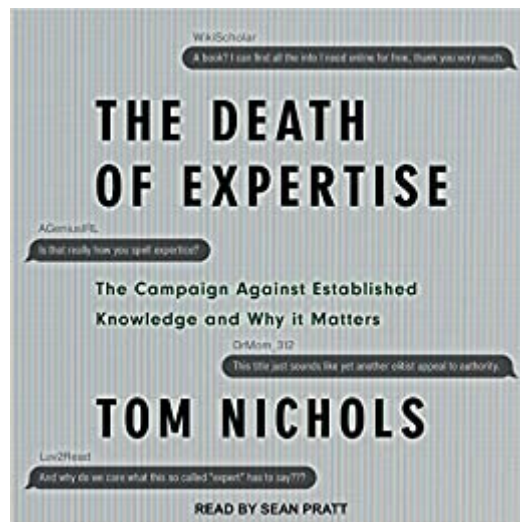




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The Death Of Expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge And Why It Matters



Synopsis

People are now exposed to more information than ever before, provided both by technology and by increasing access to every level of education. These societal gains, however, have also helped fuel a surge in narcissistic and misguided intellectual egalitarianism that has crippled informed debates on any number of issues. Today, everyone knows everything and all voices demand to be taken with equal seriousness, and any claim to the contrary is dismissed as undemocratic elitism. Tom Nichols shows this rejection of experts has occurred for many reasons, including the openness of the internet, the emergence of a customer satisfaction model in higher education, and the transformation of the news industry into a 24-hour entertainment machine. Paradoxically, the increasingly democratic dissemination of information, rather than producing an educated public, has instead created an army of ill-informed and angry citizens who denounce intellectual achievement. Nichols notes that when ordinary citizens believe that no one knows more than anyone else, democratic institutions themselves are in danger of falling either to populism or to technocracy-or in the worst case, a combination of both.

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Customer Reviews

"A sharp analysis of an increasingly pressing problem." ---Kirkus

Tom Nichols is Professor of National Security Affairs at the U.S. Naval War College, an adjunct professor at the Harvard Extension School, and a former aide in the U.S. Senate. He is also the author of several works on foreign policy and international security affairs. Sean Pratt, a working

actor for over twenty-five years, has performed at numerous regional theaters around the country. He is the author of *To Be or Wanna Be*, and he has recorded over seven hundred books in just about every genre, earning eight AudioFile Earphones Awards and four Audie Award nominations.

To become a dentist, I had to study for 4 years of college and another 4 years (40 hours/week) of dental school. Since graduation nearly 20 years ago, I have taken at least 1,500 hours of Continuing Education at my own expense. And yet, despite my best efforts to be an extraordinarily good dentist, I am now more aware than ever of how much more there is to learn and master. And that's in my own profession, in which people rely upon me as an expert! Nevertheless, every week I hear or read from people that they somehow know more than I do, because they "did their research online." A few years ago, I read Daniel Kahneman's remarkable book, *"Thinking, Fast and Slow."* While many of the studies in the book have now been called into question (an excellent illustration of one of Tom Nichols' sections about when experts are wrong), I still found it fascinating how I, a person with a graduate-level degree and extensive self-education through extensive reading, knew so very little about so much. I became aware of how easy it is to think that I know more than I do. It was quite humbling, which I need to remember more frequently in discussions on many topics. At least I am aware of how little I know, though. Sometimes. And I know that, even as an expert in my own field, I can make mistakes. How much do we see today, though, of people without any education or training or experience, claiming that their opinion is as valid as any expert, or dismissing experts as nothing more than "elites," as if that allows them to be ignored? In a time when our entire world is built around technology and knowledge and the experts who understand them, Americans are forgetting how that all happened. They are so ignorant of the knowledge and experience and understanding that exists, that they don't have a clue that they don't have a clue. Dunning-Kruger writ large. And it is slowly destroying democracy and our republic. Tom Nichols can only recommend what is key, and what even our Founding Fathers understood: the electorate must be an INFORMED electorate. The populace must understand enough to make the decisions to choose both smart experts (Knowers) and policymakers (Deciders) and understand the limits of each. The conclusion of Tom's book, if anything, offers little hope. Sadly, I agree. We both do hold out some hope, of course, but it will take a massive effort on the part of all sides. If it will happen, no one can predict, not even the experts. But without experts and policy makers who listen, and an educated, informed populace that helps choose and respect them.....I worry for the world of my children. HIGHLY recommended.

Tom Nichols' new work uses real life examples, wry wit, and a tailored understanding of our nation and our times to present the reader with a strong argument for why experts are more important than ever. A must read for those of all political persuasions who look at the country and wonder what happened.

I heard the author interviewed then ordered the book for Kindle...read it then had my wife order it in hardback. Have recommended it both friends and family. Extremely well-written and shares information and a perspective that fits current political and social reality.

Nichols' book is nothing short of a description of the end of western culture's tenacious hold on culture, education, and personal value. Without a respect for knowledge and wisdom western culture simply can't survive the narcissistic and shallow denial of expertise in any number of disciplines that have, for the better part of a thousand years, been the keystones of western civilization. I had particular interest in the author's description of modern education now being lobotomized by the need for outsized earnings and cowardly administrations bent on remaining inside of their academic cocoons aided and abetted by the Internet and the social justice movement. Without being dramatic, Mr. Nichols is sounding a clarion call to all that will listen that intellectual and practical knowledge as we know it, is at a tipping point, and that with no leader in sight to create a reformation western civilization will accelerate to an untimely end. "Man on the Street" interviews and the growing reluctance of the general public to have even polite discourse is reason enough for any intellectually curious person to read this book.

This book won't have you turning page after page to see what is next and I don't think it is meant to be read that way. Tom Nichols will be the first to tell you he is an educator first and there is a plethora of information to learn and absorb from this book. I am slacking on subscribing to a journal that I disagree with and if there is one thing you should take away from this book it is that you must educate yourself and stay educated and involved in your government, no matter what political spectrum you prefer.... And for the love of god stop watching hours upon hours of cable news.

In this book, Dr. Nichols, expertly dissects the factors, both cultural and technological, that have lead to what he refers to as a "Cult of Ignorance", where being uneducated and uninformed is not only acceptable, but celebrated. A must read if you want to have a grasp of the modern political and societal environment.

As a teacher of high school English (ret.), I can attest that Nichols got it right. The anti-intellectualism of populist America has brought us to the edge of a precipice. Convictions without evidence "trump" knowledge and experience now with a disturbing degree of regularity. We've seen this movie; it doesn't end well.

This is a very well argued and thoughtful book. A lot of criticism seems to be that there are a lot of experts who don't know what they're talking about, and yes that's correct. However the consensus of experts is far superior to a layman's anybody who doesn't get that doesn't live in the real world. That's why people don't work on their own automobiles for the most part. Yes there are bad auto mechanics but there are a lot more bad lay auto mechanics. In any case I thoroughly enjoyed this book, it's timing with the Trump election is right on spot. And this is something that people need to hear. All throughout this book there are valuable thoughts and insights, almost on every page. It's a thinking person's book and if you are a thoughtful person I highly recommend it.

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