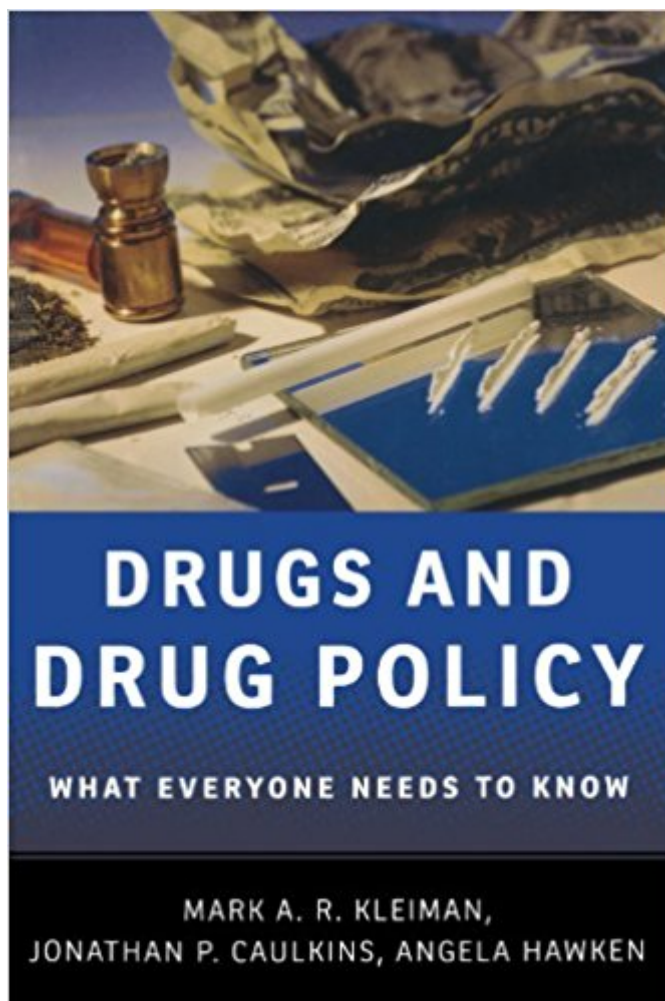


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# Drugs And Drug Policy: What Everyone Needs To Know™



## Synopsis

While there have always been norms and customs around the use of drugs, explicit public policies--regulations, taxes, and prohibitions--designed to control drug abuse are a more recent phenomenon. Those policies sometimes have terrible side-effects: most prominently the development of criminal enterprises dealing in forbidden (or untaxed) drugs and the use of the profits of drug-dealing to finance insurgency and terrorism. Neither a drug-free world nor a world of free drugs seems to be on offer, leaving citizens and officials to face the age-old problem: What are we going to do about drugs? In *Drugs and Drug Policy*, three noted authorities survey the subject with exceptional clarity, in this addition to the acclaimed series, *What Everyone Needs to Know*®. They begin, by defining "drugs," examining how they work in the brain, discussing the nature of addiction, and exploring the damage they do to users. The book moves on to policy, answering questions about legalization, the role of criminal prohibitions, and the relative legal tolerance for alcohol and tobacco. The authors then dissect the illicit trade, from street dealers to the flow of money to the effect of catching kingpins, and show the precise nature of the relationship between drugs and crime. They examine treatment, both its effectiveness and the role of public policy, and discuss the beneficial effects of some abusable substances. Finally they move outward to look at the role of drugs in our foreign policy, their relationship to terrorism, and the ugly politics that surround the issue. Crisp, clear, and comprehensive, this is a handy and up-to-date overview of one of the most pressing topics in today's world. *What Everyone Needs to Know*® is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press.

## Book Information

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**WHAT EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW About This Series** Who it's for: Busy people with diverse interests, ranging from college students to professionals, who wish to inform themselves in a succinct yet authoritative manner about a particular topic. What's inside: An incisive approach to a complex and timely issue, laid out in a straight-forward, question-and-answer format. Meet Our Authors Top experts in their given fields, ranging from an Economist correspondent to a director at the Council on Foreign Relations, you can trust our authors' expertise and guidance. Popular Topics in the "What Everyone Needs to Know" Series International Politics Environmental Policies World History Sciences & Math Religion & Spirituality

"Drugs and Drug Policy is the product of scholarly work but comes in the form of a guidebook of answers to questions simple and complex about everything to do with the two topics. It is fit for both the policymaker and the concerned parent (how many books can this be said of?) because it combines a rigorous analytical approach to drugs without skipping over the social reasons the topic deserves to be discussed in the home. Kleiman, Caulkins and Hawken's review of the nuances of the drug issue can't help but elicit an appreciation for the variety of approaches against drug use that could supplement or substitute for our current top-down one." --Forbes.com "Drugs and Drug Policy is a practical book which aims to debunk myths...thoughtful and clearly written." - The Economist "A product of genius, in form and content: more than two hundred questions, all relevant and urgent, with succinct and lucid answers. When I started the book, I had strong opinions on many of the topics it covered; again and again--every time the book came into conflict with my original beliefs--the authors changed my mind. If you care about drugs, you need to read this book. If you don't, read it anyway, just to see how it's done." --Thomas Schelling, 2005 Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences "In this deceptively simple book, Mark A.R. Kleiman, Jonathan P. Caulkins, and Angela Hawken eviscerate many of the arguments behind the policies that have been the leading weapons in the war on drugs. But they also cast a skeptical eye on some shibboleths of the burgeoning drug reform movement...the authors' penetrating and nuanced critique of the growing calls for legalization is one of the highlights of the book." -- The New Republic "This book is incredibly useful, in both format and content. It has made me more aware than ever of the extent to which people are either uninformed or misinformed about most issues having to do with drug policy,

drug trafficking, and criminal activity. If Washington's political leaders, government officials, and policy analysts give the book the wide attention it deserves, we might finally begin the kind of serious, rational debate about drug issues that the US and the rest of the world desperately needs."

--Peter Hakim, President Emeritus and Senior Fellow of the Inter-American Dialogue "[The authors] ask the right questions, and their answers and discussions can benefit anyone connected to the subject-users and enforcers, policy makers and implementers, innocent bystanders and citizens...worth reading." -Tickle the Wire.com "An easy-to-read, authoritative guide to the key issues...[The authors] aren't trying to make friends, they are trying to tell the truth as evidence or logic leads them." --Eric Sterling, President of The Criminal Justice Policy Foundation, Sterling on Justice & Drugs "The authors are refreshingly candid about the trade-offs and limitations of drug policy, and through a series of brief answers to 143 questions, they provide a well-written and generally fair-minded summary of the vast literatures bearing on drug problems." --Health Affairs

This book was published in 2011 and updates the arguments (pro and con) for some form of regulated legalization. The book presents a masterful survey of the issues to be considered and provides factual data and statistics about drugs and drug use. The information was a real eye opener as so much of the sensational media reporting grossly distorts the realities of the drug "problem".

Kleiman, Caulkins & Hawken do an overall good job at presenting the various sides of the war on drugs conundrum, and their book is indeed an easy read. But this comes at a price as their perspective is sometimes simplistic and self-serving. While they do not seem to deny that the current prohibitionist policies have created a big mess, they seem to believe that alternatives would be far worse, while they fail to truly explore all the viable alternatives. Between prohibition and free market, there is a continuum of options and free-market is certainly not the only alternative. Likewise, regulations should differ widely according to the substance, the mode of administration and the type of user. Kleiman & all correctly point out a variety of potential problems, such as the potential conflicts of interests between the various actors of a regulated drug marketplace, pitting employees and shareholders against regulators. They also correctly bundle all psychoactive substances, at least to a certain point, but they fail to push their observations to its logical conclusion. The vast majority of psychoactive substances are legal, and those that are currently illegal can be compared to legal counterparts that are at least as potentially harmful, therefore there is no logical rationale for the legal status of the substances currently illicit. As the authors correctly

point out, the prohibition of certain substances create a dangerous black-market, as well as all kinds of derived problems due to complete lack of quality control and unsanitary administration practices among others. Altogether, the unintended consequences of prohibition bear a huge economic, societal and human toll, with marginal effects on price and availability. The nearly 8-fold increase in jailed population since the launch of the War on Drugs has created an underclass with no social prospects besides crime, and catastrophic consequences for dependents. The authors seem to ignore a few facts worth noticing: Despite the huge power of the alcohol industry, alcohol abuse has been on an overall decline since it peaked in the mid-1800s to early 1900s. This has been accomplished mostly through prevention, education and decreased social acceptability of alcohol abuse. Alcohol abuse is still a huge problem, but has been reduced greatly. Same with tobacco abuse. Cocaine use has declined substantially since its peak in the 1980s, but this has been more than compensated by the abuse of prescription drugs. To quote the authors, "non-medical use of prescription pharmaceuticals is already an enormous problem", which is putting it mildly. There seems to have been a displacement of use here. Drug prohibition is most likely merely kicking the can and displacing the underlying problem of substance abuse and addiction, with its added layer of nefarious consequences. At the end of the day, the book is too simplistic and disappointing in its failure to truly explore alternative to the current failed prohibitionist regime. On the heel of the report issued by the Global Commission on Drug Policy issued in June 2010, the book seems outdated. I suggest reading the excellent report issued by the "Transform Drug Policy Foundation" in 2004: 'After the War on Drugs: Options for Control,' The recently released 'A World War D. The Case against prohibitionism, roadmap to controlled re-legalization' offers a much broader picture with deeper analysis and more in-depth understanding of the issues revolving around use and abuse of psychoactive substances and the perverse effect of the criminalization of certain substances. The book also presents realistic and reasoned alternatives to the status quo.

Kleiman, Caulkins, and Hawken have pulled a great coup with this volume. They managed to condense, in very readable terms, layer upon layer of scholarly research about the many facets of drug policy. Their encyclopaedic knowledge of the subject matter, combined with a breezy style, allows the reader to quickly make sense of complex and controversial issues. This is not, however, a dry reference book: the authors have strong, sometimes eccentric opinions that will not be to everyone's liking. But that is indeed one of this book's strengths: it allows its pages to feel as an animated conversation with three very smart people. Anyone with even a passing interest in drugs or drug policy should buy this book; and for policymakers involved in drug issues, this should be

required reading.

Good book that's very informative and objective about this topic. The whole thing is organized into questions about drugs and drug policy. At the end there are three sections of possible solutions to the current situation ranging from easily implementable to not a chance that it will happen.

Great overview. Most up-to-date and accurate overview of U.S. Drug policy and issues that I have read recently.

Being an analyst who follows the drug war in Mexico on a daily basis, I was really interested in this book to learn more about the drugs themselves, rather than just how they were being transported into the United States. SO many of the assumptions I had and things I "knew" about drugs and drug addiction were turned on their heads by the time I finished reading this! I'm still on the fence about whether we, as a country, would benefit more from maintaining current drug policy (or at least a smarter version of it) or ending all drug prohibition; there are just so many unknowns, and it's a very complex issue that can't be easily predicted. But what this book does is provide all of us - and hopefully several US policy makers - with solid information we can all use to be smarter about how we approach drug trafficking, drug addiction, and drug policy.

Excellent book for people starting to study the world of drugs, or that want simpler explanations for such a complicated topic. Very recommendable.

covers all points objectively

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