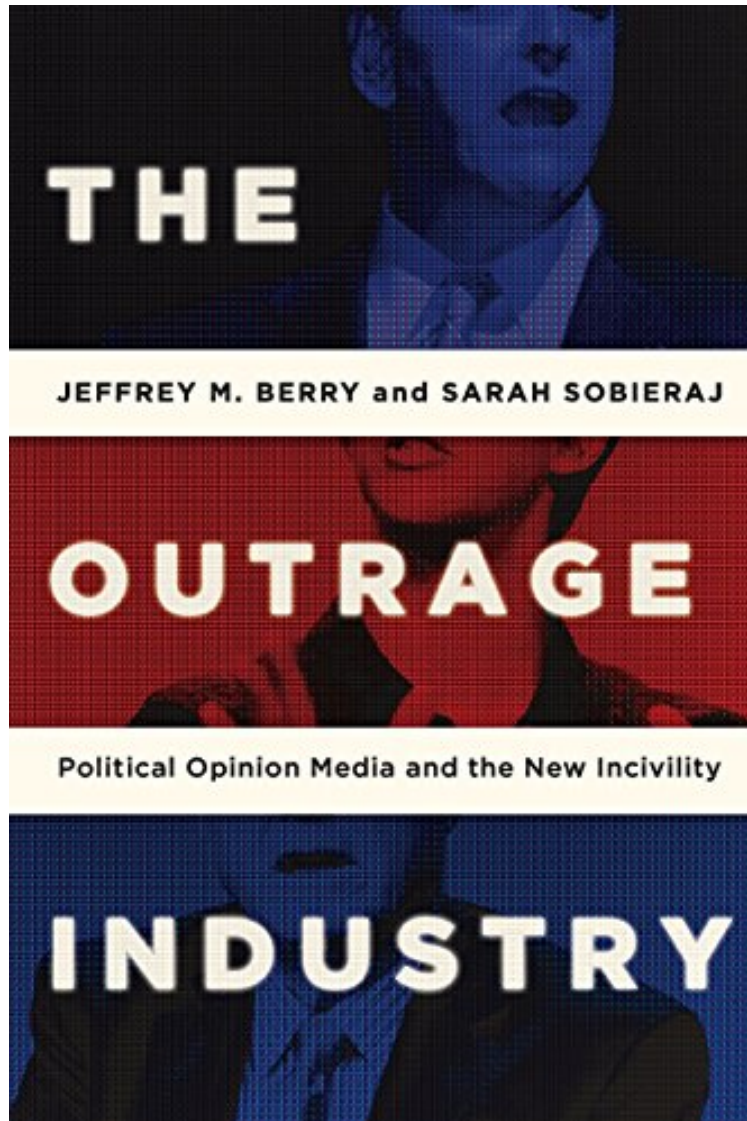


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The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility (Studies in Postwar American Political Development)

Jeffrey M. Berry, Sarah Sobieraj
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Jeffrey M. Berry, Sarah Sobieraj : The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility (Studies in Postwar American Political Development) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility (Studies in Postwar American Political Development):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. It Just OutrageousBy Randolph EckPolitical scientist Berry and sociologist Sobieraj have written an interesting book here on outrage in the media today. In the last twenty-five years, we have seen vitriolic commentary go from existing in small pockets to a new genre of political opinion, which the authors refer to as outrage. This genre is defined by several attributes: it is personality centered, it is ideologically selective, it is engaging, and it is marked by internal intertextuality. We can see the growth of the industry by just considering talk radio where there are now 3795 all-talk or all-new outlets in the U.S., which is triple the number of 15 years ago. The authors had discovered that the aggregate audience for this media is huge. The book covers three commercial sectors: cable, radio, and the blogosphere/newspapers, which as a group have outrage as their product, and this outrage is differentiated from incivility, where someone simply may not be treated with due respect. After careful analysis, we see that the rise in this behavior has been propelled by a synergistic confluence of economic, technological, regulatory, and cultural changes that converged to create a media environment that proved unusually nurturing for outrage-based content. This medium succeeds because each day new content is generated, and this is primarily outrage based, inexpensive to produce, and dramatic enough to cut through the clutter of alternatives, according to the authors. In Chapter 5, we learn about the camaraderie people develop with their hosts in the media. They come away feeling up to date on current events, and they now know what is really going on. Forget the mainstream media it cant be trusted they feel. These outlets bring reassurance that the fans insights are astute and their priorities are in order. In the next chapter, we discover what linkages may exist between this outrage media, advocacy groups, and political parties. Finally, the authors assess the Outrage Industrys impact on public policymaking. It seems it does have an impact. We definitely see an increase in polarization. From the 95th to the 104th Congress, among Republicans, moderates shrank from 33 percent to only 3 percent. I do have to point out that I tend to disagree with the authors selection of some of the candidates that they include in their selection of purveyors of outrage media. Some of the candidates exhibit significant outrage in their presentations while other display little to none, and perhaps those ones should not be included in the surveys. We do see some checks on the Outrage Industry via organizations such as Media Matters for America (liberal) and Media Research Center (conservative). And then theres the satire circuit with the likes of Jon Stewart and Steven Colbert. I think Colbert sums up why this outrage seems to work by expressing it as the quality by which one purports to know something emotionally or instinctively, without regard to evidence or intellectual examination.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Powerful Indictment of a National ScourgeBy Charles JacobsThe Outrage Industry is a book that needed to be written, and kudos go to the two authors whose extensive research and analysis is evident in the massive notes printed at the end of each chapter. They have done an outstanding job of defining outrage, clarifying its history and development and demonstrating its impact on our political institutions and on the individual voter. However, the book would have had a far greater impact on society and been more widely read if the two professors who authored it had employed a less academic presentation. I found the writing somewhat stilted at times. It was not easy reading, although I must point out that I enjoyed the final chapter that dealt with the future of outrage, and consider it the best written and most meaningful portion of the book. How valuable it would be if the average citizen who is so influenced by outrage was able to understand its motivations and its sponsorship by broadcast stations, producers and performers who are using invective, distortions and blatant untruths to make themselves rich. While total worth of the industry is impossible to calculate it ranges from radio to TV to bloggers to columnists, indeed to commentators of every medium earnings for participants range as high as Rush Limbaughs yearly income of \$60 million. The books authors must be congratulated for the manner in which they maintain a distinct nonpartisan posture, although forced to devote a large percentage of the text to the conservative and Republican outragers since these right wingers far outnumber the more liberal and progressive performers. That imbalance is not surprising since there has been a strong trend towards conservatism in the ownership of both the broadcast and the print press. Most upsetting to me is the fact that the vast increase in outrage in recent years has posed a threat to some of our most vital democratic practices, as the authors characterize the situation. They explain, At the individual level, outrage discourse may undercut our tolerance of other views and promote misunderstandings about public issues. At the institutional level, outrage is working to stigmatize compromise and bipartisanship, and undercutting the political prospects of more moderate voices. If you have any doubt of this, just watch our House of Representatives in action or is it inaction. One of the authors arguments that I do question is their contention that the best way to curb outrage is not through the court system, but instead to offer a greater choice of commentators to the public. I will heartily agree that we need more competent commentators, especially in broadcast journalism. But there must be a point at which the welfare of society and the fundamental principles of our nation cannot be compromised by an exaggerated concern for free speech. Unfortunately, this constitutional precept has become a handy tool for use by interests as diverse as politicians and gun advocates. Overall, I strongly recommend this fine book and urge others to read and digest it despite the few caveats that I expressed above. How helpful it would be if the fearsome five who sway the Supreme Court were to recognize the need for this balance when ruling on cases like Citizens United.

13 of 15 people found the following review helpful. An Excellent AnalysisBy Mary Bell LockhartThis is an excellent, more scientific and sociological analysis of "shock" radio, TV and blogging, on almost exclusively the conservative side of our political spectrum. Read this, then do more research into the history to find

answers to some of the questions they raise. For example, at one point they ask why shockers like Rush Limbaugh have such a large audience. Reading the history we find that they have large audiences precisely because they are being pushed onto us while alternatives have been eliminated. Radio networks have been bought by conservatives to put especially Limbaugh out there everywhere someone tunes in a radio. At one point in the book the authors say, "It is almost as if outrage media were designed by legislators for their own means." Historically that's exactly what happened! For example Fox News (sic) grew directly out of proposals submitted to President Nixon for a "GOP TV" by the same people who developed Fox. And as soon as the Tea Party raised its head it was taken over, manipulated, shaped, funded and promoted by the GOP and Fox News. Read about the strategy of debating called the "Gish Gallop" and you will see that method applied in "outrage media" today - talk a mile a minute, talk over others, change the subject repeatedly, demonize and devalue your opponent. There are some liberal media figures lumped in, perhaps for balance, but the authors may miss the point that when liberals have engaged in outrage it almost always is in response to outrage from the right. Ask what purpose the GOP has in the outrage and the answer is, as usual, "follow the money." They need supporters to vote for them and actively campaign so that GOP public policy will favor corporations, big banks, Wall Street and polluting industries. They can't campaign on that agenda, so they use outrage to garner support. The authors have exactly the right prescription for this malady, however. It's not restriction of outrage that will work best (the First Amendment is vitally important) but the addition of more alternatives, more media challenging directly the misrepresentation and ugliness of outrage.

In early 2012, conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh claimed that Sandra Fluke, a Georgetown University law student who advocated for insurance coverage of contraceptives, "wants to be paid to have sex." Over the next few days, Limbaugh attacked Fluke personally, often in crude terms, while a powerful backlash grew, led by organizations such as the National Organization for Women. But perhaps what was most notable about the incident was that it wasn't unusual. From Limbaugh's venomous attacks on Fluke to liberal radio host Mike Malloy's suggestion that Bill O'Reilly "drink a vat of poison... and choke to death," over-the-top discourse in today's political opinion media is pervasive. Anyone who observes the skyrocketing number of incendiary political opinion shows on television and radio might conclude that political vitriol on the airwaves is fueled by the increasingly partisan American political system. But in *The Outrage Industry* Jeffrey M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj show how the proliferation of outrage-the provocative, hyperbolic style of commentary delivered by hosts like Ed Schultz, Bill O'Reilly, and Sean Hannity- says more about regulatory, technological, and cultural changes, than it does about our political inclinations. Berry and Sobieraj tackle the mechanics of outrage rhetoric, exploring its various forms such as mockery, emotional display, fear mongering, audience flattery, and conspiracy theories. They then investigate the impact of outrage rhetoric-which stigmatizes cooperation and brands collaboration and compromise as weak-on a contemporary political landscape that features frequent straight-party voting in Congress. Outrage tactics have also facilitated the growth of the Tea Party, a movement which appeals to older, white conservatives and has dragged the GOP farther away from the demographically significant moderates whose favor it should be courting. Finally, *The Outrage Industry* examines how these shows sour our own political lives, exacerbating anxieties about political talk and collaboration in our own communities. Drawing from a rich base of evidence, this book forces all of us to consider the negative consequences that flow from our increasingly hyper-partisan political media.

"In politics, reason persuades but emotion motivates. This outstanding book offers a fine contribution to our understanding of how and why this form of communication achieves both goals." --The US Army War College Quarterly, *Parameters* "Jeffrey Berry and Sarah Sobieraj have written an important book about a phenomenon that has been a major contributor to partisan conflict and gridlock in Washington in recent years-the development of an increasingly hyperbolic, emotional and negative style of media commentary. *The Outrage Industry* will be must reading for anyone who wants to understand why our political system is so dysfunctional." --Alan Abramowitz, Alben W. Barkley Professor of Political Science, Emory University "Amidst a changing media landscape, we are fortunate to have Berry and Sobieraj as guides, mapping the terrain of an expanding media genre. This rich and compelling analysis of the production and consumption of outrage media is sure to inspire much-needed discussion about the politics of today's news media and stimulate new research on this powerful but understudied genre. *The Outrage Industry* is essential reading for media scholars and students, and for all those concerned about the future of journalism in the United States." --William Hoynes, Professor of Sociology and former Director of Media Studies, Vassar College "The *Outrage Industry* provides a thorough, revealing look behind the scenes of today's angry rhetoric and the networks and systems that make it tick. The book is admirably empirical, thorough, and nuanced, and it should be required reading for those trying to understand our political landscape, how we got here, and the role of media in building and reproducing political identities." --Andrew Perrin, Associate Professor of Sociology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill About the Author Jeffrey M. Berry is John Richard Skuse Professor of Political Science at Tufts University. Sarah Sobieraj is Associate Professor of Sociology at Tufts University.