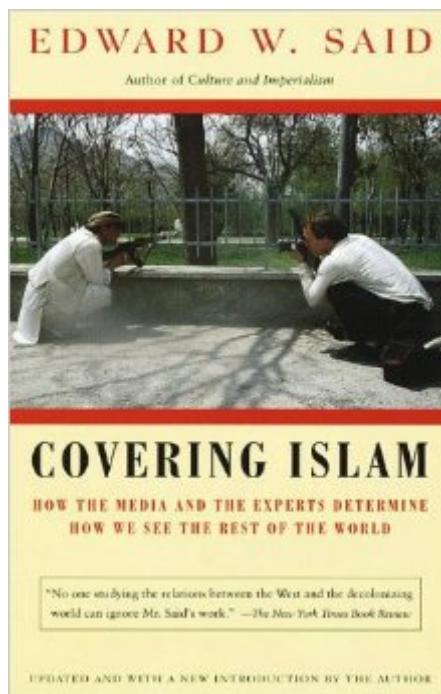


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# Covering Islam: How The Media And The Experts Determine How We See The Rest Of The World



## Synopsis

From the Iranian hostage crisis through the Gulf War and the bombing of the World Trade Center, the American news media have portrayed "Islam" as a monolithic entity, synonymous with terrorism and religious hysteria. In this classic work, now updated, the author of *Culture and Imperialism* reveals the hidden agendas and distortions of fact that underlie even the most "objective" coverage of the Islamic world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is one of the most intelligent and thought-provoking books I've ever read. The gist of Said's argument is that academic studies of the Muslim world are (like all academic studies) influenced by the culture that produces them. Because the first Westerners to study Islamic culture came from colonial powers, they tended to view things through colonialist, ethnocentric eyes. Although the United States has never had colonial ambitions in the Middle East, we've inherited many of those European attitudes. More importantly, because Middle Eastern studies in American universities lead so many people into careers as government consultants, or oil company employees (and because so much of the funding comes from government and oil companies), those studies usually do not focus on Muslim culture as something of interest and value in and of itself, but are concerned rather with how it relates to American power and business interests. We are not concerned, in other words, with how an institution in an Islamic country effects the local people, but only with whether it makes them more or less pro-American. According to Said, American journalists, who tend not to know the languages, or much about the culture of the places they report from, rely on such slanted academic

studies for their understanding of the Islamic world, and allow it to color almost everything they write. As a result, reporting from Islamic countries is not only shallow, but often filled with insults and ethnic slurs that no editor would accept if the reporter were writing about any other group of people.

Some reviewers have criticized this book for wanting to cover up racism, misogyny and religious persecution in Muslim countries. This is completely false. Said is challenging the notion that because some Muslims are bad that Islam is inherently bad. One would not say Christianity was inherently bad even though Christian America once had legal slavery, lynching, denied women equal rights, locked Japanese Americans up in concentration camps, and persecuted the Irish, Italians, Mormons, Jews, and Chinese etc. The media does not blame oppression, misogyny, crime, poverty, extremist movements or racism in Peru, Mexico, Russia, Japan, and South Africa etc. on the predominant religion. Media bias is helping to spread negative stereotypes of all Muslims. For example, after 9/11 a few hundred Palestinians celebrated and it was shown all over the American media. Yet a million Palestinians held 5 minutes of silence in honor of the victims but this got no media coverage. ProOsama protests got huge media coverage, but the tens of thousands of Muslims around the world who held memorials were largely ignored. Muslim leaders and clerics all over the world condemned the attack but got little or no press. The problem is the Cold War is over and the media is looking for another bogeyman. Another problem is that many American journalists don't know any Muslims, so they also write and portray things based on their own stereotypes. For example, if a study came out that 50% of Kuwaiti women are victims of domestic violence, the article would more than likely mention that Kuwait is a Muslim country. Yet if 50% of South African women were victims of domestic violence the predominant religion (Christianity) would not come up in the article.

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