

Critical theory and demagogic populism

By Paul K. Jones

DESCRIPTION

Populism is a powerful force today, but its full scope has eluded the analytical tools of both orthodox and heterodox 'populism studies'. This book provides a valuable alternative perspective. It reconstructs in detail for the first time the sociological analyses of US demagogues by members of the Frankfurt School and compares these with contemporary approaches. Modern demagoguery emerges as a key under-researched feature of populism, since populist movements, whether 'left' or 'right', are highly susceptible to 'demagogic capture'. The book also details the culture industry's populist contradictions - including its role as an incubator of modern demagogues - from the 1930s through to today's social media and 'Trumpian psychotechnics'. Featuring a previously unpublished text by Adorno on modern demagoguery as an appendix, it will be of interest to researchers and students in critical theory, sociology, politics, German studies, philosophy and history of ideas, as well as all those concerned about the rise of demagogic populism today.

ENDORSEMENT

'Ranging widely across the different intellectual contexts in which questions of populism and demagoguery have been debated since mid-century, Jones puts the critical theorists' work into fruitful conversation with fascinating interlocutors from David Riesman to Raymond Williams, from Gramsci to Laclau. He carefully elaborates his concepts and then tracks their nuances across political science, media and cultural studies, into the very fabric of the culture industry. This tour de force reveals untapped riches of critical theory for understanding not just an earlier historical moment but indeed the present resurgence of right-wing populism as well.'

Johannes von Moltke, Professor of German and Film, Media and Television, University of Michigan

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