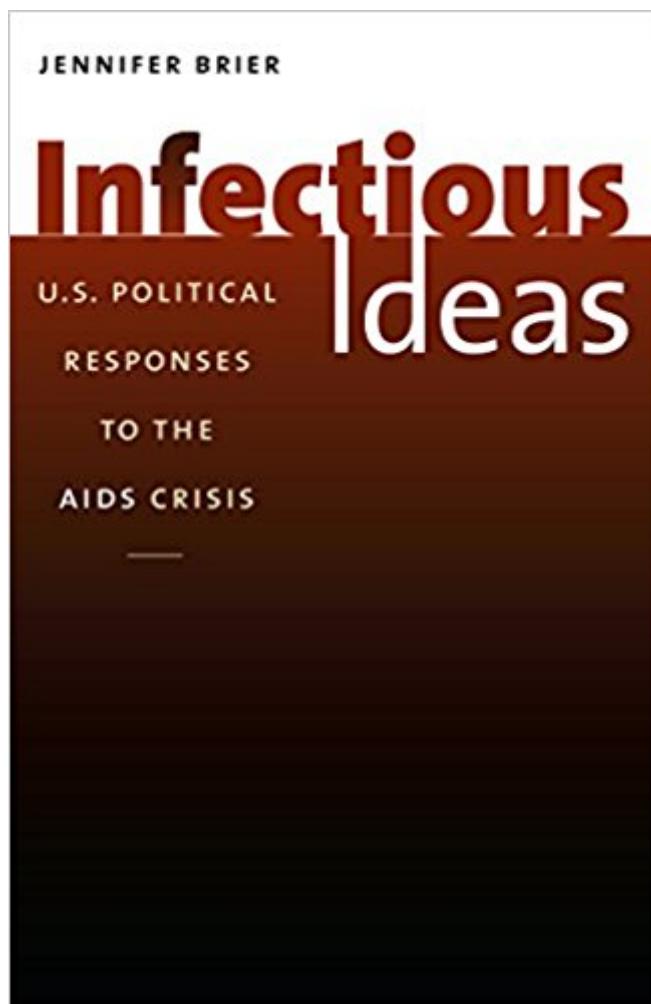


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# Infectious Ideas: U.S. Political Responses To The AIDS Crisis



## **Synopsis**

Viewing contemporary history from the perspective of the AIDS crisis, Jennifer Brier provides rich, new understandings of the United States' complex social and political trends in the post-1960s era. Brier describes how AIDS workers--in groups as disparate as the gay and lesbian press, AIDS service organizations, private philanthropies, and the State Department--influenced American politics, especially on issues such as gay and lesbian rights, reproductive health, racial justice, and health care policy, even in the face of the expansion of the New Right. *Infectious Ideas* places recent social, cultural, and political events in a new light, making an important contribution to our understanding of the United States at the end of the twentieth century.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

A compelling history of health politics in a critical decade.--Global Public HealthThis is an important addition to the literature on AIDS. . . . The chapter on Reagan alone, with excellent original source material, is worth the price of admission.--Windy City TimesHelps readers make sense of political history as more than just red or blue states. . . . Redefines our understanding of the mainstream. . . .

Read it.--Journal of American HistoryAny historian studying this period would do well to read Jennifer Brier's *Infectious Ideas*, which uses AIDS as a lens through which to view the period.--History News NetworkOffers a more comprehensive and complex understanding of how marginalized communities engaged the state of neglect by linking the politics of sexuality to politics, culture, and the economy, thereby shaping the political landscape. . . . Thoroughly researched. . . .

An insightful analysis.--ChoicePlaces recent social, cultural, and political events in a new light, making an important contribution to our understanding of the US at the end of the 20th century.--Abstracts of Public Administration, Development, and EnvironmentThere is no comparable book on the market that ties an event such as the AIDS crisis to the historical/political landscape nor one that shows the impact of a disease such as AIDS on government and politics.--Doody Enterprises

Brier's careful research into the 1980-2000 period contests the popularized history of the AIDS epidemic that has helped justify a neoliberal policy frame for AIDS in the U.S. She adds to the historical record by explicitly treating the relationship between early AIDS activism and gay liberation, by drawing out the influence of (and backlash against) the reproductive rights movement on AIDS policy, and by showing the inter-relationship and transformation of local AIDS politics and global anti-AIDS efforts. The book is very well researched and beautifully written.--Cindy Patton, Simon Fraser UniversityThis important book provides a rich history of the AIDS pandemic and its place in U.S. politics. Brier uncovers curious alliances--and furious debates--among activists, policy makers, and philanthropists, and along the way she reshapes our understanding of the 1980s, conservatism and left-liberalism, poverty and public health, and feminist and gay liberation movements. Highly recommended.--Joanne Meyerowitz, author of *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States*Brier's exploration of the AIDS crisis disrupts conventional historical narratives and demonstrates how the history of sexuality is always a history of politics, the economy, and culture. Her brilliant approach places this book on the cutting edge of American history work that seeks to place the U.S. in a global context.--Leisa D. Meyer, College of William and Mary

Growing up hearing about AIDS on the nightly news, my generation missed out on the sexual freedom which my parents had experienced. But we have a different language to utilize and a different environment to utilize it in as a response from this development. Initially and mistakenly identified as GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency), AIDS now permeates every demographic group in society. A profound strength of this book is that it examines the response to the virus from an intersecting sociological perspective. Almost as if from learning from the mistakes of the response to the virus itself, the voices of women and people of color are thoroughly intertwined throughout the text. AIDS is not merely a white man's disease. And she includes some interesting pieces of political information along for the ride. Due to my young age, I had not paid close attention

to politics when Reagan was in office. I now know he was extreme, but I was honestly shocked to realize that he had people like Gary Bauer (perhaps best known for involvement with the Family Research Council) serving in his White House administration--and in social policy positions. Such an environment probably stalled the government's effective response to the emergent AIDS crisis. It did not actively address AIDS when the disease was perceived as something which would only strike a certain segment of the population--and one which the conservative administration did not care for. I have great respect for former Surgeon General Koop. He was able to accomplish the work he did in such a trying work environment. Fear had placed presence over science in many a case. But he pressed on, undaunted and convinced that effective and practical education about AIDS needed priority.

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