

Epstein, Gene. Econospinning: how to read between the lines when the media manipulate the numbers. Wiley, 2006. 246p index ISBN 0471735132, \$24.95 Epstein (Barron's economics editor) attempts to inform citizens and journalists alike so that they are not so easily misled by media reporting--or, more appropriately, misstating, misrepresenting, and manipulating--familiar economic data. While the book is far from objective, and its treatments are more well documented than well researched, at least Epstein takes to task both the political Left and Right, and reserves a special place in "journalistic hell" for Paul Krugman and his New York Times polemics. More than half the book deals with permutations of reported job and wage data--surveys that produce employment/unemployment rates; myths and realities of hidden employment, long-term unemployment, and discouraged workers; and hours of work, hourly earnings, and productivity. More attention to other important microeconomic issues that receive appalling press coverage, e.g., health care, income inequality and poverty, and product and worker safety, would have been helpful. Epstein ends with chapters on some of his least favorite sources of data: economist Steve Levitt's bestseller *Freakonomics* (CH, Nov'05, 43-1689), journalist Barbara Ehrenreich's popular *Nickel and Dimed* (2001), and Lou Dobbs's commentaries on outsourcing and globalization. Despite shortcomings, *Econospinning* will at least get audiences into a more questioning frame of mind, and that is a worthwhile contribution. Summing Up: Recommended. All collections. -- A. R. Sanderson, University of Chicago