Theda Skocpol

Skocpol earned her B.A. in 1969 as the Top Honors College Student at Michigan State University (which also awarded her an Honorary Doctor of Science degree in 1995). Skocpol received her Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1975, and taught there until moving in 1981 to tenured posts in both sociology and political science at the University of Chicago. Five years later, Skocpol returned to Harvard.

At Harvard, she teaches and does research on the politics of national public policymaking and on civil society in relationship to democratic government and politics. She is currently directing the Civic Engagement Project at Harvard University, a set of investigations of the development and transformation of voluntary associations in the United States from 1790 to the present.

Over the past two and a half decades, Skocpol has authored or coauthored eight scholarly books; eight edited books; more than 60 academic articles; and dozens of articles for public audiences. Among her best-known works are States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China (Cambridge University Press 1979), which won two major scholarly awards and influenced subsequent debates on the causes and outcomes of revolutions in the modern world; and Bringing the State Back In (Cambridge University Press 1985), coedited with Peter B. Evans and Dietrich Rueschemeyer), which encouraged scholars to pay careful analytic attention to states as actors and as institutional arrangements that help to shape political identities, alliances, and strategies. An analysis of why the United States pioneered national social benefits for military veterans and mothers rather than for wage-earners, Skocpol ’s 1992 book, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States won five scholarly awards in several disciplines. Among these were the 1993 Ralph Waldo Emerson Award of Phi Beta Kappa, given to honor a comprehensive study that contributes to historical, philosophical, or religious interpretations of the human condition,"and the APSA ’s 1993 Woodrow Wilson Foundation Award, for "the best book published in the United States during the previous year on government, politics or international affairs.

Skocpol's newest book is Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life.