Reading Number 74
from *Red Over Blue*
by James Ceaser and Andrew Busch

p. 516, ¶ 1– “Using colors to describe political divisions is a practice that was employed at least as early as the sixth century, when Byzantine politics was riven by a division between the ‘blues’ and the ‘greens,’ rival political factions that based their names on the colors worn their favorite chariot teams.”

p. 517, ¶ 2– “America’s experience with the palette did not begin until just after the 2000 election, when an electoral map appeared in the New York Times showing the states that gave a plurality to George W. Bush in red and those going to Al Gore in blue.”

Ibid., ¶ 4, line 4– “Not only are the poll questions often vague and confusing, but the actual line of causality can run in a different direction than many suppose: people often make a general overall decision about which individual they prefer, after which they embrace some policy explanations to justify the choice.”


Ibid., ¶ 3– “From the way questions are posed in the polls, it is difficult to establish a clear ranking of the relative importance of the four different dimensions of policy. But using the figures available, and sorting them by the different categories, national security concerns come out on top (and favor Bush), followed by economic issues (which helped Kerry), moral issues (strongly Bush), and finally welfare concerns (strongly Kerry). (See Table)” Note: The table is located on p. 519.

Ibid., ¶ 4– “Given this ranking, how did it happen in the immediate aftermath of the election that a widespread view emerged, especially on the Left, that the moral dimension was the most important factor in the 2004 election?”

p. 519, ¶ 2– “In response to this highly polemical interpretation, a number of Republicans and conservatives understandably rushed to downplay the significance of the moral issue – perhaps too much so.”

p. 520, ¶ 2– “The terms ‘red’ and ‘blue’ have come to use not just politically, to designate partisan leanings, but anthropologically, to describe cultural proclivities.”

Ibid., ¶ 3– “Geography, especially when it relies on units as large as states, is a fairly crude way to try to discuss the scope of cultural divisions in America.”

p. 522, ¶ 3– “This change in the relative strength of the two political parties over the last generation is the most notable fact in the electoral history of our time.”

N.B.– Since this article was written the Democrats regained control of both legislative bodies.