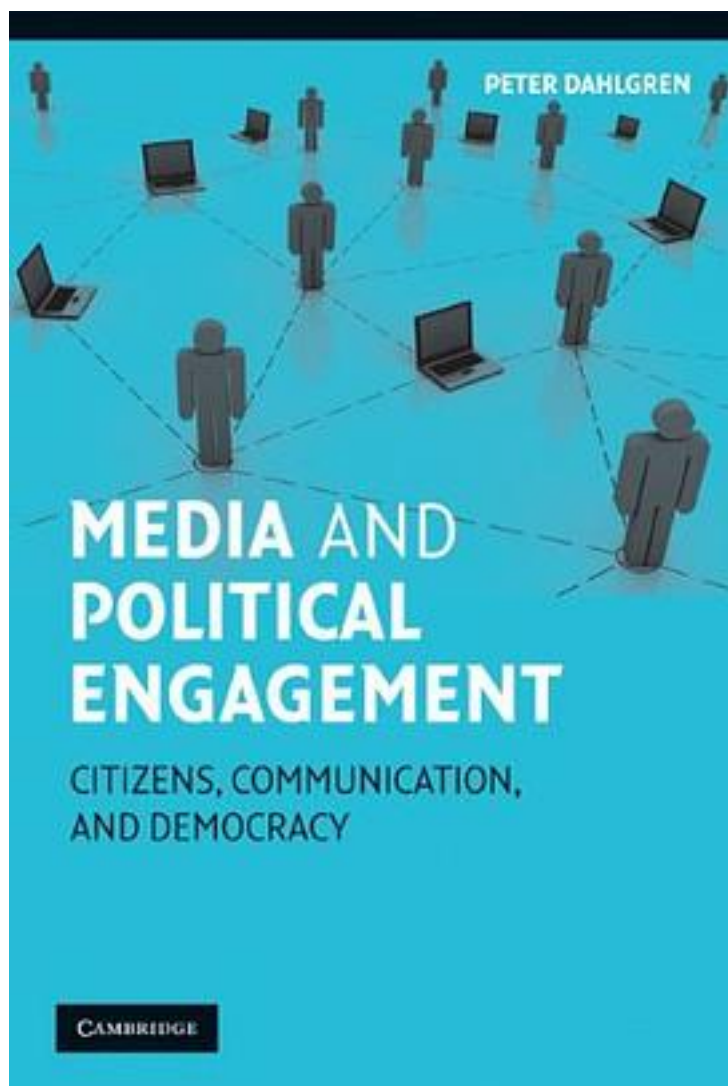


Media and Political Engagement



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Review

"Politics is an impolite topic at the dinner table; the news is sometimes superficial and often ignored; and citizens' interest in the traditional activities of democracy is on the wane. How did we get here? A new book by Peter Dahlgren...offers a more unified way to think about the variety of theoretical approaches to these problems. From social capital to identity politics, there are many ways to think about citizens' engagement and how media might play a role."

Rosanne M. Scholl, Louisiana State University, Political Communication

"The vision that civic engagement in a democracy will lead to a happier and better quality of life for more people is an article of faith. With an analysis that is sobering but also passionate, Peter Dahlgren offers good reasons for believing that such a vision remains desirable and obtainable, and he shows how contemporary media technologies and institutions are central to any meaningful pursuit of such a vision. But it is human agency and political will, not machines and bureaucratic structures, that are central to this hopeful vision. Media and Political Engagement is path-breaking in its demonstration of the profound nature of media institutions as political institutions."

-Andrew Calabrese, University of Colorado

"Every few years a book takes a complex debate to a new level. Dahlgren's Media and Political Engagement is one such book. Truly impressive in its scope, wise and forward-looking in its assessment of many tangled disputes in political theory and sociology, new media and popular culture, Dahlgren's book offers a convincing and original model of civic culture, articulating brilliantly the multiple cultural and social roots of political participation. By 'opening the gate', as he puts it, between standard definitions of 'politics' and 'non-politics', Dahlgren provides an essential foundation for sharper debate, across media studies, political science and political theory, on media's complex but fertile contribution to the life of democracy."

-Nick Couldry, Goldsmiths College, University of London

"Media have always had an ambivalent relationship to citizenship and democracy. Sometime promoters of democratic values, often purveyors of their opposite, the role of the press, radio, and television has been fraught. In this important book, Peter Dahlgren shows how the new media context has now changed the dynamics of how citizens use media to advance the democratic project. Brimming with sober analysis and relying on the latest empirical data, Dahlgren explores how the Internet has changed the nature of political engagement - perhaps forever. Far from lauding the Internet as an uncontested new agora, however, Dahlgren explores the paradoxical side of the new technology. The cautionary tone that marks this unsentimental study will inform students of politics and social activists alike."

-Marc Raboy, McGill University

Product Description

One of the most difficult problems facing Western democracy today is the decline in citizens' political engagement. There are many elements that contribute to this, including fundamental socio-cultural changes. The book summarizes these contexts and situates itself within them, while focusing on the media's key role in shaping the

character of civic engagement. In particular, it examines the new interactive electronic media in terms of their civic potential. Looking at the evolution of the media landscape, the book interrogates key notions such citizenship, public sphere, agency, identity, deliberation, and practice, and offers a multi-dimensional analytic framework called 'civic cultures'. This framework is then applied to several settings, including television, popular culture, journalism, the EU, and global activism, to illuminate the role of the media in deflecting and enhancing political engagement, as well as in contributing to new forms of political involvement and new understandings of what constitutes the political.

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