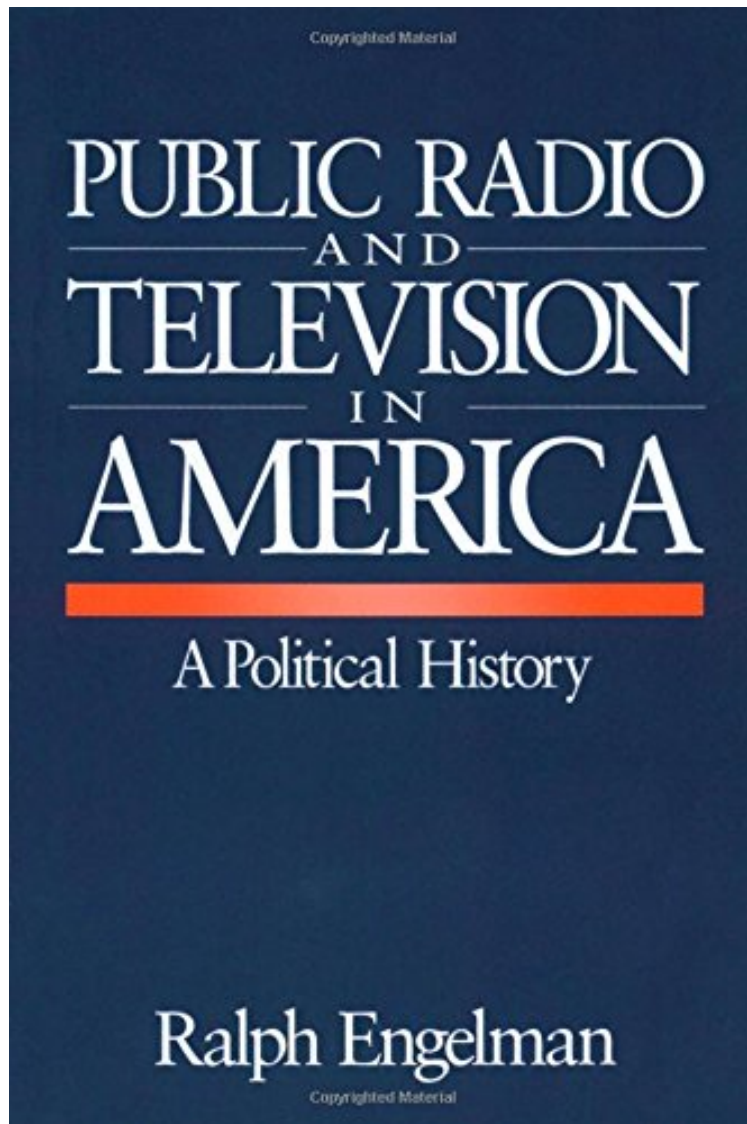


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Public Radio and Television in America: A Political History

Ralph Engelman

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Ralph Engelman : Public Radio and Television in America: A Political History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Public Radio and Television in America: A Political History:

The origins and evolution of the major institutions in the United States for noncommercial radio and television are explored in this unique volume. Ralph Engelman examines the politics behind the development of National Public Radio, Radio Pacifica and the Public Broadcasting Service. He traces the changing social forces that converged to launch and shape these institutions from the Second World War to the present day. The book challenges several commonly held beliefs - including that the mass media is simply a manipulative tool - and concludes that public broadcasting has an enormous potential as an emancipatory vehicle.

Engelman served on the national board of Pacifica, America's oldest noncommercial radio network, from 1973 to 1979. Perhaps because of that background, he is more attuned than most writers to public broadcasters who do not fit the standard NPR/PBS mode, such as independently licensed community radio stations or public-access channels on cable TV. For Engelman, "public" refers not just to state subsidies but to citizen participation--not just to city hall but to town square. "A fundamental distinction," he writes, "emerges between federal and community forms of public radio and television, with the former rooted in the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, the latter in more decentralized and participatory processes." His book aspires to be the story of both brands of broadcasting--not a path-breaking history rich with primary research but a synthesis of the many books and articles that preceded his. His book is also, one gathers, an attempt to defend these stations against the alleged Threat From The Right, i.e., Republican politicians' now-dormant efforts to defund the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. -- Reason, Jesse Walker