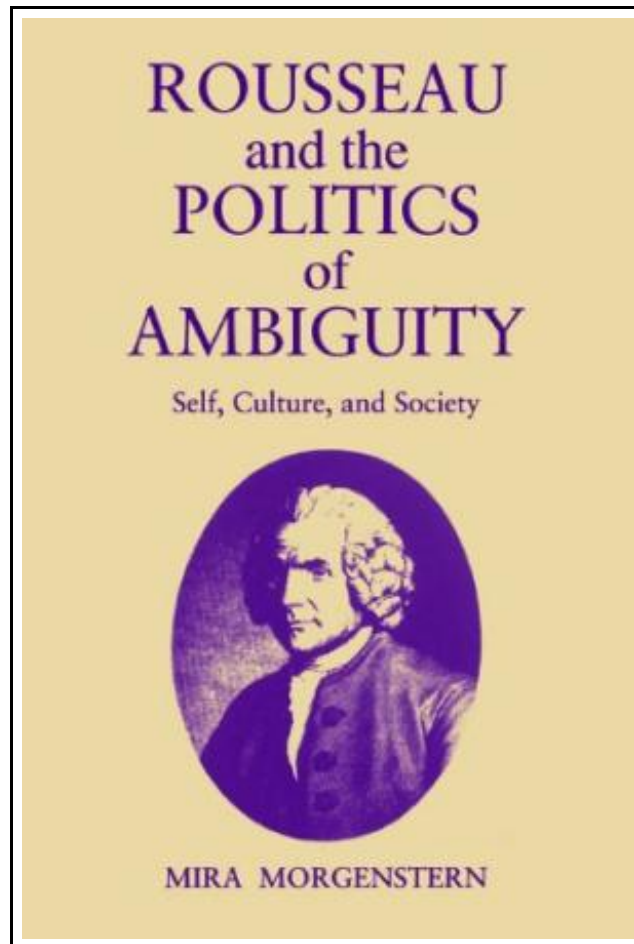


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Reviews

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(Dr. Marcel Collins)

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Pennsylvania State University Press, United States, 2004. Paperback. Book Condition: New. 229 x 152 mm. Language: English Brand New Book ***** Print on Demand *****.This new reading of Jean-Jacques Rousseau challenges traditional views of the eighteenth-century political philosopher's attitudes toward women and his perceived pessimism about human experience. Mira Morgenstern finds in Rousseau an appreciation of the complexities and multidimensionality of life that allowed him to criticize various easy dualisms promoted by his fellow liberal thinkers and point to the crucial mediating role that women fulfill between the private and public spheres. Morgenstern sees Rousseau as an important contributor to the feminist thoughts and concerns that animate so much of our public and private discourse today. While Rousseau is commonly seen as a patriarchal misogynist, Morgenstern finds evidence in his writing that belies much of this claim. Rousseau was very much a man of his time, but he also believed that women were the key to transmitting his ideals of personal and political authenticity, thereby transforming his theory from ephemeral ideas into practical reality. A careful evaluation of Rousseau's writings on women reveals his highly complex sense of reality, especially his awareness that the solutions to life's complex problems are often temporary and must be renegotiated over time. Rousseau is more persistent than most in highlighting the weaknesses and pitfalls of liberal political thought, whose fundamental characteristic is its categorization of life on the basis of dualistic categories: public and private, outside and inside, male and female. Ultimately, what makes Rousseau worth reading today, argues Morgenstern, is his ability to illuminate critical weaknesses in the dualisms of liberal political theory and his pointing out, if only by implication, alternative ways of reaching the full measure of our individual and communal humanity. In honoring the traditional liberal emphasis on individual liberty...



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