



In Defense of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns (Studies in Communication, Media, and Public Opinion)

John G. Geer

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Americans tend to see negative campaign ads as just that: negative. Pundits, journalists, voters, and scholars frequently complain that such ads undermine elections and even democratic government itself. But John G. Geer here takes the opposite stance, arguing that when political candidates attack each other, raising doubts about each other's views and qualifications, voters—and the democratic process—benefit.

In Defense of Negativity, Geer's study of negative advertising in presidential campaigns from 1960 to 2004, asserts that the proliferating attack ads are far more likely than positive ads to focus on salient political issues, rather than politicians' personal characteristics. Accordingly, the ads enrich the democratic process, providing voters with relevant and substantial information before they head to the polls.

An important and timely contribution to American political discourse, *In Defense of Negativity* concludes that if we want campaigns to grapple with relevant issues and address real problems, negative ads just might be the solution.

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