



A Field Guide to the Culture Wars: The Battle over Values from the Campaign Trail to the Classroom (Religion, Politics, and Public Life)

By Michael McGough

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Like any realignment in politics, the Democratic takeover of Congress in the 2006 midterm elections inspired a raft of instant analyses. One take on the results that is surely wrong is that the change in control of Congress and the spike in Democratic hopes for the 2008 presidential race mark an end to the culture wars that conventional wisdom blamed (or credited) for George W. Bush's re-election in 2004. This book sets the stage for a new consideration of the contemporary culture wars by examining their antecedents—from the Scopes trial to Prohibition to the controversy over the Supreme Court's desegregation and school-prayer rulings to loyalty-oath battles of the 1950s to the pre- *Roe v. Wade* campaign to liberalize abortion laws. Even during times of supposed conformism, Americans have been presented with competing claims about what sort of culture this is and how and to what extent government should reflect, and police, values. The author covers such topics as same-sex marriage, stem cell research, intelligent design, and other hot button issues that are debated not just between the religious and secular, but more and more among the ranks of the religious themselves, where a religious left has emerged to counter arguments from the religious right. Anyone interested in the intersection of religion and politics, in the rise of the so-called moral majority, and in the current state of affairs with regard to values and public life in America will gain a better understanding from reading this book.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

The phrase *culture wars* has come to encompass the subjects, persons, and institutions involved in the more polarizing conflicts in American public values of recent decades. In typical discussions of the culture wars, such subject areas as religion, abortion, immigration, and education are well explained and balanced with an emphasis on recent decisions of the Supreme Court. McGough (senior editorial writer, *Los Angeles Times*) more often simply relates the content and development of antagonistic views in an evenhanded, if pat, presentation. His sketches of persons, foundations, and institutions that furnish the effort, ideas, and resources behind the debates are useful and set this volume apart from others like it. In keeping with the promise of a field guide, McGough includes the mission statements, funding sources, and issues for the most important liberal and conservative foundations. Many authors treat the same areas, but McGough's contribution is a usefully brief research tool.—Zachary T. Irwin, Pennsylvania State Univ., Erie
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Review

"The phrase culture wars has come to encompass the subjects, persons, and institutions involved in the more polarizing conflicts in American public values of recent decades. In typical discussions of the culture wars, such subject areas as religion, abortion, immigration, and education are well explained and balanced with an emphasis on recent decisions of the Supreme Court. McGough (senior editorial writer, *Los Angeles Times*) more often simply relates the content and development of antagonistic views in an evenhanded, if pat, presentation. His sketches of persons, foundations, and institutions that furnish the effort, ideas, and resources behind the debates are useful and set this volume apart from others like it." - **Library Journal**

"McGough, an experienced journalist, and series editor Mark Silk have produced a reliable guide to key issues, spokespersons, sources for financial support, and institutions where opposing positions in contemporary America's so-called culture wars get formulated and expressed. . . . In short, this book is a worthy supplement to James Davison Hunter's now classic *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (CH, May'92, 29-5401). . . . Recommended. Lower-level undergraduates and above; general readers." - **Choice**

"A senior editorial writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, McGough begins by identifying some of the specific issues that the religious right in the US have taken on as missions. They include American identity, separation of church and state, human origins, abortion, homosexuality, and stem-cell research. Then he describes the structure of the assault in terms of field marshals, philosophers, and financiers. Finally, he surveys some of the arenas; in addition to those mentioned in the subtitle, they include congress, courts, the arts, and church." - **Reference & Research Book News**

About the Author

MICHAEL MCGOUGH is senior editorial writer for the *LA Times*, writing about law, national security, politics and religion. Prior to joining *The Times*, McGough worked more than two decades for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. He has written for *Slate.com*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *The New Republic*, *Commonwealth*, and other publications.

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