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- Policies
- Call for Papers
- Submission Guidelines

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Book Review: Chris Hedges, Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and The Triumph of Spectacle

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[Herb Hirsch](#)

Abstract

At first glance, a book that is a critical analysis of US culture might appear not be relevant to the study and prevention of genocide. This would be a profound mistake. Chris Hedges' analysis is not only applicable but important. Hedges, author of the National Book Critics Circle–nominated *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (2002), has given those who consider themselves genocide scholars much to think about and to apply to their concerns. With the possible exception of chapter two, "The Illusion of Love," he digs into modern American culture and casts a critic's glare on what is wrong and how it might eventuate in possible violations of human rights or even genocide. By way of reviewing his argument, I will attempt to spell out these connections.

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Chris Hedges argues that we now live in two societies: one, the minority, functions in a print-based, literate world, able to cope with complexity and to separate illusion from truth. The other, a growing majority, is retreating from a reality-based world into one of false certainty and magic. In this "other society," comforting, reassuring images, fantasies, slogans and a celebration of violence push reality, complexity and nuance to the margins. The illusion of literacy -- The illusion of love -- The illusion of wisdom -- The illusion of happiness -- The illusion of America. Notes. Obscured text on front cover, leaf# 0002 and 0247 due to sticker and adhesive tape. There are no reviews yet. Be the first one to write a review. 235 Previews. 13 Favorites. Chris Hedges. I disagree with those who dismiss this book, however erudite their claims. The author first impressed me with *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America*. + *Illusion of Wisdom*. This is a great slam on the universities and their combination today of militarization, commercialization, and nihilism. I have reviewed several books in this area, see those reviews for additional support for the author's thesis. We are creating drones that perform to standard and cannot think for themselves. The author is compelling in discussing how specialists are illiterate and disconnected from reality as well as all the adjacent disciplines. The author lays the blame for our economic and political collapse directly on the universities and their sacrificing of the h

The Amazon Book Review Book recommendations, author interviews, editors' picks, and more. Read it now. click to open popover. "Each chapter of *Empire of Illusion* makes a strong case for how different illusions...taken together are destroying the American mind, culture and the nation itself."—National Post. About the Author. Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist. He spent nearly two decades as a correspondent in Central America, the Middle East, Africa, and the Balkans, with fifteen years at the New York Times. He is the author of numerous bestselling books, including *Empire of Illusion*; *Death of the Liberal Class*; *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*; and *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*, w