



# **A Vindication of Political Virtue: The Political Theory of Mary Wollstonecraft**

*Virginia Sapiro*

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Nearly two hundred years ago, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote what is considered to be the first major work of feminist political theory: *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Much has been written about this work, and about Wollstonecraft as the intellectual pioneer of feminism, but the actual substance and coherence of her political thought have been virtually ignored. Virginia Sapiro here provides the first full-length treatment of Wollstonecraft's political theory.

Drawing on *all* of Wollstonecraft's works and treating them thematically rather than sequentially, Sapiro shows that Wollstonecraft's ideas about women's rights, feminism, and gender are elements of a broad and fully developed philosophy, one with significant implications for contemporary democratic and liberal theory. The issues raised speak to many current debates in theory, including those surrounding interpretation of the history of feminism, the relationship between liberalism and republicanism in the development of political philosophy, and the debate over the canon. For political scientists, most of whom know little about Wollstonecraft's thought, Sapiro's book is an excellent, nuanced introduction which will cause a reconsideration of her work and her significance both for her time and for today's concerns. For feminist scholars, Sapiro's book offers a rounded and unconventional analysis of Wollstonecraft's thought.

Written with considerable charm and verve, this book will be the starting point for understanding this important writer for years to come.

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