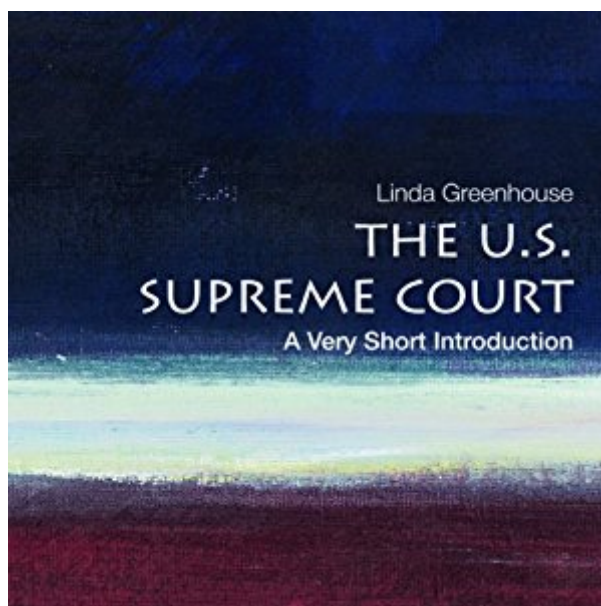


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# The U.S. Supreme Court: A Very Short Introduction



## Synopsis

For 30 years, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Linda Greenhouse chronicled the activities of the U.S. Supreme Court and its justices as a correspondent for The New York Times. In this Very Short Introduction, she draws on her deep knowledge of the court's history and of its written and unwritten rules to show readers how the Supreme Court really works. Greenhouse offers a fascinating institutional biography of a place and its people - men and women who exercise great power but whose names and faces are unrecognized by many Americans and whose work often appears cloaked in mystery. How do cases get to the Supreme Court? How do the justices go about deciding them? What special role does the chief justice play? What do the law clerks do? How does the court relate to the other branches of government? Greenhouse answers these questions by depicting the justices as they confront deep constitutional issues or wrestle with the meaning of confusing federal statutes. Throughout, the author examines many individual Supreme Court cases to illustrate points under discussion, ranging from *Marbury v. Madison*, the seminal case which established judicial review, to the recent *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008), which struck down the District of Columbia's gun-control statute and which was, surprisingly, the first time in its history that the Court issued an authoritative interpretation of the Second Amendment. To add perspective, Greenhouse also compares the Court to foreign courts, revealing interesting differences. For instance, no other country in the world has chosen to bestow life tenure on its judges. A superb overview packed with telling details, this volume offers a matchless introduction to one of the pillars of American government.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Supreme Court considers and resolves legal issues of great moment in the United States but remains a mystery to many Americans. Linda Greenhouse's "The U.S. Supreme Court: A Very Short Introduction" (2012) offers an overview of the Supreme Court, its history and workings, and its place in American government. Greenhouse covered the Supreme Court for the New York Times for over 30 years and currently teaches at the Yale University Law School in addition to continuing to write about the Court. Her book is part of the "Very Short Introductions" series of Oxford University Press. The OUP offers the following description of the goal of the series. "Very Short Introductions can change the way you think about the things that interest you, and are the perfect introduction to subjects you previously knew nothing about. Because of this, they have proven to be extremely popular with general readers, as well as students and their lecturers."In addition to the overall purpose of the series, Greenhouse explains her own specific goals for the book."This book is not intended primarily as a work of history. Its aim is to enable readers to understand how the Supreme Court of the United States operates today. But while detailed knowledge of the Court's history is not required for that purpose, acquaintance with the Court's origins helps appreciate the extent to which the Supreme Court that we know today has been the author of its own history. From the beginning, it has filled in the blanks of Article III [of the Constitution] by defining its own power..... That process of self-definition continues today.

I unreservedly recommend Greenhouse's book for distinguished jurists and lawyers, as well as for laymen interested in the Constitution and the functioning of the Supreme Court. There are marvelous nuggets of personal insight and of judicial history and analysis that would enlighten us all. Linda Greenhouse is one of my favorite Supreme Court chroniclers of our era. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and other distinguished awards for her NEW YORK TIMES coverage of the Supreme Court (1978 to 2007, with a two-year break in the mid-80s),Greenhouse is uncommonly well versed in the Constitution, the Supreme Court, and the judicial personalities of recent Court justices. She also displays flashes of personal opinion, especially on abortion, same-sex marriage, and a flexible application of a constitution written nearly 250 years ago Taking early retirement from the TIMES in 2008,Greenhouse teaches at Yale Law School and writes frequent, opinionated TIMES commentary columns. The most recent, 7/10/13, was on the debilitating long-term affect of carefully crafted, compromise Court majority opinions. THE SUPREME COURT is part of the Oxford Very Short

Introduction series that, since, 1995, has covered over 300 topics. In only 98 pages Greenhouse provides a thumb-nail sketch of the Supreme Court's history and several turning-point cases. Far more important, she describes, with exquisite examples: how the Court functions, critical issues of law, the long-term impact of public opinion, and how personal the process can become. This is the inside story from a highly-respected insider. (Seven of nine sitting Supreme Court justices attended her farewell party.)

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