

On Media: Making Sense of Politics (On Politics)

Doris A. Graber



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Even as more and more communications avenues open up, are Americans losing their political IQ? Some democratic theorists bemoan citizen apathy, ignorance, and incapacity to make sound political judgments. Renowned media scholar Doris Graber contends that such assessments are based on impractical and outmoded models of measuring citizen awareness and engagement. Using what she calls reality-based research methods and a sensitivity to contemporary trends, Graber finds that average people understand many political issues and can think about them in complex ways. She reports her new research on learning from entertainment offerings, emphasizing its novel aspects, including experiments, interviews, message board analyses, and stimulus dramas. The book includes companion studies carried out in the Netherlands and Greece designed to test whether the American findings are culture-specific or hold true across cultural settings. A capstone reflection by a communications authority, "On Media" offers new approaches to timeworn topics and projects an emerging image of public political knowledge that is at once encouraging, inspirational, and fascinating in its contour and detail.

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