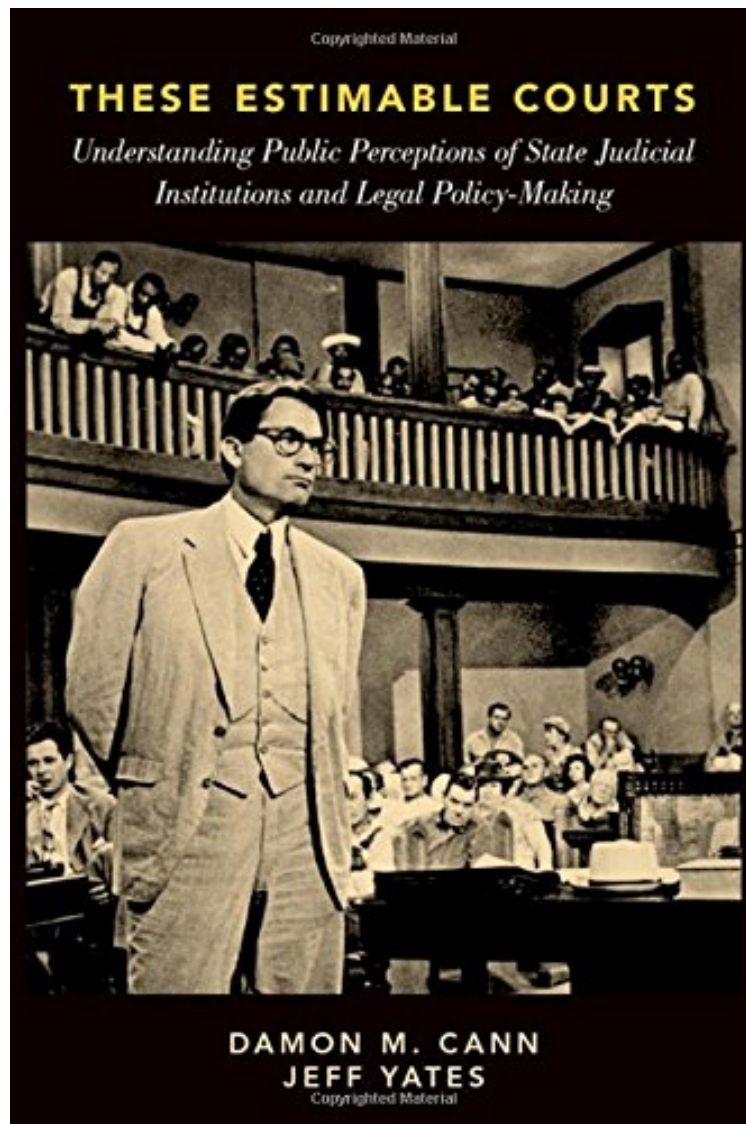


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These Estimable Courts: Understanding Public Perceptions of State Judicial Institutions and Legal Policy-Making

Damon M. Cann, Jeff Yates

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In *These Estimable Courts*, Damon M. Cann and Jeff Yates explore how citizens feel about the government institutions at the front lines of jurisprudential policy-making in America - our nation's state and local courts. The book's central focus concerns a primary question of governance: why do people support and find legitimate the institutions that govern their lives? Cann and Yates evaluate the factors that drive citizens' support for their state and local courts and that influence peoples' perceptions of the proper role of these courts in our society, as well as how judicial policy-making should be made. A viable democracy depends upon citizen belief in the legitimacy of government institutions. Nowhere is this more evident than in judicial institutions. Courts depend heavily on a reservoir of public good will and institutional legitimacy to get their decrees obeyed by the public and implemented by other policy actors. It enables courts to weather the storm of counter-majoritarian decisions and remain effective governing bodies whose edicts are respected and followed. *These Estimable Courts* takes advantage of new original survey data to evaluate citizens' beliefs about the legitimacy of state courts as well as a number of important related concerns. These include peoples' views concerning how judges decide cases, the role of judges and courts in policy-making, the manner in which we select judges, and finally, the dynamics of citizens' views regarding compliance with the law and legal institutions.

"In *These Estimable Courts*, Cann and Yates weave together two of the most interesting, innovative, and vibrant strands of contemporary scholarship on law and politics: attention to the powerful, policy-making role of state courts and attempts to understand the causes and consequences of the legitimacy of judicial institutions. They do so in a masterful, ground-breaking fashion, greatly pushing forward the frontiers of our understandings of how Americans view their courts. Unquestionably, a must-read." -James L. Gibson, Washington University in St. Louis "In this important book, Cann and Yates use original data to examine citizens' views of their states' courts, an important area that has been understudied for too long. Their analysis is clear, comprehensive, and convincing. This book is a must-read for scholars interested in state courts and the relationship between courts and public opinion." -Chris W. Bonneau, University of Pittsburgh, and co-author of *Voters' Verdicts* and *In Defense of Judicial Elections* "While public attention may focus on federal courts, the preponderance of legal activity takes place in state civil and criminal courts. Informed by data, Cann and Yates advance our understanding of the complex relations between citizens and state courts. Future scholarship on public perceptions of state courts will need to engage with this important book." -Michael Heise, Professor of Law, Cornell Law School "To studies of state courts, *These Estimable Courts* adds an essential element: the views of the American public. This fascinating volume meticulously documents the nuanced ways in which Americans perceive state courts and judicial decision making, contradicting extant accounts of the impact of electing judges on judicial legitimacy. This important and thought-provoking work is sure to spark debate while offering intriguing new insights and is a must-read for anyone interested in state courts and linkages between citizens and the bench." -Melinda Gann Hall, author of *Attacking Judges: How Campaign Advertising Influences State Supreme Court Elections* "Damon Cann and Jeff Yates provide a welcome and pioneering exploration of the contours of public opinion about state high courts using new public opinion data and sophisticated and appropriate analytical techniques. This is a must-read book for judicial scholars and a worthy adoption for upper division undergraduate and graduate courses." -Paul Brace, Clarence Carter Chair in Legal Studies and Professor of Political Science, Rice University "Still, the authors have written an interesting and useful book. They have employed sophisticated techniques to explore their hypotheses, but their book remains eminently readable. Technical discussions are presented clearly and explored in more depth in appendixes." -M. M. Feeley, University of California, Berkeley

About the Author Damon M. Cann is Associate Professor of Political Science at Utah State University. Jeff Yates is Professor of Political Science at Binghamton University.