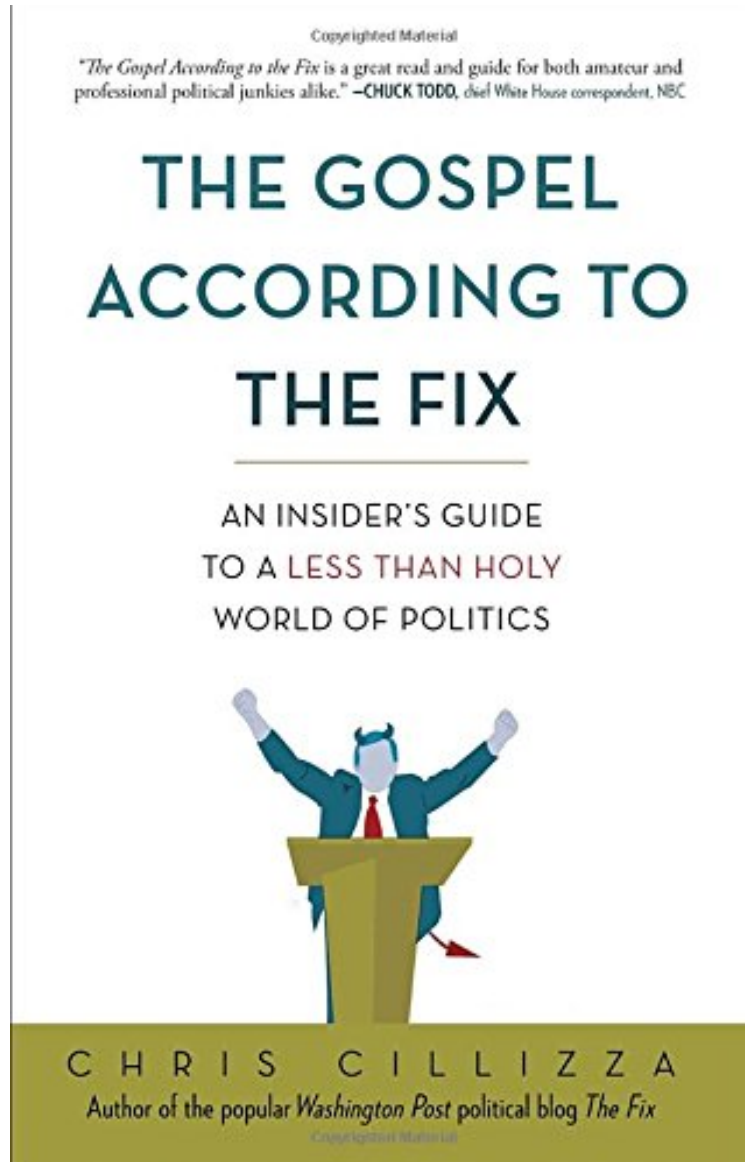


[Free] The Gospel According to the Fix: An Insider's Guide to a Less than Holy World of Politics

The Gospel According to the Fix: An Insider's Guide to a Less than Holy World of Politics

Chris Cillizza

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Chris Cillizza : The Gospel According to the Fix: An Insider's Guide to a Less than Holy World of Politics before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Gospel According to the Fix: An Insider's Guide to a Less than Holy World of Politics:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Does the Job It Promises
By Tom Sales
Chris Cillizza's first book is a good effort that fits snugly alongside many of the books now focused on the political environment. Coincidentally, it came out on the same day as "It's the Middle Class, Stupid," and adds more texture to what Carville Greenberg discuss in that book about the upcoming election. Cillizza's chapters compartmentalize different aspects of the electoral process in the way a blog would--often using sports analogies: things like biggest issues, best ads, October surprises, 2016 Republican and Democratic all-star teams. They're serious topics, but Cillizza doesn't take them or himself too seriously. I agree with another reviewer that Cillizza is not overly partisan. I'm sure he fights those tendencies because he is an MSNBC contributor and on multiple shows each day, but he does a good job in this book of looking at both parties, handicapping their chances, recognizing their up-and-comers, and leaving it for readers to decide where they stand. The people he skewers deserve to be skewered -- by their actions and not their affiliations. I wanted to see how the blogger/contributor perspective compared to these other authors. I'd agree that Cillizza didn't do all the reading and footnoting that others have (hence no index), that he's not hosting a daily show or a former elected official himself, but his book shows you how people think and cope who follow the details of day-to-day politics and campaigns and immerse themselves in seeing close up how politicians act, keep or lose their way. It also shows how we as citizens and periodic voters choose to care or not care about the issues they talk and blog about every day. So from that angle of making politics more understandable, this book does the job it promises.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fails to deliver
By Rishikesh Bhalerao
Chris Cillizza is a talented journalist and his blog "The Fix" at The Washington Post is insightful, entertaining, and comprehensive in its coverage of American politics. It's a shame then that Mr. Cillizza's book, *The Gospel According to the Fix*, is such a dreary failure. As a loyal reader of *The Fix*, I have come to rely on Mr. Cillizza to deliver timely and well crafted insights into the story behind the story. Unfortunately, for readers like me, the book introduces no new insights. In addition, the writing style that has made *The Fix* easy to read simply does not work in a book format. There are extensive and circuitous analogies (e.g. the link to *Friday Night Lights*), overuse of the m-dash, introduction of non-words (what's "cashola"?), and other such offenses against the English language. The chapters appear to be in some random order that don't tell a cohesive story: for example, the first few sections about the recommended blogs should really be appendices. Finally, there's wild speculation about candidates for 2016 with a justification of how such a discussion appeals to political junkies--this is a far cry from the thoughtful commentary that has made *The Fix* a destination for analysis versus opinion. Chris Cillizza is an important voice in an increasingly noisy world of political journalism. Mr. Cillizza will do well to fire his editors and work a professional team for his next book (which I'll be borrowing from the library rather than purchasing!).

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I love *The Fix*, but not too many memorable pieces here
By Andy Orrock
Like others reviewing here, I'm a big fan of Chris Cillizza's *WaPo* blog, *The Fix*. It's juicy and insightful - his hard work is evident in every timely post. And, I appreciate his well-tuned sense of humor. Whether it's his "Worst Week in Washington" post (his "Congrats, or something" salutation to the 'winner' never ceases to make me laugh) or his "call your office" posts to politicians falling bumptiously off-message, his style is perfect for blogging. It's no wonder '*The Fix*' has become a must read, both inside and outside *The Beltway*. As a book, not so much. I consumed this collection of pieces quickly but don't have a lot to say. Though the one chapter that stuck with me is the nice one on Richard Ben Cramer and the cult of *What It Takes: The Way to the White House*. Cillizza modestly cites that book as his - and much of his generation's - inspiration. Cramer's book was almost universally panned or ignored when it came out shortly before the 1992 election. Since then - thanks to devotees like Cillizza and his colleagues - it has become seen as the sui generis hallmark of political books. Cramer gives a nice interview to Cillizza. That Cramer has been ultimately triumphant by developing a unique vision of political reporting (the 1,000 page (!) book took six years to research and write) is a nice story of perseverance and talent winning out. That a fan like Cillizza gets to write that story is really great. Many of the others chapters have a lot to thank *EPSN's* Bill Simmons for. Cillizza is an unabashed Simmons fan (he met him once and asks his readers to remember the *SNL* skit of Chris Farley 'interviewing' Paul McCartney to get an idea of what the exchange was like). As a result, Cillizza's got his "Levels on Endorsements" (see Simmons' "Levels of Losing") and his Political Hall of Fame (a Simmons staple, most notably his Top 100 ranking in *The Book of Basketball: The NBA According to The Sports Guy*).

A divine guide to deciphering the sinful world of American politics, from the author of the Washington Post's *The Fix*
The political world is full of acronyms, shortcuts, and lingo that stand as a barrier to entry for anyone not in the business. The onset of social media has only made that barrier higher, as insiders tweet furiously to one another in a language most of us can't even understand. Everyday Americans and even political junkies need a how-to manual for understanding what words matter in this arena and why. Enter Brother Chris Cillizza and *The Gospel According to the Fix*--an essential guide to the wonderfully odd religion of politics. Based on his highly popular blog, *The Gospel According to the Fix* will teach you something new about politics, no matter who you are and whom you know. In our torturous political climate, this Gospel is the one true source for comprehending what the heck is going on in DC. Chapter and verse, this political Gospel will include parables the likes of: • Why Ron Paul's candidacy is a lot like the TV show *Friday Night Lights* • What it takes to be Richard Ben Cramer and write the political classic *What It Takes* •

The top ten negative campaign ads of all time • The top ten issues candidates should be discussing but aren't because of the economy • The dos and don'ts of surviving a political sex scandal

“The Gospel According to the Fix is a great read and guide for both amateur and professional political junkies alike.” —Chuck Todd, chief White House correspondent, NBC “This is a smart, funny road map through the maze of presidential politics, replete with Chris Cillizza’s trademark insights and keen wit. If you have time for one guide to politics, The Gospel According to the Fix is it.” —Andrea Mitchell, chief foreign affairs correspondent, NBC “The Gospel According to the Fix hits its stride in several ambitious explorations of various aspects of the political scene.... The speed, volume and reach of [Cillizza’s] take on matters not only chronicles the daily grind but influences it, too: Consultants read him, and their candidates react.” —Ken Kurson, Wall Street Journal

About the Author CHRIS CILLIZZA writes The Fix for the Washington Post. He is an MSNBC contributor and political analyst who appears regularly on the network in addition to NBC, PBS, and NPR’s Diane Rehm Show. Chris has worked for Roll Call, the Cook Political Report, and Congress Daily. His freelance work has appeared in a variety of publications, including The Atlantic, Washingtonian, and Slate.

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Chapter 1 Ames Straw Poll (Born August 1979, Died 8/13/2011) The Ames Straw Poll died a quiet death in the summer of 2011, although the patient didn’t realize it was all over until five months later. For the better part of three decades, the straw poll, held on the campus of Iowa State University, amounted to a must-attend event. Though it was nothing more than a fund-raiser for the Iowa Republican Party, it transformed itself—with a major assist from the mainstream media (shakes fist)—into an early indicator of who might wind up winning the first-in-the-nation caucuses in the Hawkeye State. In 1979, 1987, and 1999 the straw poll winner went on to win the caucuses. In 2007, former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee—remember him?—came in a surprising second at Ames and went on to win in Iowa the following year. As the supposed importance of Ames as organizational litmus test grew, so too did the pageantry surrounding it. By the time George W. Bush and Steve Forbes faced off in 1999, it had become a full-blown carnival. In a parking lot outside of the Hilton Coliseum—where Cyclone hoops greats like Fred “The Mayor” Hoiberg and Marcus “Huge NBA Bust” Fizer (OK, that wasn’t his nickname) once roamed, the Iowa GOP auctioned off the various parcels around the voting site to the aspirants. In 1999, Bush, who was practically bathing in cash, dropped \$40,000 just to have the best and biggest space in the Coliseum parking lot. In 2011, Texas representative Ron Paul was the highest bidder—spending \$31,000 for his plot. Once their piece of land—concrete, actually—was secured, the real spending began. Elaborate tents and stages were built, caterers were hired to feed the masses, dunking booths were set up, tickets were bought for attendees. (Yes, one of the great/terrible things about Ames is that the candidates paid for their “supporters” to attend.) And the media swarmed. And I do mean swarmed. More than eight hundred press credentials were issued for the 2011 version of Ames, which amounted to more votes than either former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney or former House speaker Newt Gingrich received at the event itself. Reporters from Japan, Germany, and every American news outlet you have ever heard of—and many you haven’t heard of—circled those few days in mid-August as a must-do for campaign coverage. With reporters literally everywhere, political hangers-on were drawn to Ames like flies to a carcass. (And, yes, I am aware I just compared the media—of which I am a member—to an insect that vomits its own food.) National Rifle Association supporters paraded around Ames wearing orange hats. Men dressed like Uncle Sam and women dressed like Lady Liberty were a dime a dozen. And everywhere, everywhere were people pushing pet causes that ranged from the mildly credible to the demonstrably insane. Over the years, reporters covering Ames grew ever more cynical about the event—and what it told us about the Republican race. After all, no more than 23,000 people had ever voted at Ames—in 2007 just 14,000 did so—and the idea of it as must-stop for political candidates was fading rapidly. But cover it they did—and did, and did, and did. The 2011 Ames straw poll changed all that. First, Romney, who had been the favorite since it became clear he was running for president again (and that became clear about five minutes after he dropped out of the 2008 race), bowed out—insisting that any straw polls were a waste of time and energy for his campaign. But Romney isn’t the one who, ultimately, stuck the dagger in the heart of Ames. That honor goes to Minnesota representative Michele Bachmann. And it’s beyond ironic—in that Alanis Morissette way—that it was Bachmann who killed the straw poll. After all, Bachmann rode to prominence in Iowa by touting the fact that she was born in Waterloo and, therefore, understood the hopes, dreams, and problems of the state’s residents better than the outsiders trying to hone in on their votes. It worked—for a while. Bachmann surged over the summer months, and when straw poll day—August 13, 2011—came it was clear that she was the favorite. Her tent was the largest of any on the grounds, and there was a steady stream of people angling to get inside for the chance to glimpse the candidate herself. (Oddly, once you made it inside the tent, which had all its flaps down to keep in the air-conditioning, it wasn’t all-so-spectacular. Between the cool temperatures and the darkness it reminded me more of a cave than anything else.) No one was surprised then when the straw poll results were announced and Bachmann had won—albeit it very narrowly over Paul. (Much more about Paul—and the cultlike following he has developed—later.) What few people realized at the time was that Ames marked not the beginning of the beginning of Bachmann’s run as a top-tier candidate but instead the beginning of the end. Even as the straw poll results were being read, Texas governor Rick Perry was announcing his decision to enter the race—and it only got worse from there for

Bachmann. The following day, at a Lincoln Day Dinner in Blackhawk County—yes, that is really the name of the county—Bachmann and Perry were both scheduled to speak. The Bachmann forces saw it as a chance to engage Perry on their terms—after all, they were just coming off of a huge straw poll victory, and the Texas governor was just now entering the race. Instead it turned into a symbol of everything that was to go wrong for Bachmann as summer turned to fall. While Perry worked the room, displaying the sort of natural charm that voters saw too little of in the campaign, Bachmann's famous/infamous campaign bus was circling the venue. The candidate refused to enter the dinner until Perry had cleared out. When she did, finally, speak, she was "horrible," according to a former adviser to the candidate. The practical effect of her circling the target was that Perry had already won the room and the media coverage of the event. Rick Perry schools Michele Bachmann in Waterloo. Read the headline from a Politico story on the event. Things went from bad to worse for Bachmann. Perry having stolen her thunder, Bachmann watched her support erode badly—both in Iowa and nationally. She kept up a brave face. Try to find a picture from those months where she isn't smiling. Seriously. We dare you. And to her credit, she did well in her increasingly limited role in the dozen (or so) debates during the fall. By the time Iowans voted—a whole three days into 2012!—Bachmann's political obituary and that of the Ames straw poll had already been written. Bachmann won 4,823 votes in the Ames straw poll. One hundred forty-four days later, she got just 6,046 votes in the actual Iowa caucuses—good (that may not be the right word) for sixth place. It's actually even worse than it sounds. Only six candidates were actively competing in Iowa; former Utah governor Jon Huntsman skipped the state entirely but managed 739 votes. (Rick Santorum, the former Pennsylvania senator who won the Iowa caucuses, finished fourth at the straw poll with 9 percent.) Bachmann's first-to-worst performance ends the Ames straw poll as a barometer of much of anything in Iowa Republican politics. Yes, it will continue. And, yes, defenders of the straw poll will insist the Bachmann victory/collapse was the exception, not the rule. And, triple yes, the media will almost certainly continue to cover it as though it means something. But smart politicians—and I am nominating myself for this category—now should know better. Ames was always, at root, a fundraiser masked as an actual contest; after all, in what other election do you buy people tickets to attend and vote for you? Bachmann's victory laid bare the utter meaninglessness of the Ames straw poll as a predictive or productive exercise. Ames died that day in mid-August 2011 at the hands of one of its own—Michele Bachmann. Let's hope it stays dead. And in its place? (The Fix is all about solutions, after all.) How about an American Idol–like competition in which each week the candidates are tested on various skills they'll need to make it in the presidential race. Think about it. One week they could do the "major aspirational/inspirational speech." Another week it could be working a rope line. Or dealing with the fallout from a scandal in your campaign. Or kissing babies. Or dealing with a hostile audience. How about a mock debate? I mean, the possibilities are literally endless. At the end of every week, America would vote on who did it the best. I mean, this is a democracy after all. The lowest vote-getter would get a chance to argue for his political life in front of a three-person panel of judges—me, Katie Couric, and Bill Clinton (like he wouldn't totally want to participate)—and then would have judgment rendered. You get kicked off, you drop out. And so it goes until we get down to a final four candidates, at which point we begin the traditional nominating contest. Is there any question that the level of interest in politics would shoot through the roof? With the public voting every week there would be a genuine engagement well beyond what we currently see in the early days of a primary race. It would also take money out of the process—at least at the start. Rather than spending the lion's share of their time trolling for cash, the candidates would dedicate themselves to perfecting skills they actually would need if/when they managed to be elected president. Plus, is allowing the public to choose their final four candidates via a Political Idol competition any more arbitrary than the way we currently do it? No way.

The Best Political Blogroll—Anywhere

People always ask me what I read on a daily basis. Answer: not all that much. I skim. So, then, what do I skim? That's easier. Below is the most comprehensive blogroll I—plus some of my smarty-pants friends—could think of. Rip these pages out of the book and put them next to (or in) your computer. You'll need them this fall.

From the Right

Jim Geraghty, Campaign Spot: <http://www.nationalreview.com/campaign-spot>

Hot Air: <http://hotair.com/>

American Spectator blog: <http://spectator.org/blog>

Michael Dougherty: <http://www.businessinsider.com/author/michael-brendan-dougherty>

Down the Middle

Nate Silver: <http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/> (or is he center?)

<http://gop12.thehill.com/>

From the Left

Steve Benen: http://maddowblog.msnbc.msn.com/Jonathan_Bernstein, Plain Blog: <http://plainblogaboutpolitics.blogspot.com/>

The Monkey Cage: <http://themonkeycage.org/>

ThinkProgress: <http://thinkprogress.org/>

Ezra Klein, Wonkblog: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein>

Greg Sargent, The Plum Line: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line>

The Best State Political Blogroll—Anywhere

National blogs may get all the attention (present company included), but for the true political junkie (present company included), there's a whole other level of terrific blogging going on at the state level. We've collected our favorite(s) from each of the fifty states. Bookmark them. There's no better way to follow Senate, governor, and House races than through these state-specific blogs.

Alabama

Doc's Political Parlor

Left in Alabama

Wanted Alabama Democrats

Alaska

The Mudflats

Arizona

Arizona Eagletarian

Espresso Pundit

Arkansas

Arkansas Blog

Tolbert Report

California

Calbuzz

California Majority Report

California's Capitol

Capitol Alert

Carla Marinucci

Fox and Hounds

Daily Rough Tumble

Colorado

Colorado Peak Politics

Colorado Pols

Complete Colorado

Peoples Press Collective

The

SpotSquare StateConnecticutCT Capitol ReportMy Left NutmegDelawareDelaware GrapevineDelaware
LiberalFloridaSayfie BizpacreviewThe BuzzFlorida Progressive CoalitionNaked PoliticsPolitical
PulseSaintPetersBlogThe SpencerianSunshine State NewsGeorgiaPeach PunditPolitical InsiderHawaiiAll Hawaii
NewsIdaho43rd State BluesHuckleberries OnlineIdaho ReporterIllinoisCapitol FaxChicago CurrentIllinois
IndianaCapitol WashingtonHoosier AccessIndiana BarristerIowaThe Bean WalkerBleeding HeartlandIowa
IndependentIowa RepublicanJohn DeethUnder the Golden DomeKansasDome on the RangeHawver's
NewsKentuckyBarefoot and ProgressiveBluegrass BulletinHillbilly ReportPage One KentuckyLouisianaBetween the
LinesDaily KingfishThe HayrideMaineDirigo BlueMaine PoliticsPine Tree PoliticsMarylandMaryland ReporterRed
MarylandMassachusettsBlue Mass GroupPolitical IntelligenceTalking PoliticsMichiganBlogging for MichiganJack
LessenberryRight MichiganMinnesotaBluestem PrairieCapitol ViewDump BachmannHot Dish PoliticsMinnesota
IndependentMinnPotusMN Progressive ProjectSmart PoliticsTrue NorthMississippiCotton Mouth BlogMajority in
MississippiY'all PoliticsMissouriFired up MissouriPoliticoShow Me ProgressMontanaIntelligent
DiscontentMontana CowgirlNebraskaLeavenworth StreetNew NebraskaWinterizedNevadaDesert BeaconIn the
Sausage FactoryInside Nevada PoliticsLas Vegas GleanerThe Nevada ViewNevada News BureauSlash PoliticsRalston
FlashNew HampshireBlue HampshireNH JournalWMUR Political ScoopNew JerseyBlue JerseyPolitickerNJSave
JerseyNew MexicoDemocracy for New MexicoHeath HaussamenJoe MonahanNew YorkThe Albany ProjectCapitol
ConfidentialThe Daily PoliticsState of PoliticsNorth CarolinaCape Fear WatchdogsCapital BeatCivitas
NCCapitolTalking About PoliticsUnder the DomeNorth DakotaFlickertales from the HillNorth DecoderSay
AnythingOhioPlunderbundOhio Daily BlogThe Sidney IndependentThird Base PoliticsOklahomaBatesLineThe
McCarville ReportMuskogee PoliticoOregonBlue OregonCapitol WatchJeff MapesOregon
CatalystPennsylvaniaPolitics PACapitol IdeasEarly Returns2 Political JunkiesRhode IslandOn Politics/WRNINesi's
NotesSouth CarolinaFITS NewsPolitical BriefingSouth DakotaMadville TimesSouth Dakota War
CollegeTennesseeCamp4UHumphrey on the HillKnox ViewsPostPoliticsTexasTexas TribuneBurka BlogBurnt
Orange ReportUtahOut of ContextUtah PolicyVermontGreen Mountain DailyVermont Daily
BriefingVTdiggerVirginiaBearing DriftBlue VirginiaNot Larry SabatoWashingtonNPI AdvocateNW Daily
MarkerPetri DishPolitical BuzzPolitics NorthwestSlogStrange BedfellowsWest VirginiaWest Virginia
BlueWisconsinBlogging BlueBlue CheddarDane 101On PoliticsUppity
WisconsinWisPoliticsWyomingHummingbirdmindsThe PitchWyoming Capitol JournalThe Not Top Ten—the Ten
Issues You Won't Hear About This Fall"It's the economy, stupid."Truer political words were never spoken. James
Carville and George Stephanopoulos made that phrase famous during Bill Clinton's 1992 run for president, but it
matters as much today as it did twenty years ago.The economy is the only issue on voters' minds. More than six in ten
Floridians, South Carolinians, and New Hampshire-ites told exit pollsters that the economy was the most important
issue to them. Every national poll conducted over the past three years has shown something very similar.You would
have to be a real dummy—and given that you have bought this book you obviously are not—to miss that the 2012
election will be decided by the state of the economy.If the economy is sucking up every ounce of oxygen in the
political room—bad (and extended!) metaphor alert—then what other issues are being suffocated? What would
we—and the candidates—be talking about if they weren't talking about the economy all the damn time?In honor of
SportsCenter—aka the show that Mrs. Fix demands be turned off when I am watching it straight through for the
second consecutive hour—we give you the Not Top Ten Issues of 2012.