This is by no means a linear trajectory of hope, optimism, and empowered citizens. There are also sobering accounts of the range of ways in which local authorities collaborate, deploy coercion, and file counter-complaints – often in the form of criminal charges – to punish and deter complainants. There are also accounts of shocking brutality alongside the bureaucracy and politics of complaint.

Alongside the brutality the book documents – and it is such an important thing that it does place on record judicial torture, detention without trial in quite horrific conditions, and the brutalizing of peaceful demonstrators – the book also tracks and highlights astonishing stories of people standing up for themselves and their communities; resisting the law and order paradigm of conditional privileges to assert rights, and claim justice.

In taking what animates Myanmar's criminal courts seriously, it is not just that we learn about Myanmar as a complex and paradigmatic case of the asymmetrical relations between opposing concepts, we are also supplied with a robust intellectual scaffolding through which we might (hopefully) spot some conceptual blind spots informing analysis of sociolegal ideals and categories in our own projects.

Opposing Rule of Law is beautifully written. The aesthetic sensitivity of the writing becomes a worthy platform for the acute and compelling analysis, the rigorous engagements with critical theory, and the thorough appreciation of context and relational dynamics grounded in ethnography. This important monograph will be invaluable to scholars in a range of fields, including law, authoritarianism, postcoloniality, military regimes, Southeast Asia, and ethnographies on rule of law.

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Supreme Court Confirmation Hearings and Constitutional Change. By Paul M. Collins, Jr., and Lori A. Ringhand. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 296 pp. $32.99 paperback.

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This book does exactly what a scholarly manuscript ought to do: It offers a novel theoretical interpretation of a long-known phenomenon, makes arguments backed up with empirical evidence and accompanied by real-life examples, and makes one think. While it remains debatable whether theirs is the "right" view of the phenomenon under study, it is absolutely the case that it ought to be taken seriously and widely discussed and debated. Indeed, I urge everyone with an interest in confirmation hearings and in the interplay between Congress, the Supreme Court, and the public, to engage with their analysis and discuss its implications. After summarizing their argument, I will do so here, in hopes of beginning the conversation.

In their book, Collins and Ringhand analyze Supreme Court confirmation hearings, attributing to them more meaning than has been so attributed to date. The conventional wisdom is basically that Senators are grandstanding and playing to their constituents as they ask long-winded statement/questions while the nominees themselves decline to answer the most basic of questions concerning their views on relevant issues. We already know, from other scholarly research, that the latter is not true; Justice-Nominees do indeed answer most of the questions posed to them. In addition, although, Collins and Ringhand ascribe much more meaning to the questioning arguing that these hearings constitute "a democratic forum for the discussion and ratification of constitutional change" (p. 10). They make the case for their much-more-charitable interpretation of these events by showing that Senators ask questions about issues that are important to the public, and that the conversations they have with nominees are grounded in Supreme Court precedent. This translates, they argue, into evidence that, through the process, the Senate informs the public of Supreme Court precedent, takes a position informed by public opinion on the constitutional interpretation choices made in those precedents, and communicates to Supreme Court nominees the expectation that they will abide by those preferred, public-opinion-ratified constitutional understandings. They test these claims via two empirical chapters and several qualitative analyses, finding support for their view.

Their characterization of the hearings as a democratic forum for constitutional discussion is intriguing. Indeed, many legal scholars argue that judges ought not be exclusively charged with interpreting the constitution, so a construal of the confirmation hearings that considers a "people's constitution," as many scholars call it, is attractive. Is it possible that these hearings are the official way in which "the people" contribute to a constitutional conversation? Perhaps, although I have a few doubts making me resist Collins and Ringhand's notion.

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Most importantly, I continue to struggle with considering the questions asked by Senators to constitute a constitutional conversation, expecting instead that they are either a way for Senators to wax eloquent on issues important to their voters, or a way for Senators to predict how the nominee will vote. The findings reported in the book remain consistent with both notions: Senators ask about policies, not about theories of constitutional interpretation; and the largest impact on questioning is the amount of legislation in a particular issue area and not the most important issue or the amount of Supreme Court precedent in an issue area (although they each matter as well). Since issues currently being legislated are both important to the Senators and likely to be tested by future Courts, it seems likely that Senators ask about them to predict how the nominee will vote if seated. This is also likely why they focus on policy questions and not on more esoteric interpretation questions. Since issues important to the people may well serve as drivers of their votes, it seems likely that Senators pay heed to take advantage of the spotlight and curry favor with voters. In general, while the account offered by Collins and Ringhand is interesting and provocative, I am not convinced the alternative hypothesis of attention to policy is wholly refuted. And, while the authors argue that it matters not whether, after confirmation, the justices go on to vote in ways consistent with their hearing testimony, I think it absolutely does for if they abandon the principles they espoused at the hearing, then surely no real constitutional discussion has taken place. In that case (Sotomayor on the Second Amendment, for example), we have merely witnessed a political show.

I do find the argument about confirmation conditions (that certain cases, like *Brown v. Board of Education*, are so settled that a nominee would be disqualified were he or she to express disagreement with them) compelling, although we likely have far too little data to analyze it rigorously. They argue that Judge Bork's confirmation problem was not that he answered too many questions (as many would argue), but rather that he gave the wrong answers. Perhaps Bork was just too far outside the constitutional mainstream in general, but it might be that they are right and precedents could be identified that are game-changers in terms of confirmation hearings. I am simply uncertain how many of those there are that will hold up for the long term. Again, because there is policy inherent in these constitutional choices, it is difficult to argue that any of the Court's precedents/interpretations of the constitution are sacrosanct, and it seems to me one needs that sort of permanency to make the argument for a confirmation condition that is distinct from a policy interest. Adding the public into the mix further complicates the picture as the public is likely divided over many of these

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questions and likely less informed than necessary to warrant considering their opinions in a constitutional conversation.

Regardless of my questions and my expressions of doubt, although, is the bottom line on this book: Collins and Ringhand challenge conventional wisdom on the purpose of confirmation hearings in a way that will force scholars of the process to think and to find additional ways to test their theory in future research, injecting new life into the study of confirmation politics. In other words and as noted earlier, the book does exactly what a scholarly book ought to do.

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How Policy Shapes Politics: Rights, Courts, Litigation and the Struggle over Injury Compensation. By Jeb Barnes and Thomas F. Burke. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 256 pp. $39.95 cloth.

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Political scientists have had a longstanding project of assessing the significance of courts and litigation in the American political landscape (Haltom and McCann 2004; Kagan 2009; Silverstein 2009). Many of the studies addressing this question focus on legal campaigns brought by social movements, where new rights are part of a larger symbolic struggle in addition to narrower legal claims for recognition (McCann 1994; Rosenberg 2008). While most of this research has traditionally focused on courts, more recent studies by Sean Farhang (2010) and Charles Epp (2009) have de-centered the judiciary and concentrated on the relationship among courts and other state actors in the legislature and administrative agencies, emphasizing the mechanisms that shape judicial politics.

In their book, *How Policy Shapes Politics*, Barnes and Burke join this debate to address some of the pressing questions that remain open: Does litigation diminish activists' interest in pursuing other political strategies? Does litigation undermine political solidarity by reducing collective problems into individual disputes about personal injuries? Does judicial politics generate counter-productive backlash that ultimately undermines the parties' broader political goals? This debate is at something of an impasse, with competing case studies that have findings that answer these questions "Yes," "No," and "Sometimes." Barnes and Burke offer an elegant and original research design that addresses these questions in a theoretically

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