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Extremist Groups: Information for Students (Review)

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The history, philosophy, and motivation of 150 extremist groups from around the world are discussed and described in this guide for students. The organizations, from 17 November Organization in Greece to the Zapatista Army of National Liberation in Mexico, range from local political activist groups and special-interest groups to international terrorist organizations. Most of the groups are active today and were selected because they "represent the broad spectrum and global diversity of agendas and tactics."

Entries are arranged alphabetically, and each includes six elements: "Overview;" "History;" "Philosophy and Tactics;" "Other Perspectives" (discussing how governments, other groups, and individuals have reacted); "Summary" (describing leaders and activities); and "Sources." Many entries also include sidebars with basic facts, key events, and time lines in the group's history; black-and-white photos; and primary sources, which are reprinted from news sources, papers, and publications of nonprofit and governmental organizations.

Supplementary material includes a list of sources consulted, a glossary, a compendium of acronyms used in the book, and an index. The index lists personal, organizational, and country names; acronyms; and subject terms, with references to main entries in boldface. Indexing by region or country and type of extremist group would have been helpful.


Christine Ammer acknowledges in the preface to this second edition of her dictionary of clichés that it may seem oxymoronic for her to speak of updating a dictionary of clichés by adding new clichés. But of course every cliché is new at some blurry point along a time line, just as others gradually fall out of favor. Thus, as a linguist whose concern is current usage, Ammer has not added new ones (new in the sense of having recently become established as clichés) but she has culled and discarded many older clichés—such as "alas and alack" and "blot one's copybook"—that appeared in the first edition but that are rarely seen or heard nowadays.

Taking the long view of the historian, Ammer regards a collection such as hers as giving form to "the particularity of an era's attitude." A pointed example is drawn from the testimony of a young soldier pressed by her comrades to participate in harassment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Her response, when agreeing to join in, was "OK. Whatever." This example, along with several others, appears in the entry for whatever, which Ammer says is "one of the most recent additions to clichédome," noting, too, that it is used very loosely. Her own definition—"in any case; anything goes; as you wish"—is certainly adequate, though it hardly accounts for the word being sometimes "irk some, and even incendiary, as well as nonchalant." In this connection, she adds the actor Russell Crowe's assault on a hotel clerk who uttered the word with a greater measure of disrespect than Crowe thought appropriate. (It's an absolute delight to find such matters brought up in discussing meaning and usage.) The thoroughness of this entry is typical of the whole, and the same thoroughness may be found in the indexing, which permits both phrasal and keyword searches. Recommended for all libraries wanting to keep their collection of English-language resources current.—Harold Cordy


Movies and television are fascinating subjects, but it is difficult to find information about them in one place. That need is met by this guide, which is an annotated and comprehensive list of print and electronic sources. As stated in the introduction, the guide is intended as a starting point for researchers and complements a similar work in the Reference Sources in the Humanities series on journalism and mass communication. It covers film and television from the earliest days to 2004 for print and 2005 for Web sites. Author Emmons was inspired by Kim Fisher's On the Screen: A Film, Television, and Video Research Guide (Libraries Unlimited, 1986).

The guide is arranged in 14 chapters covering types of resources, such as "Indexes and Bibliographies," or topics, such as "Fans and Audience." Each chapter has a number of subdivisions. For example, chapter 6, "Genres," has sections on categories ranging from game shows to war films. The entries are numbered consecutively from 1 to 1,244, and each includes a citation to the print source or Web site, followed by a paragraph-long annotation. The annotations are both descriptive and critical. Six appendices cover Library of Congress and Dewey decimal subject headings and classifications. Two indexes, one of authors and titles and one of subjects, complete the work.

The only section that has some definite omissions is "Worst," in chapter 4 ("General Film and Television Filmographies"), which fails to