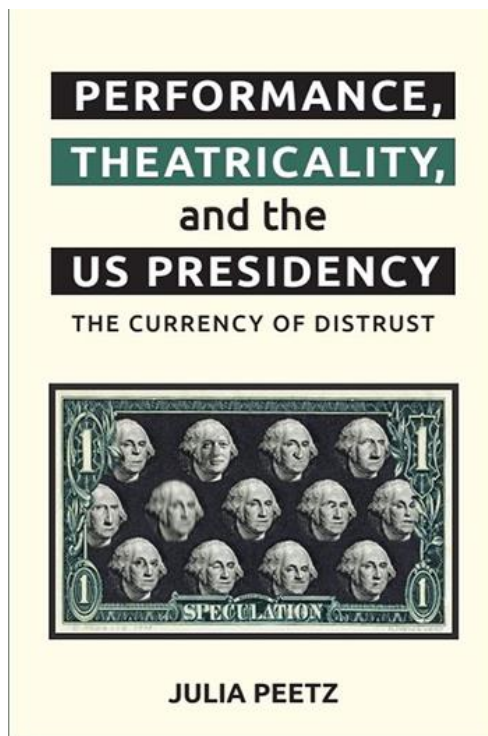


# SANTASADŌ

## Julia Peetz - Performance, Theatricality, and the US Presidency

The Currency of Distrust

CURRENT AFFAIRS | HISTORY | PRESENTATION



Explores the role of performance in US presidential politics

- Combines theoretical argument and original interviews with leaders in U.S. presidential speechwriting
- Proposes a new perspective on the contemporary rise of mainstreamed populism by exploring features of populist-style politics through the lens of distrust
- Interdisciplinary exploration of the role and function of performance in representative democracy that fully integrates politics and theatre/performance perspectives
- Focuses on U.S. presidential politics since Watergate, whilst contextualizing recent developments through historical case studies from the French Revolution to early and turn-of-the-century American presidents

The erosion of trust in politicians and political institutions is a major challenge in early twenty-first-century democratic politics, not least in the United States. This book argues that, rather than being a flaw or corruption, the potential for political distrust must be understood as an essential feature of representative democracy because representation works through performance. The book explores performance as a constellation of factors: scripts, embodiment, ideas of selfhood, and historical norms and ideals.

It draws on key scholarship of political representation, rhetoric, and populism; on theories of performativity, theatricality, and acting; and on interviews the author conducted with political speechwriters spanning presidential administrations and campaigns from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama to demonstrate both that distrust is inherent in representative politics and that in mainstreamed populism distrust becomes a focal point around which the theatre of politics revolves.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Julia Peetz**, PhD, is an author and academic in London, UK. Her work addresses questions of political representation, democracy, and performance – particularly in the context of the U.S. presidency and in Anglo-American relations. Currently, Julia is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the University of Warwick.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

"In an impressive feat of cross-disciplinary scholarship, this book combines insights from theater and performance studies with political studies and interviews with presidential speechwriters to understand modern US politics and the rise of Populism. [...] Recommended." – **J. R. Vile**, Middle Tennessee State University, CHOICE, January 2024

"Going beyond well-worn and simple theatrical metaphors to describe political action, Julia Peetz's new book offers a sophisticated – and genuinely interdisciplinary – blend of performance and political analysis. Readers will find compelling new approaches to, and arguments about, crucial factors in political life, from legitimacy and representation to distrust, authenticity and populism. The book's in-depth engagement with the past and present of US presidential performance is both illuminating and insightful." – **Michael Sward**, University of Warwick

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Acknowledgements

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