

# Witness to the Body Politic: Alcohol as Challenge to Democratic Policy and Politics

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# Witness to the Body Politic: Five Lessons Alcohol Policy Taught Me About the American Democracy

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# *1. Epidemiology = bodies amidst common dangers = social conflict, criticism*

- *Lesson #1: By shifting attention to what happens to bodies exposed to common dangers, the epidemiological perspective became social criticism and helped create a new paradigm for responsibility for health.*
- The Great Society “collectivized fault.” Hugh Heclo
- Bodies exposed to common dangers
- Social responsibility includes individual responsibility
- Democracy, epidemiology as social criticism

*2. Public health = social justice = contagious conflict  
= new values, new publics*

- *Lesson #2: Public health as social justice is a body politics that encourages the contagion of conflict to form new publics and new public values (healthier social conditions).*
- Social justice is politics before it is a principle
- Alcohol policy, social justice, and the socialization of conflict
- Making problems public: public health, democracy as verb
- The media as critical; what happened to the media?

### *3. The body politic = responsibility = institutions = the common good*

- *Lesson #3: The larger mission of public health in a democratic body politic is to institutionalize responsibility for regulating alcohol, or what is otherwise known as the common good.*
- “Why should I pay \$15 for a bottle of scotch?”
- Institutions, including media, change how we think
- Institutions privatized, de-funded, led by opponents, etc.
- Going local instead of south in a cold political season

## 4. *The invasion of body politics snatchers*

- *Lesson #4: Conservative populism today is less about the failures of the Great Society than about exploiting the fault lines of the American body politics-race, moralism, markets, etc.- to change the subject of politics.*
- The divides and the invasion of the body politics snatchers
- The politics of polarization and Prohibition
- Political fundamentalism displacing conflict, diversion
- Political fundamentalism as the end of politics

## 5. *The individual = the state = confusion in all realms*

- *Lesson #5: Alcohol policy helps us see that when it comes to the relation between the individual and the body politic there is confusion in all realms.*
- The totalitarian implications of public health?
- Healthier together and paternalism
- 18 to 21: “Extending consequences of childhood?”
- Individual rights: speech, the public square, privacy, etc.

## *Inconclusion*

- Democratic politics in a divided republic
- A trip to New Mexico years ago
- Living and being community as social justice