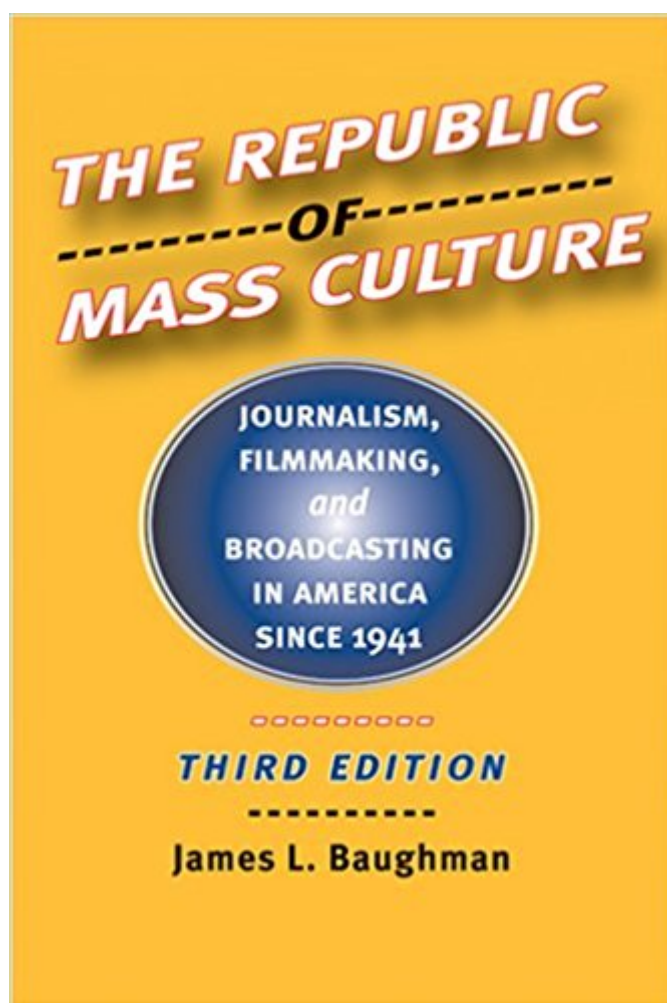


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# The Republic Of Mass Culture: Journalism, Filmmaking, And Broadcasting In America Since 1941 (The American Moment)



## Synopsis

The new edition of James L. Baughman's successful book *The Republic of Mass Culture* examines the advent of television and the impact it had on the established mass media—radio, film, newspapers, and magazines. When television captured the largest share of the mass audience by the late 1950s, rival media were forced to target smaller, subgroup markets with novel content: rock 'n' roll for teenage radio listeners in the 1950s, sexually explicit films that began to appear in the 1960s, and analytical newspaper reporting in the 1970s and 1980s. The growing popularity of cable TV posed new complications, especially for network television. The capacity of individual media industries to adapt not only determined their success or failure but also shaped the content of their products. Two new chapters examine media entrants like Fox News, technologies such as the Internet, and increasing industry concentration. Baughman discusses significant changes in media economics and audience demand that are having profound effects on radio program formats, television news coverage, and the very existence of newspapers. Carefully drawing on interdisciplinary communication research, *The Republic of Mass Culture* presents a lively analysis of the shifting objectives and challenges of the media industries.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"We need books like James L. Baughman's *The Republic of Mass Culture*." (Mike Conway Journalism History)"A useful reference for media scholars at many levels... comprehensive in its

coverage, giving especially good coverage to journalistic and other sources often overlooked by academics." (Megan Mullen Technology and Culture)

"Successfully integrates media content, commerce, technology, and external influences and... traces the interconnected web of the established media and the emergent medium of television... An important contribution to the history of media industries." (American Historical Review)"A remarkably complete historical account of the changing nature of the media industries in postwar America." (Virginia Quarterly Review)"Factual and anecdotal, Baughman's book will be useful to students and scholars seeking a wide overview of media history since 1941... His work is unusual in its breadth: it covers not only motion pictures and television but also radio, newspaper and periodical publishing, and even to some extent the music industry." (Journal of American History)

Exactly what I needed for my class.

Feels like a good college textbook, summarizing the TV industry and its effects on mags, newspapers, movies 1940s-1990s. Baughman doesn't have a particularly good feel for the aesthetics of TV and his writing is workmanlike at best. But a nice intro for young people who didn't grow up in those benighted times before HDTV and the Internet.

This volume should be of interest to anyone interested in the transformation of television from a fringe consumer product to a central force in the creation of an American mass culture. As someone who holds a special place in his heart for the printed word, I found the section on the decline of print media--especially of general-interest magazines such as LIFE and the SATURDAY EVENING POST--of particular interest. Today the decline has entered a new chapter, as newspaper organizations are shuttering their doors as advertising revenues plummet and consumers migrate onto the Internet to feed their need for news content. And as someone who has produced TV-news segments for national broadcasters, I find resonance in his description of the evolving tastes of popular audiences from high- to lowbrow content. At the dawn of the TV age, most viewers tuned in to watch Edward R. Murrow on CBS's SEE IT NOW and Sid Caesar's SHOW OF SHOWS, as networks catered to an informed audience. Soon, however, viewers drifted away from quality programming and ultimately made entertainment programs like CHARLIE'S ANGELS a national phenomenon. To this day popular content on television is dominated by programming designed for lowest-common-denominator audiences in the form of so-called reality television. If there is any

criticism of this volume that prospective readers should be made aware of, it is that Baughman's writing style is a slough to muddle through. Enervating and taxing, at its low moments it can serve as an antidote to insomnia. But do not be discouraged, because as you navigate deeper into the book it becomes more and more illuminating and rewarding. THE REPUBLIC OF MASS CULTURE offers a revealing account of shifts in American cultural tastes in the second half of the twentieth century. While the book does not center on politics and history, Baughman delivers a cultural history that nonetheless has political resonance and application in the current age. It is refreshing to read as an alternative to comprehensive histories of America.

Baughman's book is a joy to read because of his skillful writing. This is an ideal example of how to write a book of this sort. Every point he makes is worth making and is incredibly clear. He never repeats his points and covers a great deal of territory. I definitely recommend this book to any student of American history, media studies or consumer culture.

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