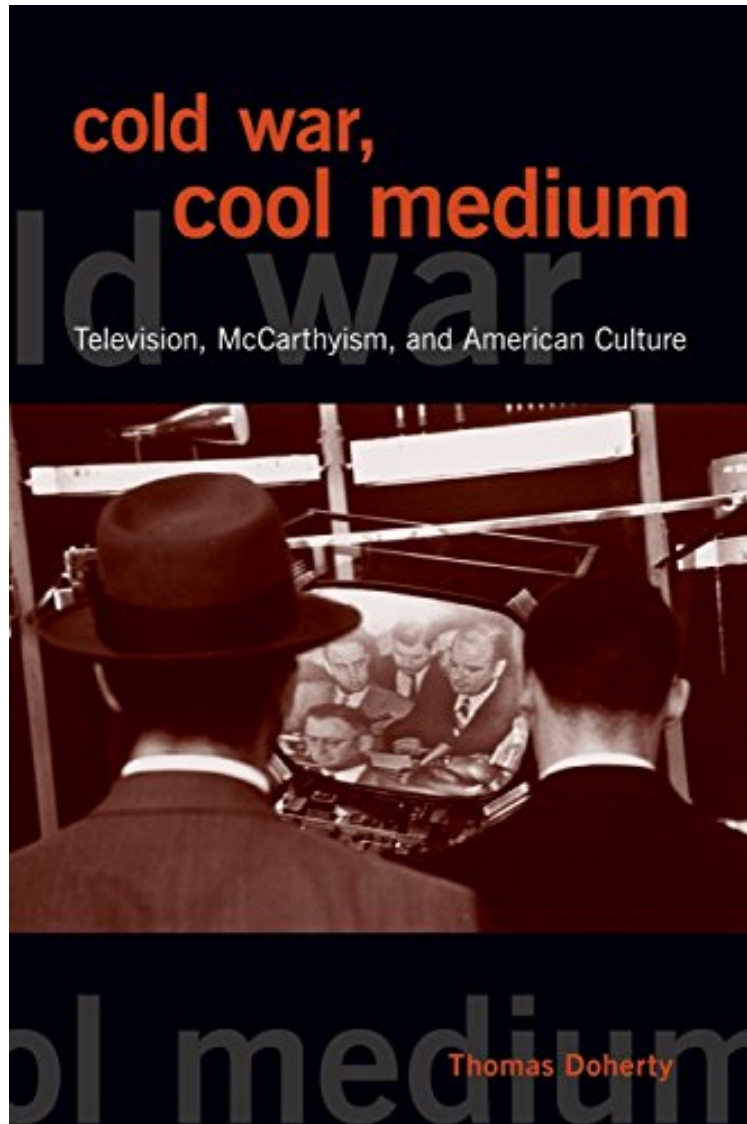


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Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture (Film and Culture)

Thomas Doherty

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Thomas Doherty : Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture (Film and Culture) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture (Film and Culture):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Deftly weaves a thread of McCarthyism through the fabric of early

televisionBy David GajThis is an insightful and elegantly-written book about a period of time in American history where popular myth often trumps actual events. The author sets the record straight in a painstakingly-researched work, bolstered by expert prose which is extremely entertaining in its own right, greatly enhancing the interesting subject which it covers.I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants a little more information and insight into many television firsts in the areas of politics, religion, and social affairs. Extremely enjoyable to read.1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great analysis of how TV changed the way we view politicsBy Marc W. SchneiderThe premise of the book is that TV was both complicit in the rise of McCarthyism and also a prime contributor to its downfall. The author shows how the blacklist was established and enforced in both the movie and TV industries and yet was also consistently undermined by the force of public opinion. For example, the discussion of how Lucille Ball-the star of the top-rated TV show "I Love Lucy"-was able to overcome suspicions of communist ties showed how TV could generate its own dynamic more powerful than a political movement. Moreover, while McCarthyism was largely about enforcing conformity in all aspects of American life, TV's need to appeal to the broadest segment of consumers undercut this to some extent by showing groups that had previously been marginalized.At the same time, the book shows that McCarthyism-a phenomenon that was larger than the Senator-was truly sinister. The kinds of things that were considered "unAmerican" expanded to include incredibly innocuous things. Basically, anything that cast any doubt on the wisdom, honesty, or fairness of American government or business became verboten in the hysteria over Communist influence. At the same time, the author is fair enough to recognize that actual communism as practiced in Eastern Europe was a dangerous ideology that restricted human freedom.In addition to this book, I would also recommend "The Culture of the Cold War" by Stephen J. Whitfield, which is referenced in this book.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four StarsBy LestweforgetterExcellent ... I learned so much. Some things never change.

Conventional wisdom holds that television was a co-conspirator in the repressions of Cold War America, that it was a facilitator to the blacklist and handmaiden to McCarthyism. But Thomas Doherty argues that, through the influence of television, America actually became a more open and tolerant place. Although many books have been written about this period, Cold War, Cool Medium is the only one to examine it through the lens of television programming. To the unjaded viewership of Cold War America, the television set was not a harbinger of intellectual degradation and moral decay, but a thrilling new household appliance capable of bringing the wonders of the world directly into the home. The "cool medium" permeated the lives of every American, quickly becoming one of the most powerful cultural forces of the twentieth century. While television has frequently been blamed for spurring the rise of Senator Joseph McCarthy, it was also the national stage upon which America witnessedand ultimately welcomedhis downfall. In this provocative and nuanced cultural history, Doherty chronicles some of the most fascinating and ideologically charged episodes in television history: the warm-hearted Jewish sitcom *The Goldbergs*; the subversive threat from *I Love Lucy*; the sermons of Fulton J. Sheen on *Life Is Worth Living*; the anticommunist series *I Led 3 Lives*; the legendary jousts between Edward R. Murrow and Joseph McCarthy on *See It Now*; and the hypnotic, 188-hour political spectacle that was the Army-McCarthy hearings. By rerunning the programs, freezing the frames, and reading between the lines, *Cold War, Cool Medium* paints a picture of Cold War America that belies many black-and-white clichés. Doherty not only details how the blacklist operated within the television industry but also how the shows themselves struggled to defy it, arguing that television was preprogrammed to reinforce the very freedoms that McCarthyism attempted to curtail.

Invigorating and wide-ranging scholarship... The heart of *Cold War, Cool Medium* is a lively and compelling retelling of the effect of McCarthyism on television. (Cineaste)[A] seriously intelligent history. (Library Journal)*Cold War, Cool Medium*, by Thomas Doherty, ranks as one of the seminal books ever written about the history of television and politics in the USA.....Doherty brilliantly challenges this conventional wisdom and indeed turns it upside down. He skillfully, systematically, and clearly demonstrates that early television helped the USA become a more tolerant nation, and provided for more open discussion. (Douglas Gomery *Television Quarterly*)Doherty's *Cold War, Cool Medium* earns its place as a subtle new map of America's politics during television's toddler years. It offers fine-grained images for television's political pontification and purifications from the late 1940s to mid-1950s.... For the study of this awkward period in America's television culture, it is hard to imagine a better text for discussions with students. Colleagues who lived in that era will read it with pained appreciation. (John Shelton Lawrence *Journal of American Culture*)fresh and important insights...an accurate and engrossing account for the nonspecialist, and its methodology provides a revealing context for the specialist as well (Brenda Murphy *The Journal of American History*)thoughtful and nuanced (Michael C. C. Adams *Film History*)Thomas Doherty's groundbreaking new volume, *Cold War, Cool Medium*, [is] a sweeping examination of the collision of television and McCarthyism, and one of the most searching looks at the intersection of popular and political culture in years. (Boston Globe)Doherty's excellent *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* [is] more timely than its title suggests.... [Doherty] has penned an engaging revisionist account of mass hysteria, forcefully arguing against critics who cast

television in its early days as a co-conspirator in conducting witch hunts and stifling dissent.... Doherty's history of the early political uses of television is never less than fascinating. (Reason Magazine)A witty, often riveting account of the simultaneous rise of television and McCarthy. (Film Comment)Explores TV's wonders and skillfully exposes the power of pressure groups on the new medium, which acted out the psychosis that dominated the 1950s. Relying on thorough and enlightening research, Doherty notes the ironies, anti-Semitism and class prejudices that underlined Senator Joseph McCarthy's ascension.... Doherty chronicles the medium and its players with style and scholarship. (Publishers Weekly)A wide-ranging, impressionistic portrait of the era... Mr. Doherty, a professor of American studies at Brandeis University and a noted film historian, deftly recaps this familiar story. (New York Observer)Doherty succeeds in illuminating both the history of television in the US in the 1950s and television's relationship to the era's anticommunist crusade.... this volume carefully examines the often-overlooked political side of 1950s television. Essential. (Choice)Cold War, Cool Medium is an excellent overview of television and American culture at a pivotal moment in United States history. It is also wittily written, with Doherty's sense of humour and irony coming through on nearly every page. (Jennifer Frost, University of Auckland Australasian Journal of American Studies)It is not only readable, enlightening and amusing, it does what all good books on the televisual Cold War should do: it can distinguish between hype and substance. (Adam Piette Journal of American Studies)Doherty delivers an enlightening and critical reassessment of television, culture, and politics in the early 1950's. (Michael Curtin American Historical)Cold War, Cool Medium is an engaging and complex account of US commercial television during the 1950's. (Megan Mullen Technology and Culture)[A] superbly written analysis of the link between the rise of American television and the fall of Senator McCarthy. (Vincent Brook American Studies)Cold War, Cool Medium is engagingly written, offering prose that is brimming with wit and insight. (Christine Becker Film Quarterly)About the AuthorThomas Doherty is a professor in the American studies department and chair of the film studies program at Brandeis University. He is the author of Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II; PreCode Hollywood: Sex, Immorality and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930-1934; and Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s, and is associate editor of the film journal Cinaste.