

# Imaging Hoover Dam: An Interview with UMass Professor and Writer Anthony Arrigo

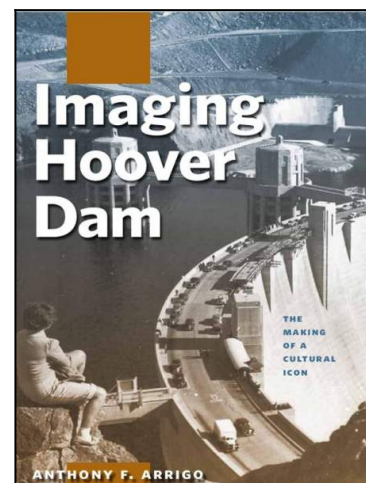


*The Hoover Dam was built between 1931 and 1936.*

Many know about the Hoover Dam – it's one of our most famous landmarks and public works projects. Right on the border between Nevada and Arizona, on the Colorado River it sits funneling tons of water through itself, turning the rush of the river through its turbines into power for millions. One question you may be asking yourselves at this point though, is what does this huge amalgamation of steel and concrete on the other side of the nation has to do with Southeastern Massachusetts?

Well the short answer is, not much except for the new book written by one of UMass Dartmouth's professors, Anthony Arrigo. The book called *Imaging Hoover Dam: The Making of a Cultural Icon*, currently available wherever books are sold, explores this iconic project through its images from well before it began through when it had completed and beyond. Including photos of the dam and its workers as the project progressed, as well as drawings of the dam the book in part

explores the government's use of these images as propaganda. Professor Arrigo explained to me though that it looks at more uses of these images than just as propaganda, "...from how farmers used it as promotional material through to how the dam was used for advertising everything from whiskey, to cars, to cigarettes."



*Written by UMass  
Professor and  
Writer Anthony  
Arrigo.*

Don't be fooled though, this book is for more than just academics and history buffs. According to Professor Arrigo, "I talk about American history and religion, and religious influences on how Americans have traditionally felt about nature. I also talk a lot about environmental issues and how the environment is represented both in photos and how people talked about and viewed the environment at the time...I talk about representations of women and minorities, I talk about American labor and how it was being squeezed out by machinery."

Who knew that in exploring the history of the Hoover Dam one could stumble upon so many different, but important policy areas and arguments that are still being had to this day? And to think that Professor Arrigo stumbled upon this topic through chance, after all he told me that it was after someone

remarking about the dam to him while on vacation that he decided to do some research and that the book organically grew out from that.

Professor Arrigo specializes in rhetoric with a focus on cultural themes and visual theory themes, and as such he wrote the book considering its applications for the still evolving field of visual rhetoric. And Professor Arrigo feels very confident about his book's contribution to academia, stating that explores a history of the dam not many are familiar with in a new, unique, and compelling way.

As a political science student one of the aspects that most interested me was the propaganda aspect so when I asked Professor Arrigo to tell me more he told me, "The Bureau of Reclamation had professional photographers who would be sent out to photograph the dam, and then later the government would distribute them to newspapers, but in that process they would pick which items they wanted people to see and which they didn't want people to see."

Professor Arrigo then went on talking about how women were never photographed near machinery, and how photos documenting the various accidents at the dam were never released as some of the many examples of government censorship and the propagandistic purposes behind images taken of the dam.

All and all it sounded like a very interesting read, and I might consider picking it up myself, although if I do it'll definitely be as a rental. Nonetheless I recommend that you check it out for yourself and see if it's something you're interested in.

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