Contents

List of Tables and Figures		x
Preface		xi
Acknowledgements		xiii
List of Abbreviations		xiv
Introduction		1

The Dynamics of Politics	1
Why Politics?	3
Why Politics Matters	5
Democratic Politics in Trouble: An Overview of the Argument	7

Part I Mass Democracy: Triumph and Disappointment

1	The Triumph of Democracy?	19
	The Nature of Democratic Governance	20
	Democracy as a Universal Value	21
	The Triumph of Democracy	25
	Conclusions: A 'Dark Side' to Democracy?	29
2	Global Dissatisfaction with Politics	32
	The Changing Pattern of Politics in the UK	33
	Disenchantment in Other Advanced Industrial Democracies	35
	Political Disenchantment beyond the Industrial	
	Democracies	41
	Should Disenchantment be a Matter of Concern?	44
3	Explanations for Political Disenchantment	47
	Is Politics Failing because Politicians are More Venal or	
	Incompetent?	47
	Does Disenchantment Reflect the Emergence of a More	
	Critical or Fragmented Citizenry?	52
	Is Politics in Trouble because Issues are Moving beyond its	
	Control?	58
	Conclusions: Politics in Hard Times	65

4	The Politics of Mass Democracies: Designed-In	
	Disappointment?	68
	Introduction	68
	Proposition 1: Politics is an Inherently Centralized Form of	
	Collective Decision Making	70
	Proposition 2: Politics is Driven by Complex Communication	
	That is Demanding and Prone to Failure	74
	Proposition 3: Political Decisions usually Involve Mutual	
	Adjustment among Governing Elites and Result in Messy	
	Outcomes and a Complex Distribution of Costs and	
	Benefits	78
	Conclusions	82

Part II The Pathologies of Political Practice

5	The Decline of Citizen Engagement?	87
	How Do Most Citizens Engage?	88
	Uneven Capacity to Participate: Exploring and Addressing	
	the Issues	93
	Concerns about the Quality of Participation	99
	Conclusions	101
6	The Professionalization of Activism?	103
	High-Intensity Activism	103
	Party Activists	104
	The Rise of the Citizen Lobby	107
	Protest and Dissent	112
	Concluding Comment: Participation by and through Experts	116
7	The Dangers of Cynicism	118
	A Cynicism Index?	119
	Public Choice Theory: An Academic Framing for Cynicism	121
	Do Politicians Lie More Today?	125
	The Role of the Media: Defender of Democracy or Creator	
	of Corrosive Cynicism?	127
	Conclusions	130
8	The Perils of Populism	132
	The People and the Truth	132
	Populism Today: Its Range and Variety	133
	Exploring Populism	137
	Assessing Populism	138

Populism and Democratic Theory: A Minor Detour	140
Concluding Note	144

Part III Searching for Solutions

9	Politics for Amateurs	149
	Political Engagement is Good (Up to a Point)	151
	Over-Prescription of Citizen Engagement	154
	Intensive Engagement is not Always Effective or an Option	
	Open to All Citizens	158
	Towards a Strategy of Engagement: Public and Civic Politics	160
10	Reviving Political Institutions	163
	Making Representation Better	166
	Three Mainstream Reforms	168
	Three Unconventional Reforms	172
	A New Architecture of Multi-Level Governance	174
	The Prospects for Reform	178
	Conclusions	181
11	Creating a New Civic Arena	182
	New Forms of Citizen Engagement	183
	Encouraging 'Civicness' and Voluntary Activity	194
	Information Flow and Understanding: Citizen Education	
	and the Media	196
	Concluding Note	199
Co	nclusions	201
Not	es and References	207
Ind	ex	223