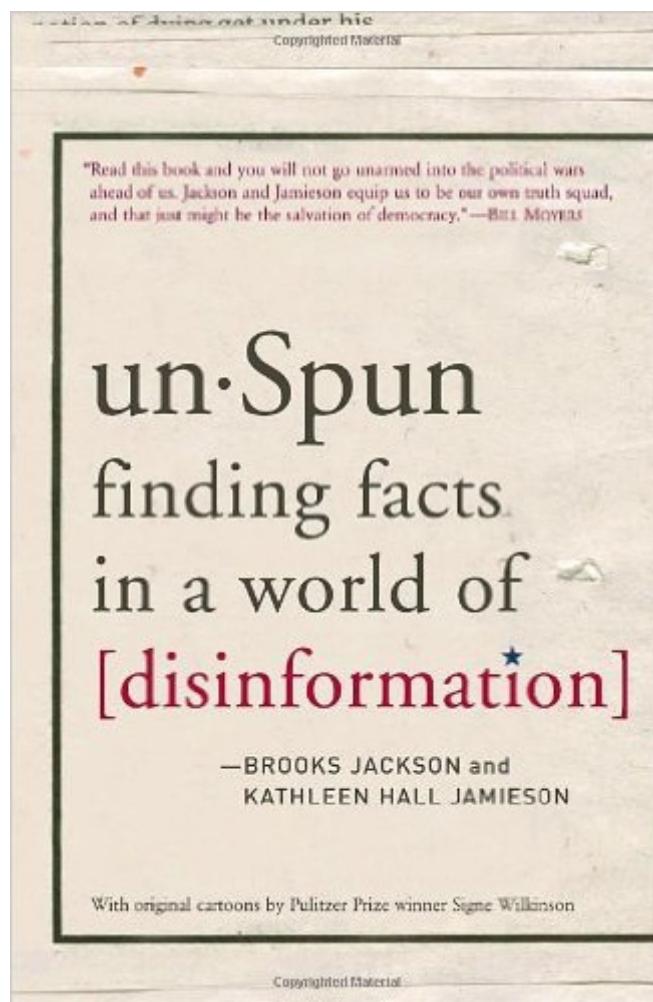


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UnSpun: Finding Facts In A World Of Disinformation



Synopsis

Americans are bombarded daily with mixed messages, half-truths, misleading statements, and out-and-out fabrications masquerading as facts. The news mediaâ “once the vaunted watchdogs of our republicâ “are often too timid or distracted to identify these deceptions.unSpun is the secret decoder ring for the twenty-first-century world of disinformation. Written by Brooks Jackson and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, the founders of the acclaimed website FactCheck.org, unSpun reveals the secrets of separating facts from disinformation, such as: â ¢ the warning signs of spin, hype, and bogus newsâ ¢ common tricks used to deceive usâ ¢ how to find trustworthy and objective sources of informationTelling fact from fiction shouldnâ ™t be a difficult task. With this book and a healthy dose of skepticism, anyone can cut through the haze of biased media reportage to be a savvier consumer and a better-informed citizen.â œRead this book and you will not go unarmed into the political wars ahead of us. Jackson and Jamieson equip us to be our own truth squad, and that just might be the salvation of democracy.â • â “Bill Moyersâ œTHE DEFINITIVE B.S. DETECTORâ “AN ABSOLUTELY INVALUABLE GUIDEBOOK.â •â “Mark Shields, syndicated columnist and political analyst, NewsHour with Jim Lehrerâ œunSpun is an essential guide to cutting through the political fog. Just in time for the 2008 campaign, Brooks Jackson and Kathleen Hall Jamieson have written a citizenâ ™s guide to avoiding the malarkey of partisan politics.â •â “Mara Liasson, NPR national political correspondentâ œThe Internet may be a wildly effective means of communication and an invaluable source of knowledge, but it has also become a new virtual haven for scammersâ “financial, political, even personal. Better than anything written before, unSpun shows us how to recognize these scams and protect ourselves from them.â •â “Craig Newmark, founder and customer service representative, Craigslist.org

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Customer Reviews

At least I think it's a great book, but now I'm not so sure. The authors, Brooks Jackson, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson have done such an outstanding job of showing me why I bought the electric scissors I didn't need and how I was focusing so much on watching the healthy people on the television doing Tai Chi in the park, I completely overlooked the possible side effects of the drug the commercial was pedaling. Now that I've listened and found out that it may lead to complete loss of body hair, tailbone growth, swelling of the lips and tongue, excessive weight gain, webbed feet, tooth loss, emesis and leprosy, I've stopped taking the drug. Starting out with the first snake oil salesman making outrageous claims, to political advertisements by republicans and democrats, by Bush and Kerry, we learn that virtually none of them can be trusted because they appeal to our biases, our perception, our experiences, and cynicism with words that are open to interpretation such as clinically tested, larger, better, more people trust or use..., on average, and other caveats that deserve closer scrutiny. (I've also added to the list: "Read with an open mind," and "Only for those who can be objective"). If that isn't bad enough, the authors show us how our personal experiences and eyewitness accounts can be manipulated by others and by our own biases. For example, when subjects were shown two lines of differing lengths, they often reported that the shorter one was longer, once they learned that everyone else (supposedly) had selected the shorter line. An even better one is the neighboring review: One, who has made his conservative feelings clear, felt that there was more "left favoring" bias to this book. A commenter said that he felt there was more "right-favoring" bias.

As a lifelong skeptic I can get with books like this, in which you can learn the best uses of skepticism against an epidemic of misinformation. This one starts out with some recent scientific evidence on why people believe spin and stick to their beliefs so doggedly when contradictory information is ripe for the plucking. That's basically the most useful aspect of the book, and the rest is a parade of obvious examples of spin and some fairly useful prescriptions for immunizing yourself. The examples given of spin, unleashed by everyone from marketers to academics to politicians (big surprise), are likely to irk the thinking American. But the problem is that the authors assume that all types of public disinformation are equally harmful, from cheesy and harmless marketing like "new

and improved" to the worst of political fearmongering. In one ridiculous example, a British commander ploy to keep secret some minor battle plans in the Falklands War is conflated to the same level of distaste as lies about the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians in Iraq. Ironically, the thinking skeptics that the authors are trying to train would be able to parse the world of disinformation more usefully than this book does. The authors also think that "bipartisanship" is the simple act of critiquing both major political parties, when it would be more useful to critique the system that creates partisanship altogether; while they often recommend that you look at "both" sides of a story, displaying the same systematic tendency of assuming that there are only two ways (left wing vs. right wing) of looking at any complex issue.. Also annoying is the specific recommendation not to assume that one example of spin is a widespread trend.

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