

Media Democracy Summer Reading List

RECLAIM THE MEDIA

SUMMER 2007

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Prologue to a Farce by Mark Lloyd

Communication and Democracy in America. Activist and scholar Mark Lloyd's first book is in large part a history of American democracy, viewed through the lens of the media and communications systems that (at their best) encourage and enable civic debate. From early postal subsidies and the creation of telegraph networks to contemporary debates over concentrated ownership and control of the Internet, US communications policy has always been contested ground, as democratic communications values battle it out against elite and commercial interests. Gleaning important lessons from this history of struggle, Lloyd argues that today we must organize a dramatic shift in communications policy in order to salvage our democracy. [Illinois]

Bleeding Afghanistan by Sonali Kolhatkar and James Ingalls

Washington, Warlords and the Propaganda of Silence. In this timely and much-needed volume, Kolhatkar and Ingalls fill in some of the appalling gaps in American popular understanding about Afghanistan, attacking our collective amnesia about the history of US intervention, the right wing's cynical use of women's liberation language, and media coverage typified by deep racism. At the book's center is a highly insightful chapter analyzing the structural biases and omissions of US establishment media coverage of Afghanistan since the 1980s. [Seven Stories]

A Century of Media, A Century of War by Robin Andersen

Looking back across the last few decades, it is difficult to name a US military conflict in which powerful pro-war corporate and government interests did not successfully manipulate media coverage. Asking how and why, Andersen provides a deeply useful examination of how both American journalism and entertainment media have taken sides in or minimized debates over going to war. Particularly insightful are Andersen's discussions of how entertainment media such as *Black Hawk Down* or the 'Rambo' films promote values of militarism, and how the government has used lessons from Hollywood for its own propaganda purposes. [Peter Lang]

When the Press Fails by W. Lance Bennett, Regina Lawrence and Steven Livingston

Political Power and the News Media from Iraq to Katrina. This book examines "the tendency of the [American] press to record rather than critically examine the official pronouncements of government" during the post-9/11 Bush administration. Despairing at this lack of press independence, the authors argue that the most important remedy for this trend is to revive public debates over the importance of public-interest journalism. Focusing deep analysis on several particular large stories - the Iraq War, Abu Ghraib and Katrina, the book argues that effective public-sphere standards of press accountability could have produced more analytical news coverage, giving people the knowledge and the will to have a greater influence on governmental action. [Chicago]

Remaking Media by Robert Hackett and William Carroll

The Struggle to Democratize Public Communication. A very insightful look at the recent rise of media activist organizations and networks in the US, Canada and the UK. Drawing upon extensive personal interviews with on-the-ground activist leaders, the authors provide a map of the current media democracy field, including successes, challenges, blind spots and potential vectors for development. The book's transnational perspective allows for useful comparisons; highlights include chapters on San Francisco's Media Alliance (US) and the Campaign for Press and Broadcast Freedom (UK). [Routledge]

Unmarketable by Anne Elizabeth Moore

Brandalism, Copyfighting, Mocketing and the Erosion of Integrity. Kids today are creating their own culture and counterculture in the midst of a manipulative media landscape wherein "alternative," "independent," and "underground" have lost their meaning, deployed over and over by corporations angling for a piece of the teen rebellion market. *Punk Planet* editor and DIY evangelist Anne Moore looks at this Orwellian phenomenon from many angles - the corporate cooptation of radical culture, the use of copyright law to prohibit rather than protect creativity, the shifting definitions of authenticity and integrity, the attractions of selling out, and the ever-present possibilities for cultural counterinsurgency. [New Press]

Anatomy of Deceit by Marcy Wheeler

How the Bush Administration Used the Media to Sell the Iraq War and Out a Spy. Demonstrating how public-interest and political bloggers are now making irreplaceable contributions to political journalism, Wheeler provides a clear and lucid narrative concerning key players in the Bush propaganda campaign mislead the country into war. Much establishment press coverage became complicit in this campaign by repeating White House messages and frames, and by treating the investigation into Plame's outing as an inconsequential game of tit-for-tat. In this environment, it was often progressive bloggers like Wheeler who regrounded the story in democratic values, including the work of simply creating a narrative that ordinary folks can follow. By doing so here, Wheeler has performed a valuable act of journalism. [Vaster]

Free Market Missionaries by Sharon Beder

The Corporate Manipulation of Community Values. This dense but fascinating book examines how public relations firms have helped powerful corporations to instill business priorities into the hearts and minds of citizens/consumers. Beder shows how these "missionaries" have reached out through advertising, mass media and public education, replacing democratic values of truth, justice and human rights with corporate values of consumption, conformity and subordination to authority. An understanding of this history, Beder argues, can be a weapon for identifying, amplifying and creating educational and media tools to break the spell and work for a true democracy. [Earthscan]

Project Rewire ed. by Judy Daubenmier

New Media From the Inside Out. A collection of essays from independent journalists and media-critical bloggers on new Internet media and its engagement with political news coverage. Daubenmier argues that the "wired media" often outperform traditional broadcast and print media in helping readers understand the world, largely by providing critical commentary on the establishment press itself. The book's viewpoints are unabashedly partisan and liberal/progressive - excluding both conservative blogger media interventions and radical left perspectives. [William, James & Company]

Echoes of Violence by Carolin Emcke

Letters From a War Reporter. Emcke, a correspondent for *Der Spiegel*, began writing these personal letters as a way to fully witness and document the horrors of warfare (in Kosovo, Iraq and elsewhere), outside the scope of her usual magazine journalism. In the process, she developed a personal idiom well-suited to reflection and moral engagement, yet still reportorial. Her sympathetic documentary eye seeks to vivify the terrible victimhood of war-torn communities, also examining the challenges and contradictions of her own profession. Moving, even in translation. [Princeton]

