

Why does secularization proceed differently in otherwise similar countries? *Secular Conversions* demonstrates that the institutional structure of the state is a key factor shaping the course of secularization. Drawing upon detailed historical analysis of religious education policy in the United States and Australia, Damon Mayrl details how administrative structures, legal procedures, and electoral systems have shaped political opportunities and even helped create constituencies for secular policies. In so doing, he also shows how a decentralized, readily accessible American state acts as an engine for religious conflict, encouraging religious differences to spill into law and politics at every turn. This book provides a vivid picture of how political conflicts interacted with the state over the long span of American and Australian history to shape religion's role in public life. Ultimately, it reveals that taken-for-granted political structures have powerfully shaped the fate of religion in modern societies.

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