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Outstanding Title!

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Radcliff, Benjamin. The political economy of human happiness: how voters' choices determine the quality of life. Cambridge, 2013. 205p bibl index ISBN [9781107030848](#) pbk, \$90.00; ISBN [9781107644427](#) pbk, \$29.99

Often debates on fiscal policy forget to answer the question of whether or not society is better off because of interventions, or lack of interventions, by the central government. Radcliff (Univ. of Notre Dame) has provided a provocative study of the impact of fiscal policy and social policy on "voter satisfaction" and "human happiness" in an attempt to develop solid prescriptions for improving human quality of life. In examining survey data from 21 countries from 1981 to 2007 and the 50 American states from 1985 to 1998, the author concludes that democratic systems with the most generous social welfare programs and the most protections for labor have higher levels of overall human satisfaction. These systems mediate many of the negative risks associated with market failure and allow citizens to flourish. The conclusions reached in the book are timely, given the debates over austerity that are now occurring in most advanced industrial democracies. The strengths of this book are found in the robust theory and methodology sections. In studying something as abstract as "happiness," Radcliff was very transparent and clear in how he conceptualized variables, so that the even lay readers can understand. This is a must read. **Summing Up:** Essential. Upper-division undergraduate, graduate, research, and professional collections.

--N. K. Mitchell, Prairie View A&M University

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