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Propaganda & Persuasion



Synopsis

Propaganda and Persuasion, Fifth Edition, has been significantly revised to reflect the growing use of global propaganda and the Internet. It is the only book of its kind to cover a comprehensive history of propaganda and offer insightful definitions and methods to analyze it. Building on the excellence of the four previous editions, authors Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell provide a remarkable and logical understanding of persuasion and propaganda, including communication history, rhetorical background, cultural studies, and collective memory. The guidelines for analysis are thorough and adaptable for the study of all types of propaganda.

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Customer Reviews

The overwealming impression that I got from the Propaganda and Persuasion was that it was muddled and poorly put together. I would probably rate it at three stars but there are enough gems in this to justify a four. Even though the flow of the book is clunky you will end up taking away a lot from it. My first complaint is that the book spends a lot of time tripping over the definition of propaganda. There is obviously quite a bit of rigorous academic debate on exactly what propaganda is but the book has trouble deciding how, when and in what format it wants to present the debate. Rather than coming up with a coherent, consistently used definition of propaganda (or even multiple definitions that are used in parallel) it haphazardly loops back on itself covering the same information two and three times. I think this accounts for roughly 75-100 extra pages that would have been more useful as examples of propaganda throughout the ages, more rigorous analysis

using the constructs presented, or even just pictures. The book has a few very cool pictures of propagandistic architecture, art, and old posters from wars. I would have been much happier with more pictures of actual propaganda that were deconstructed using the theories presented. Coverage of the propaganda leading up to and through the first gulf war was better than nothing but certainly not what I would expect from academic material. The authors managed to strip down a fairly interesting subject into kind of blah coverage. It should also be noted that this book covers a reasonably basic view of history, something that might be suitable for first or second year undergraduates. That's not a complaint per se, just something you should know.

Jowett & O'Donnell's book has become a sort of standard text in the teaching of propaganda, which is good, but it is not the best book to teach from nor from which to learn. Plus it's pricey--Sage, the publisher, as a foremost academic publisher, has, as academic publishers do, taken advantage of the academic captive market. Nevertheless, I especially recommend the chapter about how to analyze a propaganda campaign. It provides a step-by-step procedure that leads a student to the discovery and appreciation of the multi-dimensionality of modern propaganda campaigns. This chapter achieves, probably, the only lingering effect of having read the book. I have tried to use this book in teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in Persuasion and Propaganda, and while it has good chapters, it lacks what might be called "residual effect" --there is no great significant synthesis. Nor does it chill the soul (like Jacques Ellul's great book, Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes; and it does not, excepting the chapter mentioned above, lend itself to application. I know whereof I speak, being the author of The Ten Commandments of Propaganda, and a Professor of Communication. Nevertheless, writing a comprehensive book on Propaganda is, to say the least, difficult. Jowett and O'Donnell provide point of ingress into the field of propaganda studies (my field), but achieve little in the way of grand effect. They write like social scientists.

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