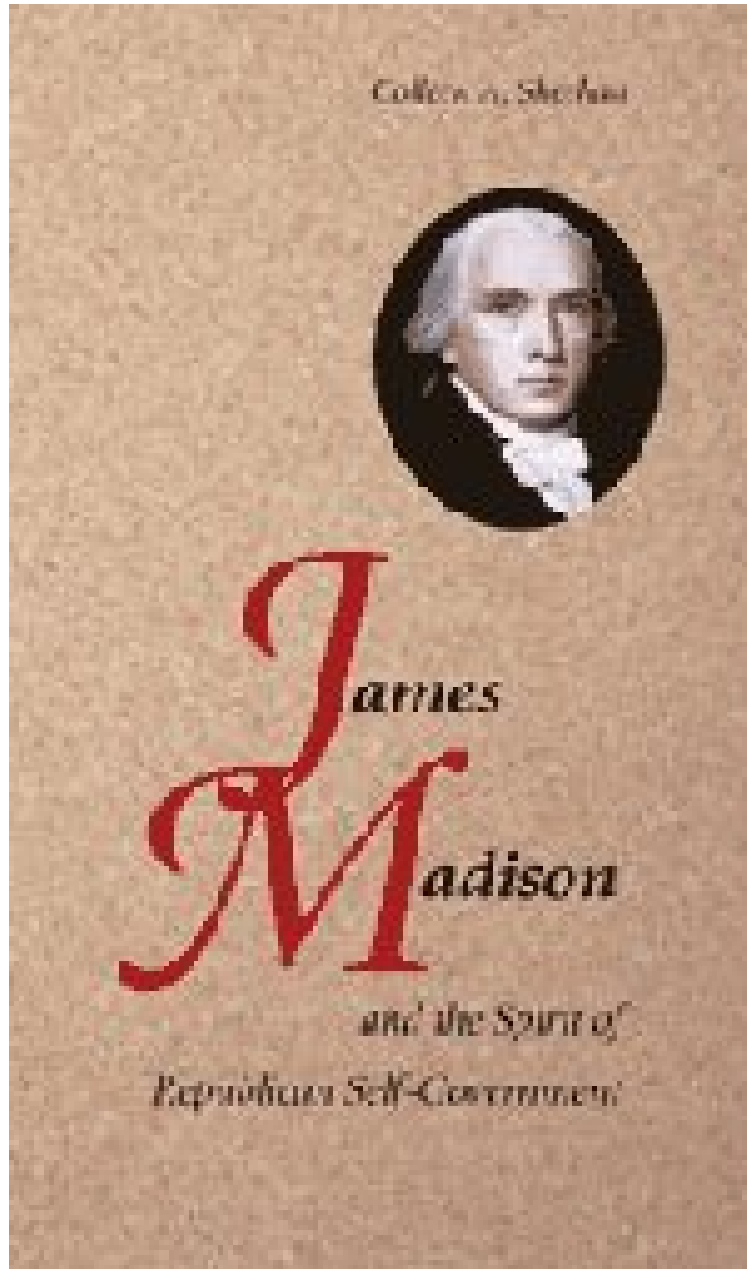


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James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government

Colleen A. Sheehan

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Colleen A. Sheehan : James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-

Government:

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OutrightBy Wight MartindaleColleen Sheehan's book on James Madison offers a wonderfully refreshing view of what it was like to be an active American early in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Her introduction, where she quotes from Robert Frost's poem "The Gift Outright," reminds us of the sense of gratitude felt by those just realizing that this land was indeed a gift, a gift for which we owned enormous gratitude. And gratitude, need I remind anyone, seems sadly out of fashion these days. I had just been looking over some of Van Wick Brooks essays and F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance*, and of course they all come together with the founders like Madison....once upon a time this was all part of "American Studies," an inspiring curriculum back in the 1960s and 1970s. I am a literature person, not a political historian, so the earnestness of Brooks and Matthiessen was infectious for me. Like Madison, they knew that America was special, that the now discarded writers of their time--Longfellow, Holmes, Cooper, Hawthorne, Emerson, Melville, were worth taking seriously because they were so serious themselves. Even the gloomy Melville understood that America was a special gift to those who could survive the early, difficult years. We may have been haunted in those strange, distant days, but we were not hopeless. Our regionalism was real but instructive. Everyone seemed to be on the same very exciting train ride, although perspectives differed tremendously. It was nice for me to be reminded by Dr. Sheehan's intelligent and accessible narrative that so many people--not just the writers--caught that same sense of discovery and excitement. Madison, Hamilton, and others like them can help us to recall what it was like to live in that ragged but brilliant period. The understanding of these times, and the knowledge that all this was part of our own heritage is more than nostalgic--that, too, is a gift outright.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy David EbbertAnyone interested in the founding principles of our country will find this book well worth the read.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Jeffrey G. ButchAnother fascinating book on Madison

In the first study that combines an in-depth examination of Madison's *National Gazette* essays of 1791-92 with a study of *The Federalist*, Colleen Sheehan traces the evolution of Madison's conception of the politics of communication and public opinion throughout the Founding period, demonstrating how "the sovereign public" would form and rule in America. Contrary to those scholars who claim that Madison dispensed with the need to form an active and virtuous citizenry, Sheehan argues that Madison's vision for the new nation was informed by the idea of republican self-government, whose manifestation he sought to bring about in the spirit and way of life of the American people. Madison's story is "the story of an idea" - the idea of America.

"the overall analysis is brilliant, and merits careful reading by anyone seriously interested in the ideas of our greatest political thinker." -Jack Rakove
"This book constitutes the most important contribution to the scholarship on James Madison produced in recent memory. In it, Colleen Sheehan demonstrates that Madison's ruminations on politics in the early 1790s and thereafter, and his activity as a politician in the early republic, need to be reinterpreted in light of his Auseinandersetzung with a group of late eighteenth-century French writers-including Mably, Moreau, Necker, Turgot, Condorcet, Chastellux, Dupont de Nemours, Le Trosne, Louis-Sbastien Mercier, Le Mercier de la Riviere, Volney, Mirabeau, Brissot de Warville, Barthlemy, and the like-who debated the significance of what Montesquieu had, in his *Spirit of Laws*, called communication, and who wrestled with the importance of a powerful phenomenon, more or less unknown in France until the second half of the eighteenth century, which they termed 'public opinion.'" - Paul Rahe, Hillsdale College
"Sheehan's insightful and incisive analysis of the thought of James Madison once again confirms for us his greatness as a political thinker and his importance as a proponent of popular republican government." -Gordon Wood, Brown University
"Colleen Sheehan's bold new book provides a corrective to the many myths of the Founding. It portrays James Madison, the father of the Constitution, as a man deeply concerned with the ideas of civic virtue, citizen character, and common purpose, albeit in the service of the truly republican principles of the Declaration of Independence." -National "....give us a handsome and worthwhile down payment on the more sustained analysis she promises." -Dr. Michael Zuckert
"Colleen Sheehan's Madison is driven by an overarching concern: What would it take for this American population to become--and remain--a self-governing people? More was at stake than survival and prosperity. For Madison the new national community could flourish only if the people had good reasons for respecting themselves. Sheehan's engaging account of America's beginnings enlarges our understanding of the hopes and fears, successes and failures, not only of a notable man but of a generation of founders." -Ralph Lerner, University of Chicago
In her excellent new study, Colleen A. Sheehan argues that James Madison is preeminent among the Founders in his insistence on the civic cultivation of public opinion." -Richard M. Reinsch, *The City Journal*
"This well-written and engaging book situates James Madison as a spirited defender of popular government." -George Thomas, of *Politics*
"...Sheehan's book is a rich, well-written, and well-argued text on Madison that any serious scholar of Madison and the founding of the United States must read." -Richard K. Matthews, *Journal of American History*
"...Sheehan's book is a rich, well-written, and well-argued text on Madison that any serious scholar of Madison and the founding of the United States must read." -Richard K. Matthews, *Journal of American*

History" ...James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government is an informed and intriguing addition to the literature on the American founders. The book will appeal to fans of Madison and to scholars of American political thought and the American founding." Canadian Journal of Political Science Graham G. Dodds, Concordia University "This is a wonderfully provocative and morally engaged argument...the overall analysis is brilliant and merits careful reading by anyone seriously interested in the ideas of our greatest political thinker." Political Science Quarterly, Jack Rakove, Stanford University "This well-written and engaging book situates James Madison as a spirited defender of popular government...Sheehan has elegantly and artfully recaptured neglected and forgotten elements of Madison's thinking that all serious scholars of Madison will need to confront." The of Politics, George Thomas About the Author Colleen A. Sheehan is Associate Professor of Political Science at Villanova University and has served in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. She is the co-editor of Friends of the Constitution: Writings of the Other Federalists 1787-1788 and author of numerous articles on the American Founding and eighteenth-century political and moral thought; these have appeared in journals such the William and Mary Quarterly, American Political Science , of Politics, and Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal.