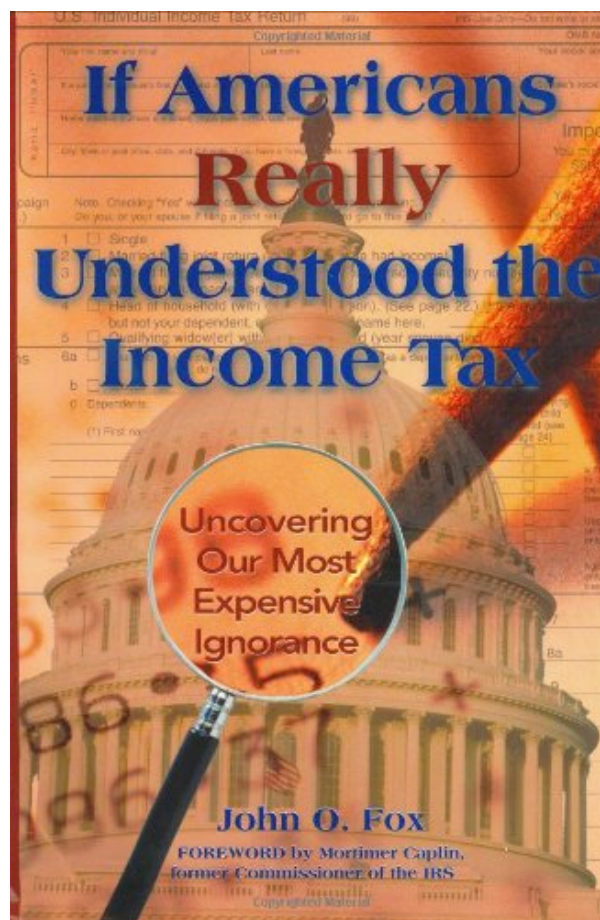
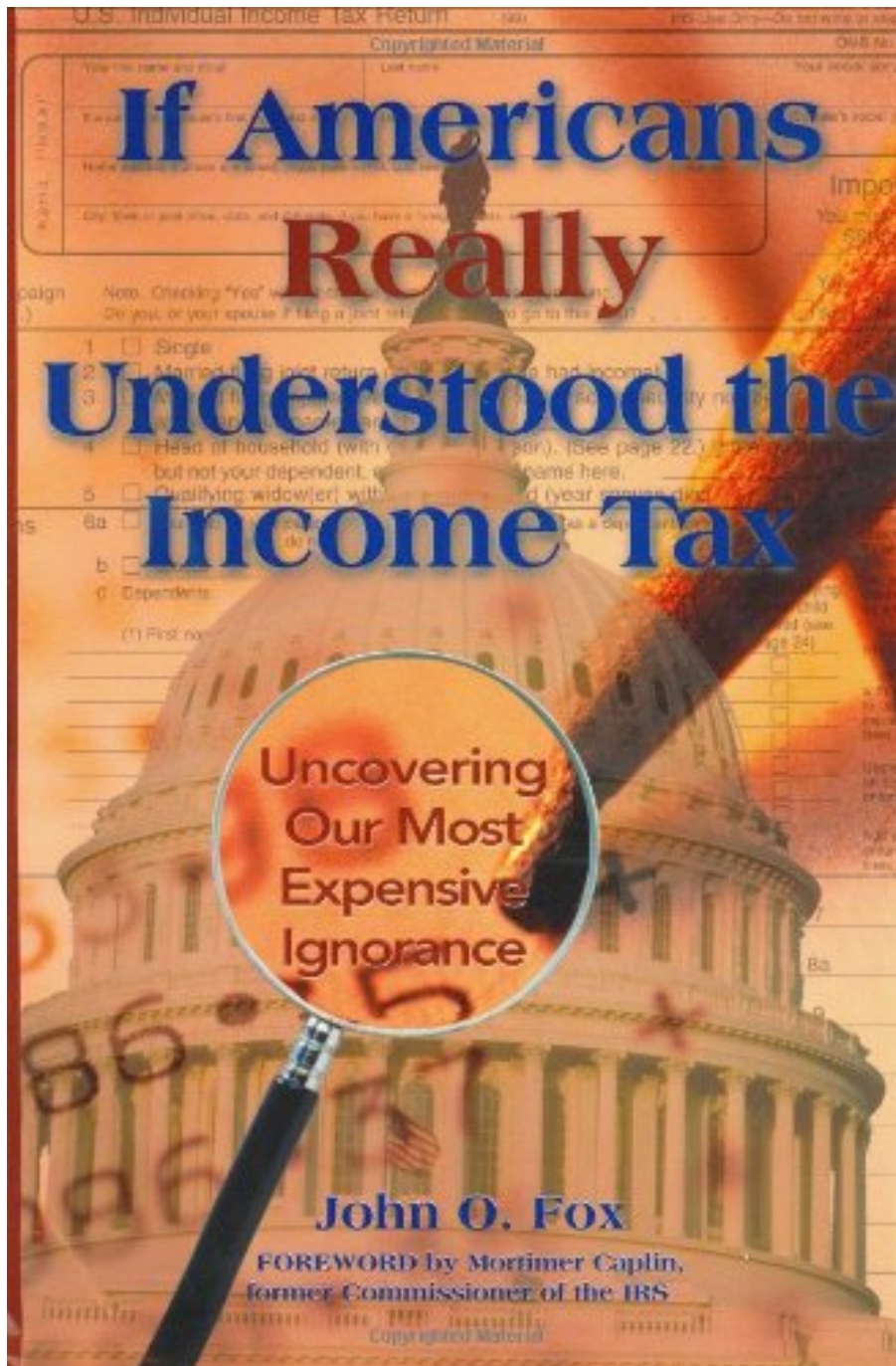


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Longtime Washington, D.C., tax attorney Fox is well positioned to lend perspective to the current tax debate. Fox stresses the narrowness of the U.S. tax base; Congress' Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that, from 2000 to 2004, nearly \$3 trillion of income will be excluded from taxes. This tax-expenditure amount includes employer benefit plan contributions, capital-gains-related exclusions, personal itemized deductions and business deductions beyond the cost of doing business, and tax credits. These tax preferences encourage economic behavior Congress wanted to reward, but Fox makes the case that conservatives and liberals could agree on a more equitable tax code if it included more income and then taxed it at lower, moderately progressive rates. Fox explores the values reflected in tax law, examines the effectiveness of tax incentives, analyzes specific exclusions (home mortgage interest, pension plans, and capital gains), and compares income tax with a "flat tax," closing with conclusions and reform recommendations. Mary Carroll  
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## About the Author

John O. Fox has engaged in the practice of law in Washington, D.C. since 1964, specializing in tax and business matters. He has been developing the arguments for this book over the past 15 years in conjunction with a course he teaches at Mt. Holyoke College entitled "Taxation and the Values of Democracy."

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One hundred eighty million Americans file income tax returns, almost as many complain about the system, yet few understand the underlying social and economic outcomes. This book carves open the belly of the income tax for Americans who never have had the opportunity to learn about it, and empowers Americans to make informed judgments about what income tax laws would be best. John Fox explains how the laws represent the most comprehensive expression of official government values. Fox also elucidates how special relief provisions far exceed in sheer dollars and importance programs funded directly through the federal budget, and why these special provisions typically fail to advance tax justice or economic growth. Fox presents a compelling argument that our nation's interests would be best served by overhauling the system through reforms that eliminate all but the most essential special relief provisions, while reducing tax rates across the board. Such reforms, he argues, are far more compatible with principles of liberals and conservatives than is today's system. Part primer, part manifesto, *If Americans Really Understood the Income Tax* is sure to open the eyes of tax-paying Americans and earn the respect of policy experts.

- Sales Rank: #653936 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Basic Books
- Published on: 2001-02-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.07" h x 6.12" w x 9.25" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 368 pages

## Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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## Most helpful customer reviews

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

My wife took my copy and I will have to buy another.

By A Customer

This is an excellent book. It has been written in a comprehensive style that can enlighten taxpayers as well as tax professionals. Every one can benefit from the collected information and well-conceived opinions of Mr. Fox. This book can serve as a wellspring to initiate questions, debate, or perhaps a citizen's revolt against our present archaic, confusing, and unequal tax system. Mr. Fox has obviously been working on this book for several years, but his phenomenal foresight has placed this brilliant work in our hands at just the right moment when we consider the major tax law changes now being considered by the U.S. Executive and Legislative branches of our government. The proposed changes could have a profound negative effect on our children and us. In the 18th century American citizens had a tea party in Boston because of unfair taxes. What will our generation do? Whimper and complain or become informed and proactive?

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Must read

By Denis P. Doyle

John Fox's take on taxes is a must read for anyone who cares about tax equity and the well-being of the body politic. When I first studied taxes as an employee of the California Legislature -- now nearly four decades ago -- we learned that simple equity -- equal treatment of equals -- was the first principle of a fair and just tax system; absent equity the system would be manifestly unfair and eventually would lose its legitimacy, the greatest danger a democratic republic can face. As Fox points out, that's exactly what's happening with modern tax policy -- regressive, unfair, unjust are the attributes that leap out at you. But Fox does more than point the finger of blame; he offers constructive suggestions to get the system back where it belongs, to restore fairness and legitimacy.

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

The Tax Connection

By Pete Reider

Fox gets right down to two essential questions: "First, can the income tax be made reasonably fair, simple and economically efficient?" and "Second, are its flaws worth repairing, or would it be preferable to adopt a very different tax system?" He explains, in the clearest - non-polemic - way, what the tax picture really is. Early on he gives an example, the taxes of the Gepetto and Anton families - an example that lights up the rest of the book. The exposition is very clear and yet detailed enough to illustrate the nitty-gritty of several issues, including homeownership (where I got a tip or two) and the capital gains controversy. Fox is broadminded and flexible in his approach - perhaps an endangered species writing about such a hot topic. There is immediacy about his writing making the book a gripping page-turner rather than pedantic.

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