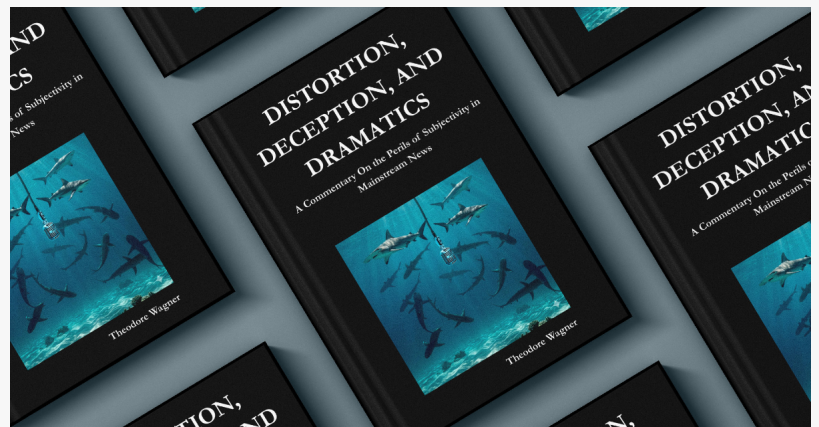


Theodore Wagner Debuts a Field Guide to Reading the News Critically: Distortion, Deception, and Dramatics

A public administrator's case for reading and watching the news with skepticism instead of giving up on it.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, July 17, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Theodore Wagner's new book makes an unfashionable argument: the answer to a press you don't trust is not to stop and turn away, but be more careful in the examination of information presented. In *Distortion, Deception, and Dramatics: A Commentary on the Perils of Subjectivity in Mainstream News*, he hands readers and viewers a set of practical tools for spotting emotional manipulation, catching what a story leaves out, and noticing when coverage is trying to condition a reaction rather than report a fact.



Cover of *Distortion, Deception, and Dramatics*

The book is aimed at people who have quietly given up on the news, tired of reporting that plays for drama and ratings. Wagner thinks that the instinct to disengage is understandable, yet wrong. His alternative is skepticism rather than cynicism: stay in the room, keep reading and watching mainstream journalism, but question it as you go.

The perspective is what makes the book unusual. Wagner is trained in public administration, and after years of studying how institutions behave and how the public takes in information, he approaches the press as exactly that, an institution with real power. Newsrooms set the agenda, decide what people should believe, and wield an influence that often escapes any real accountability. He follows that thread through the mechanics of modern coverage, from framing and ethics to statistics, algorithms, and artificial intelligence.

His central claim is that journalism has drifted from investigating toward performing. "Objective performance informs; manipulative performance provokes," Wagner says, and the line captures the whole book. The cost, he argues, is not just professional but human. Coverage routinely shames victims and people who turn out to be innocent, while handing serious offenders a

strangely flattering spotlight. "Responsible journalism is not just about accuracy," he adds. "The profession is about ethics, empathy, and tact, because the way stories evolve directly affects human lives."

For all that, the book refuses to write journalism off. Wagner believes readers can learn to follow the news better, and that the outlets willing to earn back trust can win their audiences back, too. He is not trying to pull people away from the news. He wants them to come back to it and ask harder questions.

Distortion, Deception, and Dramatics is now available on [Amazon](#).

About the Author

Theodore Wagner holds a Master's degree in Public Administration from National University and a Bachelor's degree in Management from Ottawa University. He deliberately keeps his own profile out of the book so the focus stays on the reader's experience rather than the author's.

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