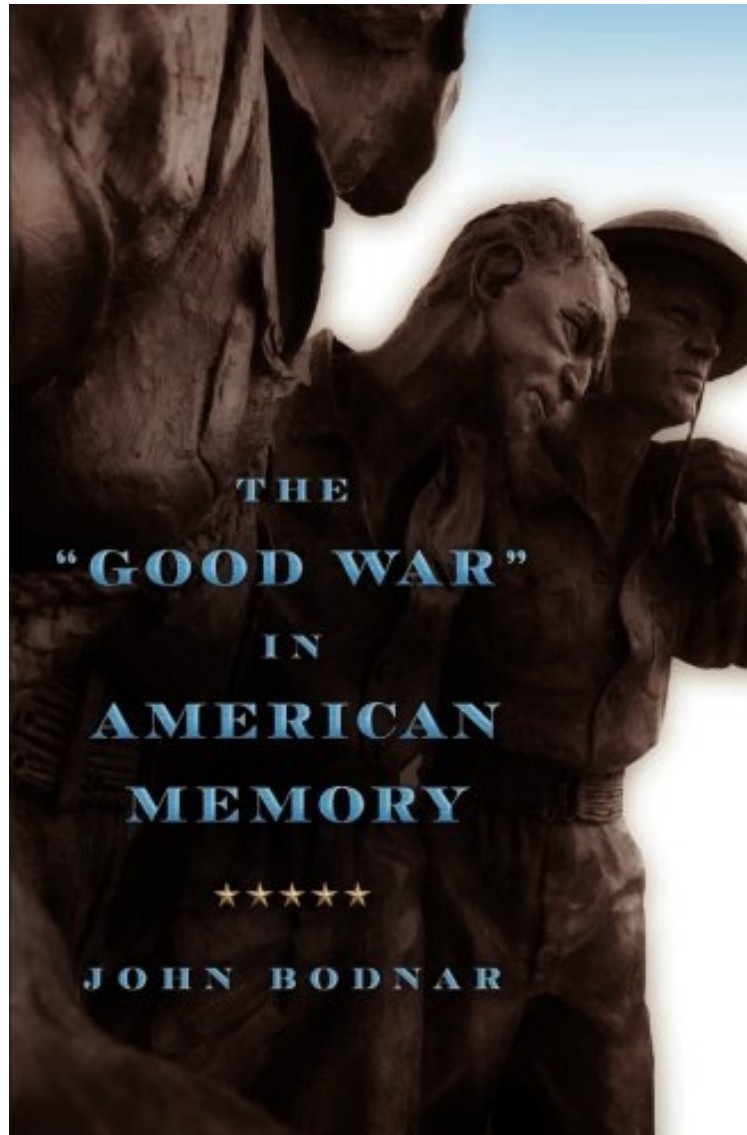


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The "Good War" in American Memory

John Bodnar

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The "Good War" in American Memory dispels the long-held myth that Americans forged an agreement on why they had to fight in World War II. John Bodnar's sociocultural examination of the vast public debate that took place in the United States over the war's meaning reveals that the idea of the "good war" was highly contested. Bodnar's comprehensive study of the disagreements that marked the American remembrance of World War II in the six decades following its end draws on an array of sources: fiction and nonfiction, movies, theater, and public monuments. He identifies alternative strands of memory—tragic and brutal versus heroic and virtuous—and reconstructs controversies involving veterans, minorities, and memorials. In building this narrative, Bodnar shows how the idealism of President Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms was lost in the public commemoration of World War II, how the war's memory became intertwined in the larger discussion over American national identity, and how it only came to be known as the "good war" many years after its conclusion.

"The comprehensiveness and scope of Bodnar's research makes [The 'Good War' in American Memory] a fine addition to an expanding body of work that seeks to complicate a consensus view of the war and that work toward a polysemic understanding of the past." (Andrew Salvati Jhistory, H-Net s)"This engaging and well-written book addresses not just World War II but has implications for war remembrance more generally. Bodnar's analysis speaks powerfully to how cultures of nationalism and of war can become challenged amidst the heartbreak of massive death—and then to how easily such challenges may be forgotten and displaced by heroic narratives." (Emily S. Rosenberg Cercles)"Bodnar provides a corrective lens for those whose recent myopia accepts the celebratory effect of... traditional treatments of American participation in World War II... What Bodnar has adamantly recovered is the faded suffering of family members whose loved ones were buried overseas or never found, and the memories of veterans who could not escape the confusion and frustration." (Michael Kammen Journal of American History)"Show[s] movingly and with great care how the history of emotion is embedded in the history of war and point[s] the way to future scholarship with authority and conviction. That is no mean achievement." (Jay Winter American Historical)"This is an outstanding book that reminds historians that today's memory may be shaped by a longing for a past that may not have existed. It is an excellent analysis of mixed messages and is highly recommended." (Journal of America's Military Past)"The "Good War" in American Memory is a welcome addition to the literature on war and memory. It synthesizes the work of many other scholars but also draws upon John Bodnar's particular sensitivity to the workings of American culture. It deserves a wide readership." (Andrew J. Huebner Register of the Kentucky Historical Society)"A stimulating and cogent account which offers an illuminating and complex picture of how Americans have remembered a war that not all of them believed was entirely 'good'." (Steven Casey War in History)From the Back CoverPraise for John Bodnar's Blue-Collar Hollywood"An uncommonly well balanced account of the political biases of American movies... A fine read for the generalist yet a scholarly achievement." ?Choice"You cannot but be seduced and even sometimes bedazzled by Bodnar's clear, well-informed and impartial analysis." ? Cercles"Bodnar provides a useful provocation. He asks us to think imaginatively about the subtle and complex ways movies communicate ideas and attitudes." ? Journal of American History"Open minded and even handed, he appreciates the nuances and mixed messages of Hollywood cinema." ? American Historical | The "Good War" in American Memory dispels the long-held myth that Americans forged an agreement on why they had to fight in World War II. John Bodnar's sociocultural examination of the vast public debate that took place in the United States over the war's meaning reveals that the idea of the "good war" was highly contested."This engaging and well-written book addresses not just World War II but... war remembrance more generally." ? Cercles"Bodnar provides a corrective lens for those whose recent myopia accepts the celebratory effect of... traditional treatments of American participation in World War II... What Bodnar has adamantly recovered is the faded suffering of family members whose loved ones were buried overseas or never found, and the memories of veterans who could not escape the confusion and frustration." ? Journal of American History"Show[s] movingly and with great care how the history of emotion is embedded in the history of war and point[s] the way to future scholarship with authority and conviction. That is no mean achievement." ? American Historical About the AuthorJohn Bodnar is the Chancellor's Professor of History and the director of the Institute for Advanced Study at Indiana University. He has authored or edited nine other books, including Blue-Collar Hollywood: Liberalism, Democracy, and Working People in American Film, also published by Johns Hopkins. (D. Colt Denfeld The Journal of America's Military Past)