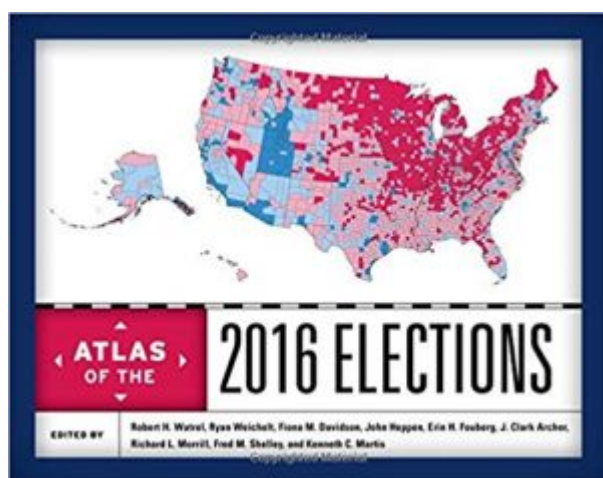




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Watrei, Robert H., et al., eds. *Atlas of the 2016 Elections*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018. 270 p. \$95.00. LC: 2017039757. ISBN: 978-1-5381-0422-4



Atlas of the 2016 Elections continues the approach of the same publisher's earlier *Atlas of the 2012 Elections* (J. Clark Archer et al., 2014) and *Atlas of the 2008 Elections* (Stanley D. Brunn et al., 2011) and shares many of those books' editors and contributors, who are predominantly academic geographers in the United States. The book is concerned with U.S. elections almost exclusively, and the Clinton-Trump presidential contest predominantly. It is very similar to the earlier two in terms of its size, thematic ordering of information (with adjustments to accommodate specific events and themes of 2016), and visual presentation. The volume contains over 100 color maps, and equal weight is given to the maps themselves and their accompanying texts, written by approximately 40 contributors. In most cases each map's meaning can be grasped without a close reading of its accompanying pages of text, and the book rewards both casual browsing and careful reading. Specific aspects of the elections or related political topics are analyzed in approximately 50 mostly self-contained narratives, split among seven thematic chapters, which cover primary elections and caucuses, presidential campaign themes and activities, presidential election outcomes, regional analysis, demographic analysis and identity, the U.S. Congress, and state and local elections and referenda. (Two additional chapters provide a brief introduction and conclusion.) Per its back cover, the atlas aims to use the "illustrative power of cartography and the explanatory power of history and political geography" to explain Donald Trump's victory. I find that the book



generally achieves that goal.

A few words about what the book is not: Coming to the book as both a highly engaged political observer and U.S. geography nerd, I found none of the maps to be as immediately engaging as some of the sophisticated political maps routinely encountered online, such as those produced by the *New York Times*, via which detailed statistics can quickly be gotten by hovering one's mouse over a jurisdiction as small as a voting precinct. (See, for example, the *Times*' online map "An Extremely Detailed Map of the 2016 Election," July 25, 2018). The atlas does not contain tables of vote totals for any jurisdiction, large or small, nor are large portions of the book given over to systematic, comprehensive, state-by-state presentation of basic information like county-level vote percentages. The chapter that follows the most consistent template for map display is the one devoted to population subgroups, which presents demographic and other variables on numerous maps at the same scale to allow for glancing visual comparisons.

Choropleth maps of the U.S. showing counties and county-equivalents are the maps most commonly presented, likely owing to counties' being the smallest jurisdiction that can reasonably be represented on single-page national maps in an atlas of its dimensions, and to counties' status as a common link between popular vote geography and census geography (a status that voter precincts, for instance, generally lack). U.S. maps showing only state boundaries are also common — sometimes printed at full-page size, which I found to be unnecessarily large. Conversely, in the aforementioned chapter devoted to population subgroups, county-level classifications are displayed on choropleth maps of the U.S. that measure less than 9 x 12 cm, which I found to be too small — especially with some maps presenting as many as nine color classifications. Other types of maps represented in the atlas include cartograms and various kinds of statistical maps. While there are fewer such maps than might be expected, in an academic environment the atlas would nevertheless be a useful frame for discussions of various mapping techniques' advantages and disadvantages for representing different kinds of data.

Having ~40 academic writers tackle ~50 discrete aspects of the election produces what most readers will regard as mixed results. The success of the pieces is dependent on both the writers' varying strengths and an individual reader's interest in their respective topics. Some writers place a map (or set of maps) at the center of their analysis (such as one narrative that begins: "Three bivariate maps display both absolute volume of votes, represented by the size of the circle..."), while



others instead treat the maps more as illustrations of particular points, situated within wider-ranging discussions of political and electoral events. These less map-centered narratives range from being particularly demonstrative of the value their authors' distinct geographical and historical perspectives bring to analysis of the election, to being nearly indistinguishable from the political analysis one encounters in higher-quality mainstream U.S. journalism. Which is not to say that writings in the latter case are not valuable and necessary contributions to fulfilling the aims of the book. Rather, it may be that for readers already attentive to recent political events in the U.S., some of the analyses and retellings of the election's themes and events, sound as they generally are, will be less enlightening than they hopefully will prove to be among geography or political science undergraduates in the ten or twenty years ahead — a readership who will be particularly well-served by the book.

The book is a worthwhile purchase for all U.S. map libraries, academic libraries supporting geography or political science programs, and large U.S. public libraries.

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