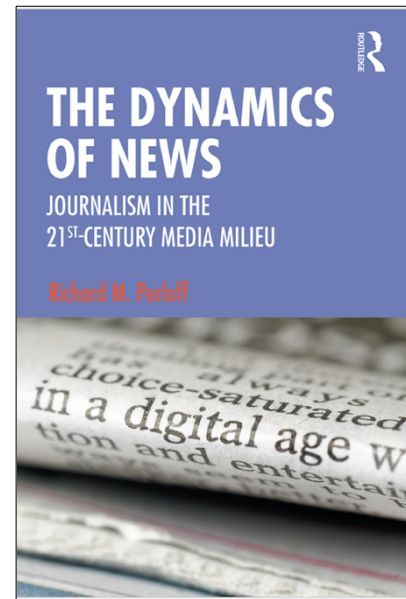


Richard M. Perloff, **The Dynamics of News: Journalism in the 21st-Century Media Milieu**, New York, NY: Routledge, 2020, 327 pp., \$64.95 (paperback).

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The advent of the Internet has transformed and revolutionized the news and journalism industry. News appears everywhere all at once and at all times in all different formats, especially on social media. The rise of citizen journalism further blurs the distinction between traditional news sources and personal viewpoints. The prevalence of conspiracies, misinformation, and fabricated news challenges the factual underpinnings of news. Often, news is intertwined with political biases and ideologies, casting doubt upon its credibility in the eyes of the audience. Nonetheless, the demand for news remains insatiable as it plays a crucial role in upholding democracy and informing society. Therefore, there exists a pressing need to understand contemporary news and journalism that is much different from previous eras.



Richard M. Perloff, a noted professor in the field of communication, psychology, and political science, published a textbook to help students and inquisitive scholars better comprehend the intricate dynamics governing news within our modern milieu. Building upon his portfolio of influential works, which have previously dissected the mechanics of persuasion (Perloff, 2007) and delved into the realm of political communication (Perloff, 2013), he presents his latest contribution, ***The Dynamics of News: Journalism in the 21st-Century Media Milieu***.

This book starts with stories of police brutality and racial injustice presented in three distinct ways in the media. The first story was presented in the traditional mainstream news organization *The New York Times*, which depicted two young Black brothers who got pulled over by policemen for minor violations and were ultimately shot and injured. The second story unfolded in real time through the unfiltered lens of a concerned citizen's Facebook livestream. The heartbreaking scenario captured the Minneapolis police's act of fatally shooting this citizen's boyfriend while he earnestly attempted to retrieve his identification. The third story is presented by an online news channel, *Vice News*, with a clear political stance that investigated violent protests against the removal of the Robert E. Lee Monument. These three emotional and dramatic stories set up a robust foundation for readers to grasp the different ways news is produced and "the inseparability of news, society, power, and culture" (p. 7).

This book further intends to unravel the multifaceted nature of news and journalism within the context of our highly fragmented age. Its primary aim is twofold: to illuminate the intrinsic significance of news to democracy and to grapple with the formidable challenges that news production and dissemination

confront. Divided into two primary sections, the book first underscores the fundamentals of news. This encompasses elucidating the concepts of news and journalism, along with exploring the anticipated role of news. The section further examines how news remains entangled with cultural and structural complexities within American society. The second section digs deeply into the mechanics that underpin news creation, debunking the statement that news reflects reality and revisiting the cornerstone of objectivity. The section presents the intricate process through which journalists actively construct the events they cover in the news. Furthermore, it discusses the various factors impacting the production of news, such as the individual characteristics of journalists themselves.

Perloff raises a lot of thought-provoking questions before delving into the content in each chapter which is extremely helpful to encourage intellectual engagement and foster a heightened level of critical thinking. In addition, a lot of questions are really important to understand journalism such as: "Does news harbor a distinct political bias? Do media serve the status quo and ruling elites? Or do they serve as powerful instruments of change, prodding society's leaders into action?" (p. 179). Perloff does not only ask questions but also provides comprehensive models of news to navigate readers through the journey of understanding the multifaceted determinants of news. He integrates other well-known scholars' models to help describe and explain complex phenomena such as the Hierarchy of Influences Model (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). This model entails five levels of influence on media content ranging from broader societal systems and institutions to specific media organizations, everyday practices, and individual actors, and it has been adapted to the online networked public sphere recently (Reese, 2016).

Drawing from the Hierarchy of Influences Model, Perloff meticulously delineates a spectrum of factors that exert influence over news production, including individual journalistic attributes, news media routines, organizational and economic factors, and ideological system influences. In a quest to dispel prevailing misconceptions, Perloff employs statistical analysis and scholarly arguments to unravel the myth that all journalists lean toward the liberal Democratic end of the spectrum. Simultaneously, he dismantles the myth that America has a liberal bias, cultivating a nuanced comprehension of the intricate interplay between journalistic practices and political orientations. A substantial portion of the book is dedicated to understanding the factors contributing to the emergence of news bias, the determinants of news itself, and normative philosophies that underscore the essence of news in contemporary society. Furthermore, the book discusses the classic news value that historically guided journalistic choices such as novelty, elitism and prominence, conflict, and controversy. The book is also not confined to the past, as it adeptly navigates the evolving terrain of contemporary journalism, probing into emergent news values like online immediacy, interactivity, and participation.

One of the most pronounced strengths of this book is its blend of illustrative examples and theoretical arguments presented with exceptional readability. The book is filled with stories and relevant examples that can help readers understand the complexity of news and the driving forces behind news production. For example, the book begins by analyzing stories of racial injustice presented in different media outlets ranging from newspapers, online media, and social media. Boasting both practical and scholarly experience within the world of journalism, Perloff effectively bridges the gap between industry insights and theoretical depth. This blend enables him to seamlessly integrate vivid real-world examples from the news

arena with a multitude of theoretical constructs such as constructionism and gatekeeping. These conceptual tools unveil the hierarchical social influences that intricately shape the journey of news production.

However, although the book touches on the influence of news consumption behaviors and technological factors such as social media algorithms on journalism, it does not specifically explore how they affect audiences' perceptions of news. Moreover, the book fails to elucidate the mechanisms by which the spread of fake news impacts the public's trust in news and perceived biases. This oversight might be attributable to the book's primary focus on evaluating contemporary journalistic practices comprehensively and impartially from the perspective of news production. In this light, such an omission might be understandable and acceptable.

One area where the book could perhaps enrich its perspective is by elucidating how today's journalists perceive their audiences. Contemporary news practitioners might have evolved views on their target audience, which, in turn, shapes the very news they produce (Coddington, Lewis, & Belair-Gagnon, 2021). Additionally, while the book commendably addresses the role of established online platforms like Facebook in contemporary news production and changes in news form, it might miss a beat by not touching on the rising giants of short video content, such as TikTok. Given that platforms like these are becoming the go-to news sources for the younger generation, a nod in their direction might not only make the book more relatable for undergrads but could also offer them a bridge between academic study and their day-to-day media consumption.

Overall, this comprehensive guidebook of the dynamics of news will be an invaluable resource for a diverse audience including undergraduate students, graduate students, and researchers from the fields of journalism, mass communications, political communication, sociology, and related areas of study. This textbook provides both conceptual and practical tools for readers to unpack the complexities of contemporary news. Inquisitive scholars can benefit from not only using this book as a valuable reference to enrich their own research endeavors but also by incorporating it as a textbook for their pedagogical purposes, especially for the courses in journalism and mass communications.

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