

(Pdf free) Fat Politics: The Real Story behind America's Obesity Epidemic

# Fat Politics: The Real Story behind America's Obesity Epidemic

*J. Eric Oliver*

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**J. ERIC OLIVER**



**The Real Story  
Behind America's  
Obesity Epidemic**

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**J. Eric Oliver : Fat Politics: The Real Story behind America's Obesity Epidemic** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fat Politics: The Real Story behind America's Obesity Epidemic:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy ElizabethGreat read! Lots of research was put into this book which I really appreciated5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Fat PoliticsBy JudithIf Oliver weren't so repetitive this could have been an engaging book. He examines the history of the definition of obesity and questions

the relationship between obesity and health. He argues that the term obesity "epidemic" is an artificial construct that only benefits the weight-loss hucksters -- drug companies, doctors who perform dangerous procedures, and researchers who tailor their research to "prove" there is an "epidemic" to get more funds to prove..... And so on, and on. Repetitively. Anyone seriously interested in this topic and who is skeptical of the drug industry-medical cabal (who isn't?) won't learn much that is news to them. The book, 187 pages of text, 30 pages of Notes, is an overblown journal article in need of a good editor. The book is not without merits and I don't disagree with Oliver's premise that calling obesity an "epidemic" is good for business, in this case the business of Fat America. I can't disagree with his argument that bodily fat does not necessarily cause health problems, which he strongly asserts, because I simply don't know (despite his 30 pages of Notes). But his explanation of why Americans are fat and getting fatter is banal. A University of Chicago professor should be able to tell us more than that our modern, sedentary life-style, fueled by high-calorie snack foods, is packing on our pounds and that drug companies and opportunistic medicos are the beneficiaries. The question is what to do about it. So far, no one has the answer. According to Oliver, eating what you want, when you want, is hard-wired into the American ideal of individual freedom. I wonder what those who suffer from incapacitating obesity would respond to that. For all his impressive research and thought-provoking ideas, my sense is that Oliver just doesn't get it. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. You may not know what you think you know... By Guy Smiley I thought I knew a lot about these issues and was surprised at how much this book made me think. The writer has a different perspective on the "obesity epidemic" and argues that obesity isn't the problem and that we should stop using weight as a barometer for health. It was an interesting and persuasive book. The only thing the book is missing is some forward looking recommendations. I found myself agreeing with the writer that obesity isn't the best benchmark for health or fitness but was waiting to hear what he thought should be used. He never talked about that. He also never discusses what the science says about what is important for preventing poor health outcomes and disease. He generally talks about the impact that exercise and eating healthier has but he never tells us what the studies say about how much a person has to do to make a difference in their health or what kind of impact more exercise or healthier eating would make on the population as a whole. In this respect, his statements were as amorphous as the government recommendations he criticizes. I would have liked to have heard what he thought the government and we as individuals could do to improve the health of our nation.

Our government is telling us that obesity is a major health crisis, that sixty percent of Americans are "overweight," and that one in four is obese. But how true are these claims? In *Fat Politics*, Eric Oliver unearths the real story behind America's "obesity epidemic." Oliver shows how a handful of doctors, government bureaucrats, and health researchers, with financial backing from the drug and weight-loss industry, have campaigned to misclassify more than sixty million Americans as "overweight," to inflate the health risks of being fat, and to promote the idea that obesity is a killer disease. In reviewing the scientific evidence, Oliver shows there is little proof either that obesity causes so many diseases and deaths or that losing weight makes people any healthier. Our concern with obesity is fueled more by social prejudice, bureaucratic politics, and industry profit than by scientific fact. Such misinformation, Oliver argues, is the true problem with obesity in America. By telling us we need to be thin, the proponents of the "obesity epidemic" are pushing millions of Americans towards dangerous surgeries, crash diets, and harmful diet drugs. Oliver goes on to examine the surprising reasons why we hate fatness and why we are gaining weight, and also the real threats to our health that are being displaced by our fat obsession. *Fat Politics* not only topples our most basic assumptions about obesity and health, it highlights frightening dangers caused by making our weight a scapegoat for our real problems.

From *Publishers Weekly* It's not obesity, but the panic over obesity, that's the real health problem, argues this scintillating contrarian study of the evergreen subject of American gluttony and sloth. Political scientist Oliver condemns what he feels is a self-interested "public health establishment"-obesity researchers seeking federal funding, pharmaceutical and weight-loss companies peddling diet drugs and regimens, bariatric surgeons and other health-care providers angling for insurance reimbursement-for spuriously characterizing fatness as a disease. He debunks the dubious science and alarmist PR that fuels their campaign, taking on arbitrary Body-Mass Index standards that slot even Michael Jordan in the overweight category, state-by-state maps of obesity rates that make fatness look like a contagion spreading over the countryside, and flimsy research studies that vastly exaggerate the danger and costs of weight gain. Oliver also examines American attitudes towards obesity, probing the abhorrence of fatness implicit in the Protestant ethic and, less plausibly, tying our contemporary feminine ideal of the emaciated supermodel to a confluence of sociobiology and the economics of the urban sexual marketplace. Arguing that fatness is perfectly compatible with fitness, he contends that scapegoating obesity drives Americans to experiment with dangerous crash diets, appetite suppressants and weight-loss surgeries, while distracting us from underlying harmful changes in the American lifestyle-mainly our incessant snacking on junk food and shunning of exercise and physical activity, of which weight gain is perhaps merely a "benign symptom." Oliver provides a lucid, engaging critique of obesity research and a shrewd analysis of the socioeconomic and cultural forces behind it. The result is a compelling challenge

to the conventional wisdom about our bulging waistlines. Photos. Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Fat Politics skewers the conventional wisdom on obesity. Beautifully written and exhaustively researched, it is impossible to read this book without having your view of fat forever changed. I absolutely loved this book."--Steven D. Levitt, Professor of Economics, University of Chicago; author of *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*"It's not obesity, but the panic over obesity, that's the real health problem, argues this scintillating contrarian study of the evergreen subject of American gluttony and sloth.... Oliver provides a lucid, engaging critique of obesity research and a shrewd analysis of the socioeconomic and cultural forces behind it. The result is a compelling challenge to the conventional wisdom about our bulging waistlines."--Publishers Weekly"Fat Politics is one of those rare books that manages to turn all your conventional ideas and easy assumptions on their heads, while somehow maintaining a probing, reasonable, and entertaining tone. Anyone who holds strong opinions--professional or personal--about America's obesity epidemic is going to have to grapple with this book." --Stephen Johnson, author of *Everything Bad is Good For You: How Today's Popular Culture is Actually Making Us Smarter*"A damning indictment of a culture awash in the paradox of too much choice, the shame of too much consumption, and the fear of a moral vacuum.... In one well-argued, boldly titled chapter after another, Oliver advances his view that we have made fatness 'a scapegoat for all our ills' and explores how we harm ourselves by doing so."--Daphne Merkin, *Elle Magazine*"Excellent."--marginalrevolution.com"Fat Politics, Eric Oliver examines America's ongoing search for weapons of body mass destruction and reveals that the emperors of the current fat hysteria aren't wearing any clothes. This is an essential book for understanding the leading moral panic of our time."--Paul Campos, Professor of Law, University of Colorado, and author of *The Diet Myth: Why America's Obsession with Weight is Hazardous to Your Health*"Eric Oliver's book debunks almost every conventional theory that causally relates obesity to diseases and early death. It will infuriate countless obesity researchers, weight-loss doctors, and the food, diet, and pharmaceutical industries. Whether or not you agree with all of his critiques, one thing is indisputable: the entire field badly needs a good shakeup."--Jerome P. Kassirer, M.D., Editor-in-Chief Emeritus, *New England Journal of Medicine*, and author of *On The Take: How Medicine's Complicity with Big Business Can Endanger Your Health*About the AuthorJ. Eric Oliver is Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago. He was formerly a Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Scholar at Yale University and Assistant Professor of Politics and Public Affairs at Princeton University. He also is the author of *Democracy in Suburbia* and the forthcoming book, *The Paradoxes of Segregation*.