

Cambridge University Press

0521621518 - Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920

Richard L. Kaplan

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## Politics and the American Press The Rise of Objectivity, 1865–1920

*Politics and the American Press* takes a fresh look at the origins of modern journalism's ideals and political practices. In particular, Richard Kaplan addresses the professional ethic of political independence and objectivity widely adopted by the US press. He shows how this philosophy emerged from a strikingly different ethic of avid formal partisanship in the early twentieth century.

The book also provides fresh insights into the economics of journalism and uses business papers and personal letters of publishers to explore the influence of competition, advertising, and an explosion in readership on the market strategies of the press. Kaplan documents the changes in political content of the press by a systematic content analysis of newspaper news and editorials over a span of 55 years. The book concludes by exploring the question of what should be the appropriate political role and professional ethics of journalists in a modern democracy.

RICHARD KAPLAN is Lecturer in the Sociology Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His work on media history has received the *Catherine Covert Prize* for best published article in *Mass Communications History* (1996). He has published in *Journalism History*; *Media, Culture, and Society*; and *American Journalism*.

Cambridge University Press

0521621518 - Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920

Richard L. Kaplan

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

# Politics and the American Press

*The Rise of Objectivity, 1865–1920*

---

Richard L. Kaplan



Cambridge University Press

0521621518 - Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920

Richard L. Kaplan

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK  
40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain  
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa  
<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Richard L. Kaplan 2002

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2002

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*Typeface* Plantin 10/12 pt *System* 3b2 [CE]

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Kaplan, Richard L. (Richard Lee), 1955–  
Politics and the American Press: the rise of objectivity, 1865–1920 / Richard L. Kaplan.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 62151 8 (hb.) ISBN 0 521 00602 3 (pb.)

1. Press and politics – United States – History – 19th century. 2. Press and politics – United States – History – 20th century. 3. Journalism – Objectivity – United States – History – 19th century. 4. Journalism – Objectivity – United States – History – 20th century. I. Title.

PN4888.P6 K37 2001

071'.3'09034 – dc21 2001025240 CIP

ISBN 0 521 62151 8 hardback

ISBN 0 521 00602 3 paperback

Cambridge University Press

0521621518 - Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920

Richard L. Kaplan

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

For my mother and father

Cambridge University Press

0521621518 - Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920

Richard L. Kaplan

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Contents

---

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page viii</i>
Introduction	1
1 Partisan news in the early Reconstruction Era: African-Americans in the vortex of political publicity	22
2 Economic engines of partisanship	55
3 Rituals of partisanship: American journalism in the Gilded Age	72
4 The two revolutions in urban newspaper economics, 1873 and 1888	104
5 1896 and the political revolution in Detroit journalism	140
Conclusion	184
<i>Methodological appendix</i>	200
<i>References</i>	204
<i>Index</i>	221

Cambridge University Press

0521621518 - Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920

Richard L. Kaplan

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## Acknowledgments

---

Debts, debts, debts. In writing this book, I have accumulated a heavy burden of debts. To the following people I am deeply grateful for their advice and support.

I am beholden to Michael Rogin whose lectures and writings inspired my explorations into American cultural history. To Ann Swidler I owe a special debt of gratitude for her impressive care and guidance as I began this project. She kibitzed and quibbled over many a detail, all the while recalling me to the larger issues at stake in this study. And I thank Kim Voss for her persistent concern with the nuts and bolts of sociology – the logic of argument and the methodology of research – and her always friendly smile.

I am obliged to the following sagacious media scholars for having read and commented on various parts of this book: Thomas Leonard, James W. Carey, Jon Cruz, and Michael Schudson. Colleagues and friends at the University of California, Berkeley spread their own version of moist, enriching fertilizer over this volume. Thanks particularly to Orville Lee, Lyn Spillman, Paul Lichterman, Arlene Stein, and Nina Eliasoph. Finally let me express my appreciation to Simonetta Falasca Zamponi – wife, cook, general caretaker, or should I rather say colleague, taskmaster, critic? Without her love and assistance doubtless this book would still be sitting on the desk a confused pile of notes and computer disks.

To my parents, Netta and Marvin Kaplan, I am permanently indebted for their special combination of caring hearts and critical minds. This book is dedicated to them.