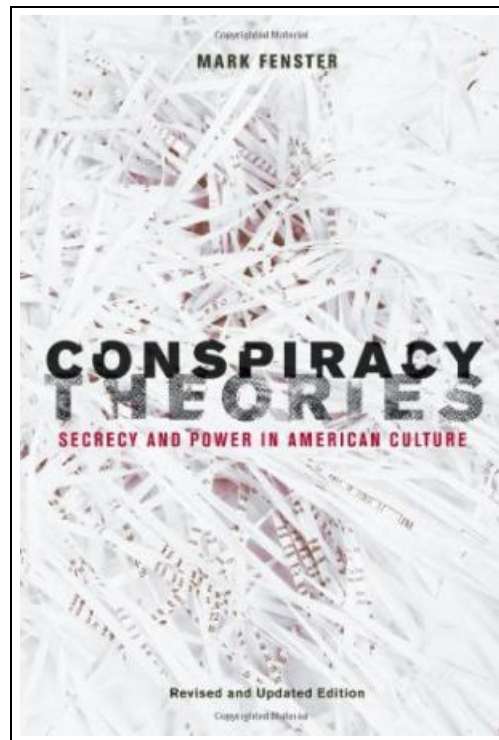


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Univ Of Minnesota Press. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 400 pages. JFK, Karl Marx, the Pope, Aristotle Onassis, Queen Elizabeth II, Howard Hughes, Fox Mulder, Bill Clinton-all have been linked to vastly complicated global (or even galactic) intrigues. In this enlightening tour of conspiracy theories, Mark Fenster guides readers through this shadowy world and analyzes its complex role in American culture and politics. Fenster argues that conspiracy theories are a form of popular political interpretation and contends that understanding how they circulate through mass culture helps us better understand our society as a whole. To that end, he discusses Richard Hofstadter's *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, the militia movement, *The X-Files*, popular Christian apocalyptic thought, and such artifacts of suspicion as *The Turner Diaries*, the *Illuminatus!* trilogy, and the novels of Richard Condon. Fenster analyzes the conspiracy community of radio shows, magazine and book publishers, Internet resources, and role-playing games that promote these theories. In this world, the very denial of a conspiracy's existence becomes proof that it exists, and the truth is always out there. He believes conspiracy theory has become a thrill for a bored subculture, one characterized by its members' reinterpretation of accepted history, their deep cynicism about contemporary politics, and their longing for a utopian future. Fenster's progressive critique of conspiracy theories both recognizes the secrecy and inequities of power in contemporary politics and economics and works toward effective political engagement. Probing conspiracy theory's tendencies toward scapegoating, racism, and fascism, as well as Hofstadter's centrist acceptance of a postwar American consensus, he advocates what conspiracy theory wants but cannot articulate: a more inclusive, engaging political culture. Mark Fenster received his Ph. D. in communication from the University of Illinois and his law degree from Yale University. He currently lives in Denver. Excerpt: Ultimately, I want...

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