Alternative Media Meets Mainstream Politics: Activist Nation Rising is an edited collection that focuses on the growing intersection between mainstream political communication and alternative media. It highlights the increasing influence of alternative media, on the political participation of audiences, on mainstream political news, and on the shaping of mainstream political communication. It is part of the Lexington Studies in Political Communication series, which aims to examine the functions and roles of communication in the realm of politics.

According to co-editor Joshua Atkinson’s Introduction, the book is structured to consider alternative media through two separate lenses – as entertainment and as a participatory media. Entertainment alternative media are defined as those that provide news, commentary and political analysis that, for the most part, are grounded in particular ideological positions. They promote a sociological model of participation where ‘the audience feels empowered because of the new insights that they gain from their choices of media’ (p.16). Participatory alternative media, on the other hand adhere to a political model of participation by enabling audiences to take part in the production of content in ways that entertainment alternative media do/can not. Furthermore, Alternative Media Meets Mainstream Politics draws attention to two distinct aspects of alternative media studies that Atkinson claims have been overlooked and/or trivialised in the scholarly literature thus far; the appearance of alternative media producers as commentators in mainstream media products, and commentary in alternative media publications about mainstream/popular culture topics.

A significant point of difference for this edited collection is the (very) heavy emphasis placed on alternative media of the right, despite the neutrality of its title. Atkinson makes the point that ‘alternative media have largely become synonymous with activism’ (p.1), an integral component for pushing back against dominant power structures in society, and, as expanded on by Jennifer Rauch in Chapter One, commonly associated with the progressive left. In fact, Rauch’s chapter – which sets the scene for the rest of the collection – ‘aims to inspire and provide a foundation for more research’ (p.19) into the domain of regressive and right-wing media. Likewise, Atkinson’s ‘Introduction’ draws on Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential election in the United States to demonstrate the ways in which right-wing alternative media are becoming increasingly influential on mainstream political communication and contemporary democratic societies. Elsewhere, in a chapter Atkinson co-authored with Suzanne Berg, the authors claim scholarship concerning alternative media is flawed when it focuses on politically liberal content leaving scholars ‘oblivious to many of the political realities today’ (p.67).
Following the ‘Introduction’ from Atkinson, Rauch’s chapter establishes the book’s overall tone with a comparison of conservative and progressive alternative media audience attitudes towards journalism. *Alternative Media Meets Mainstream Politics* is then presented in three parts headed (i) Entertainment Alternative Media and Political Parties, (ii) Entertainment Alternative Media and Mainstream Political News and (iii) Participatory Alternative Media and Emancipatory Possibilities. Each part comprises an introductory chapter written by co-editor Atkinson, followed by a collection of essays from a range of authors including scholars and students, mostly based in the United States but also New Zealand, Sweden and Spain. The vast majority of case studies used throughout hail from the United States, to the point that some chapters assume this knowledge. Readers who are less familiar with the political landscape of North America may struggle to follow the narrative of the more localised case studies and examples.

There is not the space in this review to discuss each individual chapter, however, generally the emphasis of content is strongly weighed towards entertainment alternative media, with only two chapters describing participatory media outlets, despite the attention given to this categorisation in the introduction. A series of chapters examine relationships between (mostly) right-wing media (such as Breitbart, Tea Party at Perrysberg and RedState) and political campaigns in the United States, be that through influencing media narratives or directly affecting government policy decisions. Part ii presents a wider range of examples, including a chapter on satirical news as alternative journalism by Kevin Howley that questions what alternative media studies have to say about the increasingly prominent role played by satire, parody and irony in contemporary political communication. Demonstrating the variety of contributions, Linus Andersson takes a very different approach in his chapter, ‘Mainstream Coverage of Alternative Media’, which analyses the Swedish mainstream press to reveal a shift, post 2010, towards identifying ‘alternative media as belonging to the extreme and populist right’ (p.149).

*Alternative Media Meets Mainstream Politics* is dominated by the work of Joshua Atkinson, who provides the introductions for each of its sections (four in total) and co-authors another two chapters. Attention is given to the ongoing (and seemingly never-ending) debates around how alternative media should/can be defined and described, and Atkinson draws on his previous work from 2017 to state, ‘(b)y embracing all of these definitions, or accepting them in part, modern scholars are able to cast the widest net possible’ (p.7). Some scholars may find it difficult to assimilate certain choices of case study into formats they would constitute as alternative media. For example, the chapter ‘Activist Speak at the Republican Debates’ includes The Rush Limbaugh Show in its analysis with the justification that ‘the program can be considered to be alternative because it is often interpreted to be such by listeners’ (p.88). Considering The Rush Limbaugh Show is syndicated through Premiere Networks, one of the largest syndication companies, if not the largest, in the United States and a wholly owned subsidiary of iHeartMedia, this definition may be considered a long stretch of the discipline’s bow. That being said, *Alternative Media Meets Mainstream Politics* has challenged some of my own assumptions about what does, and does not constitute alternative media, and highlighted the potential value of increased scholarly attention on right-wing media, regardless of how we choose to categorise it.