SYLLABUS

COMMUNICATION 6230

PROPAGANDA AND PERSUASION

GRADUATE SEMINAR

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The War Office kept three sets of figures: the first to mislead the public, the second to mislead the government, and a third to mislead themselves.

--David Lloyd George discussing his experiences as British Minister of Munitions during the First World War.

This seminar is organized from the perspective of propaganda scholarship, a field which concerns itself with the engineering of perception, mobilization and consent. The overall approach is interdisciplinary, drawing from research and theoretical literatures in communication studies, persuasion, social psychology, political science, sociology, group behavior, organizational behavior and the humanities.

Seminar goals are:

• To provide an historical and theoretical overview of the emergence and ubiquity of modern propaganda that will lead to a systematic understanding of contemporary social control practice (and theory) at the individual, group, organizational and societal levels.

• To investigate the foundational role that quantitative social science (e.g., social psychology, communication studies, survey research, etc.) has played in research, refinement and application of contemporary propaganda and social control technique.

• To discuss prevalent techniques of propaganda, especially current trends in communication campaigns (political, governmental and special interest) and in corporate management.

• To introduce and develop analytic frameworks and perspectives useful in dissecting the informational environment at large, as well as for protecting self and society against the propagandistic excesses of bureaucracies and elites.
Sources. Throughout, the seminar draws on original research and theoretical writings in the social sciences and the humanities rather than textbook-style commentary, as it is my firm belief that knowledge is not improved by editorial filtration.

The readings are somewhat formidable, as they should be at this academic level, although not so much as they seem on first glance. Many of the assigned research articles are quite short. Many of the selections are classic research findings on the social-psychological mechanisms of human behavior control.

Other readings consist of key chapters from books and monographs. They range from Aristotle on political rhetoric and audience analysis; to the early 20th century Progressive Era propaganda analysts; through the quantitative social science findings of the Cold War period; to contemporary studies on organizational propaganda and presidential communication strategies. This, for an example of the range of material covered, will probably be the only course you'll ever take in which the propaganda theories of Adolph Hitler will be discussed side by side with those of Hannah Arendt, a brilliant Jewish intellectual who examined both Nazi and Stalinist propagandas. (Arendt also read and commented on Hitler and she understood him all too well, as you will see.)

Assigned readings also include a representative collection of Critical Theory, Marxist- and feminist-inspired critiques and discussions of propaganda, as these approaches have become increasingly important in current humanities scholarship.

The seminar is not intended as a "how to" course, although applications for the readings will certainly suggest themselves. Nor is it a course on persuasion, although the materials will be useful to those with such interests.

Prerequisites. This is an graduate level seminar. It assumes: (1) the ability to write well and clearly, (2) a fairly high comfort level with original texts and materials, (3) the ability to synthesize meaning from diverse materials, and (4) a willingness to share this information in weekly discussions with fellow seminar participants. A background in history, social science, media studies or political science will be helpful, but not essential, as the seminar will adjust itself to the background of the participants. If you have questions, please feel free to telephone or e-mail me.

Format. Normally, a seminar meeting will include at some point a lecture providing historical, biographical, scientific and/or scholarly background for the assigned materials. But we will progress mainly by dialectic -- i.e., by discussing the themes, content and lessons of the assigned readings and arriving at some consensual understanding of their meaning and value. Or at the very least, we will reveal the array of the informed opinions present in the group. Your educational background and relevant personal experiences are also important and will add dimensions to discussions.

A weekly reaction paper of 2-3 pages integrating major themes, concerns and/or problems of the readings for each week will be due in class. I expect these papers to be thoughtful, reasonably well organized and, importantly, they should demonstrate familiarity with the readings. You will also find these papers useful during seminar discussion, as they will help organize your thoughts and responses.

Participants will have the opportunity to act as a discussant or co-discussant for a meeting if they are particularly interested in a topic. Or you may have a proposal of your own for discussion.

Requirements | Assignments | Grading. Participants are expected to read all or most of the materials all or most of the time. Regular attendance and participation are also expected. A take-home end-term exam will require participants to answer at length their choice of two or three synthesis-type questions out of a range of question options. A 15-25 page term paper will be due at the final seminar meeting. This paper must be in APA format with in-text citations and a list of references. It can take the form of (1) an organizational-level case study describing and theoretically justifying social control/propaganda practices of some corporate or organizational entity, (2) a detailed, theoretically justified proposal for a specific, new communication/propaganda
campaign, (3) an in-depth analysis of an existing communication/propaganda campaign, or (4) a scientific literature review of some specialized area of propaganda/social control research. A wide variety of topics and approaches are acceptable, but paper ideas should be cleared with me in advance to be sure they are on track. The last two class meetings will be reserved in large part for students to present their papers to the group.

Grades will be determined by a weighted calculation:

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**Office Hours:** To be announced. By appointment.

**Books and texts required:**

1. A photocopied "coursepack" made up of the journal articles and excerpted book chapters included in the week-by-week assignment list found below. These will be available on Carlson Library E-reserves.


**Readings and Assignment Dates.** Symbol Key:

- J = reading in Jackall's edited collection
- C P = reading in coursepack installments
- T = reading in assigned text

**Week #1: Introduction.**


**Week #2: The Emergence of Modern Propaganda**

PROPOSED GRADUATE SEMINAR


T Ellul. Introduction & Ch. I, Characteristics of propaganda (up to p. 89).

Week #3: Propaganda at the Micro-Level, i.e., Persuasion Research


Week #4: Propaganda and Control at the Meso-Group Level I Social Construction of Reality Theories


T Ellul. Ch. IV, Psychological effects of propaganda; Ch. V, Socio-political effects (pp. 163-25 8).

Week #5: Propaganda at the Meso-Organizational Level

PROPOSED GRADUATE SEMINAR

FALL, 2004

Week #6: Propaganda: Grand Theory--Macro-Sociological Level


Week # 7: Theoretic | Analytic Frameworks


Week # 8: Propaganda -- Governmental and Wartime Applications


Week # 10: The Engineering of Consent Continued – Survey Research | Content Analysis | Applications


CP Case Study #1: The Health Care Debate.

CP Case Study #2 The Gun Control Debate.

Week # 11: The Question of Intentionality – Structural, Organizational and Media-Format Effects Theories.


CP Iragaray, L. (1977). This sex which is not one. The power of discourse and the subordination of the feminine. When our lips speak together. In This sex which is not one, G.C. Gill (translator), (pp. 23-33; 68-85; 205-217). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.


Week # 13: Information and Development Campaigns.

Presentation of final papers.


Week # 14:

Presentations of papers continues.
End-term Exam questions handed out.

Week # 15:

Final paper due. End-term Exam due.