

# Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction, and Democracy (Oxford Paperbacks)

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Americans in recent years have become thoroughly disenchanted with our political campaigns, especially with campaign advertising and speeches. Each year, as November approaches, we are bombarded with visceral appeals that bypass substance, that drape candidates in the American flag but tell us nothing about what they'll do if elected, that flood us with images of PT-109 or Willie Horton, while significant issues--such as Kennedy's Addison's Disease or the looming S&L catastrophe--are left unexamined. And the press--the supposed safeguard of democracy--focuses on campaign strategy over campaign substance, leaving us to decide where the truth lies.

In *Dirty Politics*, campaign analyst Kathleen Hall Jamieson provides an eye-opening look at political ads and speeches, showing us how to read, listen to, and watch political campaigns. Jamieson provides a sophisticated (and often humorous) analysis of advertising technique, describing how television ads use soft focus, slow motion, lyrical or patriotic music (Reagan used "I'm Proud to be an American") to place a candidate in a positive light, or quick cuts, black and white, videotape, and ominous music (for instance, the theme from "Jaws") to portray the opposition. She shows how ads sometimes mimic news spots to add authenticity (Edwin Edwards, in his race against David Duke, actually used former NBC correspondent Peter Hackis, who would begin an ad saying "This is Peter Hackis in Baton Rouge"). And Jamieson points out that consultants create inflammatory ads hoping that the major networks will pick them up and run them as news, giving the ad millions of dollars of free air time. The most striking example would be the Willie Horton ad, which the press aired repeatedly (as an example of negative advertising) long after the ad had ceased running. (In fact, it never ran on the major networks as an ad, only as news.)

From a colorful, compact history of negative campaigning from Eisenhower to the present, to an in-depth commentary on the Willie Horton ads, to an up-to-the-minute analysis of the Duke-Edwards campaign in Louisiana, *Dirty Politics* is both a fascinating look at underhanded campaigning as well as a compelling argument for fair, accurate, and substantive campaigns. It is a book that all voters should read before they vote again.

## Kathleen Hall Jamieson

is Dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania and is the author of *Packaging the Presidency*, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age*, and other books on political discourse.

"[Jamieson's] dissection of how drama overcomes data, how vilification and flat assertion replace argument, and how reporters cover strategy instead of substance is methodical and even-handed."--The Christian Science Monitor "Instead of relying upon hearsay and innuendo, Jamieson's book is

built upon solid research. She goes beyond describing the problem and suggests strategies for change. My students are captivated!"--Mark J. Braun, Augsburg College

"Wonderful! Jamieson is a one-woman truth squad who has made a real difference in the electoral process."--Benjamin I. Page, Northwestern University

"If you read this book--and you should--you will never again listen to a news broadcast or read a newspaper in the same way....Reading *Dirty Politics* leaves one with the troubling conviction that our democracy is threatened by the failure to provide voters with the

information they need to make meaningful use of the right to vote....Impressively researched, clearly written and organized, and enlightening throughout."--The Washington Post Book World

"A book that combines social science, journalism and commentary into a coherent argument about the way political advertising shapes--and distorts--political debate, and how the press could assist the process of keeping debate more honest."--The New York Times Book Review

"An illuminating primer about the dangerously subtle distortions of video politics....Jamieson acts as a no-nonsense tour guide, a stern educator seeking to tame a roomful of unruly children....In today's political environment, where powerful images surface and vaporize in seconds, where charges and rebuttals are sifted and shelved in the span of a day, Jamieson provides valuable ballast. She understands the art of the con."--The Philadelphia Inquirer

"Jamieson raises serious concerns about how both the candidates and the media have substituted sound-bite theatrics for substantive engagement with national issues....Should be required reading for candidates and commentators alike."--Booklist

"Dirty Politics pokes down into the mud of political journalism and thus helps aim us up to the clean rationality which democracy depends upon....This is a fine choice for voters who want to know what has actually been happening....And for journalists who see themselves as real professionals. this book is an essential."--James David Barber, Duke University, author of Politics by Humans

"A cogent and evenhanded summary...about the influence of TV on politicking."--Kirkus Reviews

"A welcome addition to the literature of political science....Keen insights and an incisive sense of what matters in a democracy."--KLIATT  
Other Books

Handbook on Politics and Public Opinion, Examining the nature of public opinion in democratic societies, this Handbook succinctly illustrates the importance of public opinion as an instrument of popular control and democratic accountability. Expert contributors in the field provide a thorough review of a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of this timely topic.

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