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Derived from the word "to propagate," the idea and practice of propaganda concerns nothing less than the ways in which human beings communicate, particularly with respect to the creation and widespread dissemination of attitudes, images, and beliefs. Much larger than its pejorative connotations suggest, propaganda can more neutrally be understood as a central means of organizing and shaping thought and perception, a practice that has been a pervasive feature of the twentieth century and that touches on many fields. It has been seen as both a positive and negative force, although abuses under the Third Reich and during the Cold War have caused the term to stand in, most recently, as a synonym for untruth and brazen manipulation.

Propaganda analysis of the 1950s to 1989 too often took the form of empirical studies about the efficacy of specific methods, with larger questions about the purposes and patterns of mass persuasion remaining unanswered. In the present moment where globalization and transnationality are arguably as important as older nation forms, when media enjoy near ubiquity throughout the globe, when various fundamentalisms are ascendant, and when debates rage about neoliberalism, it is urgent that we have an up-to-date resource that considers propaganda as a force of culture writ large.

The handbook will include twenty-two essays by leading scholars from a variety of disciplines, divided into three sections. In addition to dealing with the thorny question of definition, the handbook will take up an expansive set of assumptions and a full range of approaches that move propaganda beyond political campaigns and warfare to examine a wide array of cultural contexts and practices.



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**Jonathan Auerbach** is Professor of English at the University of Maryland. He is the author of numerous articles and books on American culture, including *The Romance of Failure: First-Person Fictions of Poe, Hawthorne, and James* (Oxford University Press, 1989), *Male Call: Becoming Jack London* (Duke University Press, 1996), and *Body Shots: Early Cinema's Incarnations*, (University of California Press, 2007). He has recently completed a study entitled *Dark Borders: Film Noir and American Citizenship*.

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