

# The New Criterion

Features December 1994

## The legacy of Russell Kirk

by David Frum

*On remembering Russell Kirk.*

Russell Kirk, who died this spring at his home in Mecosta, Michigan, at the age of seventy-five, has left behind an intellectual and literary achievement as huge as it is difficult to categorize. He was not exactly a political theorist, nor really a philosopher, certainly not a historian; and yet his work speaks profound truths about politics, philosophy, and history. An ardent enemy of Communism, he was barely more enthusiastic about the commercial civilization of America. An unrelenting critic of “King Numbers,” he championed a Goldwaterite conservatism that owed far more to the populism of Jefferson, Jackson, and Tom Paine than to the prescriptive politics of Edmund Burke and John Adams. A scourge of ideology and abstraction in politics, he determinedly refused to pay any attention to the circumstances and context in which the thinkers he studied had lived. He loved old cathedral towns and country fields, ancient mansions and Gothic...

The rest of this article is locked. Please make sure you are logged in to view the full article.

---

**David Frum** was a speechwriter for President George W. Bush.

This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 13 Number 4 , on page 10

Copyright © 2024 The New Criterion | [www.newcriterion.com](http://www.newcriterion.com)

<https://newcriterion.com/issues/1994/12/the-legacy-of-russell-kirk>