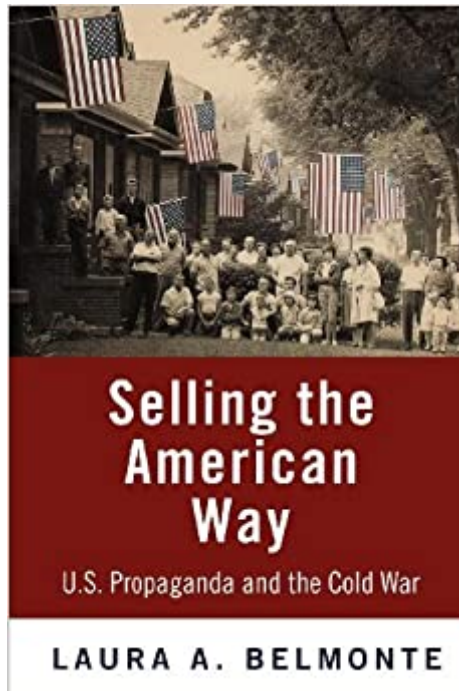




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Selling The American Way: U.S. Propaganda And The Cold War



Synopsis

In 1955, the United States Information Agency published a lavishly illustrated booklet called *My America*. Assembled ostensibly to document "the basic elements of a free dynamic society," the booklet emphasized cultural diversity, political freedom, and social mobility and made no mention of McCarthyism or the Cold War. Though hyperbolic, *My America* was, as Laura A. Belmonte shows, merely one of hundreds of pamphlets from this era written and distributed in an organized attempt to forge a collective defense of the "American way of life." *Selling the American Way* examines the context, content, and reception of U.S. propaganda during the early Cold War. Determined to protect democratic capitalism and undercut communism, U.S. information experts defined the national interest not only in geopolitical, economic, and military terms. Through radio shows, films, and publications, they also propagated a carefully constructed cultural narrative of freedom, progress, and abundance as a means of protecting national security. Not simply a one-way look at propaganda as it is produced, the book is a subtle investigation of how U.S. propaganda was received abroad and at home and how criticism of it by Congress and successive presidential administrations contributed to its modification.

Book Information

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: University of Pennsylvania Press (August 3, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0812221192

ISBN-13: 978-0812221190

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #407,946 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #119 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Propaganda & Political Psychology](#) #5801 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics](#) #18067 in [Books > History > Americas > United States](#)

Customer Reviews

"Belmonte has produced an invaluable contribution that should be examined by everyone interested in understanding public diplomacy and in building an effective public diplomacy campaign."
—*American Historical Review*
"Well researched and clearly written, *Selling the*

American Way is a welcome addition to a fast-growing body of literature on propaganda and the 'cultural Cold War.' "Journal of American History

Laura A. Belmonte is Associate Professor of History at Oklahoma State University.

Very even-handed discussion of the Cold War period, following WW II, and how the two nuclear powers dealt with what could have been a "hot" war, but wasn't due to the cleverly pitted propaganda programs of the two countries. The U.S. handled it by emphasizing individual freedom in writing, art and music as opposed to the U.S.S.R. which used governmental oversight and control of what was considered the "peoples' art. The interesting information in the book, which is not readily available, is the U.S. influence and promotion of various art forms, such as abstract expressionism and various musical forms through government financed programs and exhibits, as well as C.I.A. supported programs through Congressional government agencies. Well documented with citations, footnotes, and bibliography, the book is useful in reviewing how during the "cold war" art styles and artists were promoted by (sometimes) financial support of governments, which may have influenced art dealers, museums, and galleries over the 10-20 years of the cold war period.

School

"Selling the American Way" is on the ROROTOKO list of cutting-edge intellectual nonfiction. Professor Belmonte's book interview ran here as cover feature on April 14, 2009.

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