Some Preliminary Observations on the Study of Political Propaganda

Students face three interrelated issues when studying political propaganda: the volume of the material, the scope of the subject, and the perpetually altering and alluring nature of propaganda. An area of inquiry as ancient and yet as contemporary as political propaganda can overwhelm any serious student: you could spend almost all of your time studying current events – the actions of nation states, the statements and actions of political elites within those states, and the particular character of the various campaigns for office.

But if the present plethora of propaganda seems daunting, consider its history. You could devote an entire semester to the major moments in the infamous history of propaganda, such as the propaganda of the Caesars, or the propaganda systems of the Nazi and Soviet regimes, the competing British and German propaganda campaigns aimed at Americans just before our entry to WW I, and, of course, the Cold War propaganda that engulfed the “free world” from 1945 well into the 1980s.

At a more contemporary entry into propaganda studies, you could consider the substantial role that “think tanks,” foundations and interest groups play in managing, directing and shaping public discussion especially as their representatives contribute to political talk shows, to the op-ed pages of newspapers and in their nationally syndicated newspaper columns. Some scholars argue that these are the most powerful forms of propaganda because they appear as examples of “open discussion” and “expert analysis.” At yet another level of study, you could examine how transformations in the technological landscape changed the nature and the force of propaganda, the range of materials used for propaganda and the ability to reach mass audiences. Indeed, you could study any period in history, and the history of almost any country, and never be at a loss for the ubiquitous phenomena of propaganda.
Always the subtext of parades, posters, rallies, speeches, films and ads, propaganda is inherent in candidate debates, congressional investigations and political talk shows. And, more recently, candidate websites. In fact, the web seems to be the wild west of propaganda because of the anonymity as well as the relative lack of restrictions. But how has our contemporary media environment changed the form if not the content of propaganda campaigns? For example, how does the appearance on a late night entertainment talk show help develop the image of the candidate in the public’s mind? Or, an evening that a political candidate or even a sitting president has sitting and “chatting” with Larry King of CNN? How and why is this sort of appearance useful? What are the downsides, if any? While this particular form of campaigning goes back to the Kennedy and Nixon era, nowadays candidates use what Edwin Diamond used to call "soft media" for campaign announcements and other campaign news making events, circumventing the mainstream news media – a propaganda strategy usually called “going public,” a strategy we will discuss during the semester.

Another example: what can we say about one of Hillary Clinton’s political commercials during her run for the Democratic nomination? The one I’m referring to was a spoof of the last scene of the last episode of “The Soprano's”? The short film, which you can see on YouTube and elsewhere, has the Senator in the Tony Soprano role, waiting for her family to show up at a diner. The former president shows up and asks, “How is the campaign going?” and Mrs. Clinton answers in the words of Tony Soprano, “Well, like you always say, focus on the good times.” In the video appearing as his fictional persona is one of Tony Soprano’s enemies, Johnny Sack, played by Vince Curatola, apparently walks to the men’s room and menacingly eyes the Clintons. What is going on here? How was this a “political ad”? What does this example along with others like it tell us about the state of American political propaganda in the twenty-first century?

In a media culture undergoing vast and profound changes, and with the blurring of media genres, we can expect changes in the form and nature of propaganda. In a sense, propagandists play with the tools, the skills and the “rules” they have been given. The elaborate image development in the Bush II, Clinton, McCain and Obama campaigns should remind us of Boorstin’s concept of the pseudo-event – an event staged primarily to be reported – and in this
case, the politician (like the celebrity) is, in fact, the human pseudo-event. Part of our task in this course is to discuss such phenomena along with more traditional aspects of political propaganda.

Despite propaganda's prominence in our world and its ever-widening array of practices, the term "propaganda" remains at the margins of our academic and scholarly projects. Are names that important? For example, if our advertising industry was "named" social propaganda instead of advertising, would we have a different relationship to it? Perhaps I protest too much. But consider the recent *Handbook for Political Communications Research*, (2004), edited by Linda Lee Kaid, in which the term "propaganda" has three citations in more than 500 pages of contemporary research. Here's another example: *Interest Groups in American Campaigns: the New Face of Electioneering*, a study, now in its second edition, describing how interest groups – such as the American Petroleum Institute, the tobacco lobby, the American Defense Institute, Americans for a Republican Majority, and others – influence the public agenda, mislead voters, and finance political parties and politicians. *The word propaganda does not appear once in the book's index*. Is the reason because it's so obvious? Perhaps it's a given because, after all, these are organizations that do engage in propaganda campaigns. But, could it also be that so permeated is our media environment with propaganda, that propaganda as a term and a concept – is it the message or the form that a message takes – has become invisible. Propaganda’s nominal relationship to the mainstream of contemporary political communications research demands some explanation for its prominence in our course title, and one goal of this course is to make the force of propaganda – and propaganda analysis – more visible.

Before there were courses in "political communications studies," and even before there were organized departments of communications, there existed the study of propaganda. Propaganda analysis, which scholars say begins with Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, and doesn’t even officially appear as a word in our vocabulary until 1622, burgeoned with a focused examination of political messages in the mass media before, during and after World War I and helped to establish the significance of the field. At this point in communications scholarship, propaganda was a common descriptor for mass media messages and I will discuss some of that history in our opening sessions. However, to call what we study simply "political communications" very often
leaves out that history, or compartmentalizes that history, or minimizes or even ignores that history. I would like our work this semester to connect us with this venerable and remarkable history, even as we examine various modern political campaigns and political communication genres.

But why use the term “propaganda” and not “political communication” if what we are examining includes the study of political campaigns? The terms can be and often are used interchangeably, but they have different histories, different contexts of study, and somewhat different methodologies. And, different connotations. As I hope to show over the next few weeks, propaganda is more than a manipulative message or series of such messages, but part of the overall ecology of culture, communications and media. On the other hand, “political communication” seems to be a more benign term and suggests that political information can be transmitted without an agenda; or that the messengers use processes and tools that are natural and neutral and accessible to all; and that our focus should be mostly on the content or the strategic use of that content.

One assumption I bring to this course – and every teacher and every student enters the classroom with an elaborate set of assumptions – is that the processes and tools of political communication are not natural and certainly not neutral, and that we need to pay attention to the forms, genres, contexts and histories of political messages and messengers as well as to their content. While we pay attention to political ads or candidate speeches as obvious forms of propaganda, how can we understand, say, the Presidential press conference – an apparently free exchange of information and ideas between the President and members of the press and broadcast media – as propaganda? Or, for that matter, the White House Press Briefing? Or, the various Sunday talk shows? Or, as mentioned above, a candidate’s appearance on Leno or Letterman? Or, a candidate’s myspace profile?

Connected to these assumptions about communications, I also bring to our class discussions other assumptions about “the media.” Of course “the media” – or what is touted as the mainstream media – is a rather broad term and needs to be further defined; however, I assume that newspapers have a different impact on audiences than, say, television or radio, and
have a different function as well. They also bring to the media-consumer varying levels of
information. Connected to this assumption is the idea that you tend to learn different things in
different ways from different media – or that media tend to favor certain forms of information over
others. Media can be differentiated and categorized on a whole variety of levels, but my general
approach to all communications technologies is that they don’t just deliver political messages but
in many ways shape and transform them.

Now when I say that media are not neutral, I don’t necessarily mean they have a political
bias, in the sense that they favor a particular party or candidate for office or political perspective,
although that is possible, and in some instances – the Fox channel or WABC radio come to mind
– pretty obvious. There are a variety of studies as to media ownership, and studies that describe
who actually appears on television – on the talk shows and on the interview shows as the so-
called experts and sources of “information.” These studies (see for example Eric Alterman, 2005,
or the many studies done by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting [fair.org]) have shown that
moderate and conservative commentators and representatives from conservative think tanks tend
to dominate the public discussion, and this clearly shows a political bias. In this current election
cycle, Senator John McCain has enjoyed till now (early August) a fairly positive relationship with
the media representatives (see MediaMatters.org). However, it’s not just who owns or controls
the media, or who appears on television, for example, or what they say that suggests a biased
media – although this is extremely relevant. Media bias also exists in the sense that different
media frame information differently, have different relationships with audiences and demand or
create different conditions of attendance from them. These ideas and assumptions will be part of
our class discussion as we examine the different genres of propaganda as they appear across
different media.

Another assumption I bring to class is that I consider “propaganda” and “communication”
and “persuasion” mutually exclusive worlds of discourse. That is to say, if you really want to
communicate with someone or some group, and get to the truth of an issue, you will probably not
engage in propaganda, although you will try to be persuasive. You will create an environment that
is suitable to communication. But as I will endeavor to explain during the semester, there’s a
different communications dynamic between true persuasion and propaganda. As Jacques Ellul has written, “Propaganda ends where dialogue begins.” However, in a mass society, dominated by media of mass communications, political groups or parties really have no choice. Some propaganda scholars and professionals go even further and suggest that propaganda in a mass society is actually a necessary way of organizing society and maintaining some sort of order and posit the idea of a socially responsible propaganda. So, one of our tasks in the coming weeks is to tease out the differences between communication, propaganda and persuasion.

But perhaps the most important assumption I bring to our class is that I consider the classroom an interactive medium. I will not consider this course successful if I do all the talking and all the research and all the presenting. Believe me, I will do my fair share and then some, but as you will see below in the course requirements, student participation and involvement is an integral part of the course and consequently, a significant part of your final evaluation. You are graduate students: your thoughts and contributions are necessary and, from my point of view, vital to the learning process of everyone in the room. Students may have excellent grades on papers and assignments, but if they do not participate in class discussions or make informed and competent class presentations, they do not deserve an A.

Before I briefly outline the course, let me touch on the major terms in this course, propaganda and politics. Defining propaganda is sort of like defining pornography, except that you don’t always know it when you see it. Furthermore, because propaganda is omnipresent, it often overwhelms and desensitizes our critical capacities. To use O’Shaughnessy’s word, an actual definition of propaganda is “elusive.” But just because it is elusive doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist. Therefore, we will discuss some of the major definitions (models and/or theories) that propaganda scholars have offered over the ages in our opening sessions, suggesting different communications theories and analytical methods.

Our course begins with a discussion of several essays that describe disparate political and cultural phenomena but when taken all together suggest the theme, at least for me, of making the case for propaganda analysis. For example, the Louis Menand essay, “The Unpolitical Animal,” asks how voters actually conceptualize their votes as opposed to scholars
and political scientists. Theories about voting, voter studies, and the electoral process have long dominated political communications studies, and have long held a privileged place in political communications studies. However, this article discusses several approaches to voting and points unwittingly to propaganda as a way of explaining the electorate's choices. This discussion includes two pressing ideas in our political culture – at least from an academic point of view: do campaigns really matter or are there structural and phenomenological indicators that suggest a "predictable campaign." This latter point of view, held by many political scientists does not actually mitigate the role of propaganda in our society, but as I see it, actually reinforces the role of propaganda – although I am open to further discussion on the matter. Our discussion of this and the other articles, along with a few important terms and definitions necessary for this semester's study, starts us on our intellectual journey.

We then examine various models of propaganda. We broaden this examination by discussing some examples from Nazi propaganda, one of the major propaganda systems of the last century. Nazism, Communism and Fascism, all major propaganda systems in their time, really deserve their own semester of study, but this semester we will touch only on some aspects of Nazi propaganda. We complete the theoretical part of the course with the discussion of two major statements on propaganda, Jacques Ellul's Propaganda: the formation of men's attitudes (1964) and Nicholas O'Shaughnessy’s Politics and Propaganda: Weapons of Mass Seduction (2005).

We then begin an overview of American political campaign propaganda, where traditional genres of political communication meet the tools of modern propaganda. In this section of the course, we study various campaign genres such as televised speeches, the party primaries, the role of national party conventions, presidential candidate debates, political advertising and the role of Internet in modern campaign organization.

This year the course takes a new direction because of some significant changes in the media landscape. The convergence of popular culture and the political realm has a variety of consequences – especially for the study of propaganda. What are the benefits – and to whom – in making the political realm an area for entertainment? Politics as a source of entertainment,
while nothing new, has reached mass appeal as well as critical recognition especially in the comedic work of Bill Maher and Jon Stewart. Even George Stephanopoulos, on his traditional Sunday political talk show (traditional in the sense that he interviews major political actors and has a roundtable “discussion” with mainstream journalists), has a segment called the Sunday “funnies” where he shows clips of late night comedians poking fun at various political actors.

What does this turn of events mean for the health of our civic culture? How have propagandists taken advantage of this situation? I take this comedic cultural phenomenon seriously, and to that end we examine a major study by Jeffrey P. Jones, *Entertaining Politics: New Political Television and Civic Culture*, that provides us with an analysis of this “conjoining of popular culture and politics.”

A single semester cannot be responsible for presenting the entire array of topics in a subject as rich and as dense as propaganda. So please consider this course a first step on that much longer journey. It is in that spirit I welcome you to this semester’s version of

**Communication and Persuasion: Political Propaganda, E 58. 2270**, and I hope we have a productive and enjoyable semester.

**Required texts/websites/films/course requirements**

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**Required Websites.** You will need to peruse these websites – and bring to class other websites that would be of interest to the class. These websites complement our class presentations, discussions and texts.

1. “The Living Room Candidate,” [http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election](http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election). This website, which I am using in class instead of a text book on political advertising, has almost all of the major political ads ever broadcast.
2. You can go to calvin.edu and you will be in the presence of an awful lot of Nazi propaganda; you can also google the term "nazi propaganda" and you will come up with several million hits – there is an enormous amount of information on the web concerning the Nazi propaganda system.

3. thenationaljournal.com – this is a website that will help keep you abreast of the actions of political elites, and you can view some interesting national and local political ads.

4. You can visit the website connected to Lights, Camera, Campaign! Media, Politics, and Political Advertising. There are several chapters from this text in our course pack. The site is located at http://davidschultz.efoliomn2.com. Click on the tab with the title of the book Lights, Camera, Campaign! Media, Politics, and Political Advertising. When it asks for the user, enter "student" and then enter "campaign" for the password. We are using certain chapters from this text and they are in the course pack.

5. Make yourself familiar with the following websites and regularly check them – I consider these websites and others like them to be essential "reading" for our course: Factcheck.org, cnn.com, msnbc.com, washingtonpost.com, huffingtonpost.com, pressthink.com, dailykos.com. Any others that you folks recommend?

6. Also, make yourself familiar with the candidate websites, and check regularly. I know I don’t have to tell you folks how to deal with facebook or youtube – but these sites will also be sources for our class discussions and presentations. Youtube will be especially valuable as a source for our discussions on candidate advertising.

Required film: There are many excellent films for our purposes including "The War Room," a documentary about the 1992 campaign and "The Perfect Candidate," a documentary about Ollie North’s senatorial campaign (this one is a real eye-opener for its profiles of some right wing political operatives). Recent films that comment on propaganda (and actually engage in propaganda) include "No End in Sight," a film about the American occupation of Iraq, and "Sicko," a film about American healthcare. As for feature films, we should discuss one of the most recent, “Swing Vote,” for what it says about American politics and campaigning. We can discuss any or all of these, but the one we want to examine closely in class is "The Candidate," starring Robert Redford and available by almost every video provider. There is probably a copy in the video section of our library. I suggest that you see it with a group, perhaps even a group of students in this class. We will spend a portion of an evening – see our class schedule – discussing this film. I will show only a few excerpts before opening the class up to discussion, therefore please see the entire film on your own, so that our class discussion is informed and rewarding.

Course Requirements: Some preliminary observations: while the following are class assignments particular for this course, please consider them also as opportunities for other venues such as conferences or journals. These assignments can be the basis for articles in journals or magazines or presentations at academic conferences. Each semester, usually in the spring and depending on the number of students interested, I conduct informal “conference” oriented workshops (i.e., how to present your work at conferences) for students who want advice in applying to academic conferences and presenting their papers or publishing an article in a journal. These presentations could range from the analysis of current political propaganda practices to a propaganda analysis of various campaign events, strategies of a national or international nature. If this interests you, do not hesitate to see me. In this class you are responsible for the following:

1. A brief two - three page political/intellectual biography: I realize this is extremely difficult to do in two or three pages, but basically respond to as many of the following questions as you can. Please answer them, however, in essay form – there is no need to repeat the questions. How can you account for your political and social views? What political figures or thinkers have influenced you the most? How has your family or education or religion influenced your political views – or have they? What major events (political or otherwise), books, or other media products have helped form the political “you”? Why are you in this class and what do you hope to get out of it? Required but not graded or evaluated, although read with commentary. Some of your thoughts might become part of our discussion for session # 2. 0% of final grade, due session # 1.

2. Papers. For this course you have five essays of varying lengths to write and I will discuss them in no particular order. One of them, of course, is the final exam and that’s a documented essay describing
and analyzing a form of contemporary campaign propaganda, (30%). My suggestion is to consider this assignment as a “draft” for a journal article or a presentation at a conference – more about this as the course unfolds, but I am interested in having students become “conference” experienced, and we can talk about this during our introductory class. If this particular assignment doesn’t suit you, I have provided an alternative, see below. Another writing assignment is a comparison/contrast essay in which you compare and contrast two major approaches to propaganda theory – including a number of ancillary texts, models, theories et al, those that we discuss in class and those in your course pack (20%). You also have a book analysis (15%) and two short reaction papers (10%). See guidelines for details.

a. **Compare and contrast schools* of propaganda**: a possible title for this assignment could be something like *Notes toward a theory of propaganda* – and while this assignment seems to be about these two major theorists of propaganda, see this assignment as a meditation on the phenomena of propaganda using the theories, models et al from these major readings as well as the others in our course pack. See guidelines below. 20% of your final grade, due session # 7.

b. **A one-page proposal for your essay on campaign propaganda**, just so I know you are on the right track. Give me an idea of what you would like to examine and how you plan to go about it. 0% but read with commentary. This proposal should be handed in a timely manner during the course of the semester; a proposal received too close to the due date will be read but w/o extensive commentary.

c. **Final exam: Campaign Propaganda** – this is a documented essay examining a major genre of campaign propaganda: conventions, press conferences, speeches, debates, political advertising, web sites in light of our discussion of various theories of propaganda. See guidelines below. An alternative is immediately below. 30% of your final grade, due session # 14*.

d. **An alternative to the research project on campaign propaganda**: I am willing to discuss this: you can do something like the following or we create another type of assessment. One Develop an annotated bibliography of at least 7-10 texts on a relevant topic in political propaganda using the approach and the questions in the guidelines detailed below. Due session # 14*.

e. **One in-depth book analysis**: This documented essay has you analyzing one of the major books for our class. See guidelines below. Due session # 12 and 15% of final grade.

f. **Two reaction papers.** React or respond to one of our class discussions. 10% of your final grade. See guidelines below. Due any time after session # 5.

3. **Thoughtful and intelligent participation** in class discussions, presentations and class attendance. Students will make coherent class presentations from our readings and viewings. And since we are in the middle of a major election cycle electing a President as well as Congressmen and Senators, students can contribute relevant articles, commentary or video clips from the media environment to begin our class discussions. Students can also make short, and again, coherent class presentations on the various readings and films. These presentations are not simple regurgitations of the text but a concise summary of the major points that will lead to a discussion of the text’s implications and suggestions. Do not simply read your notes: consider yourself a facilitator as opposed to a reporter. If possible, have a visual aid or a handout for the class. Presentations can be done individually, in pairs or in “three’s”. In general, show signs that you are prepared and familiar with the material. I will provide a rubric in one of our early classes. As far as attendance goes, more than two absences will affect your grade. Presentations, participation, discussion and attendance: 25% of your final grade.

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**Guidelines for assignments**
Please double space and paginate your papers; also, please use a consistent documentation format; and provide a bibliography where applicable. Late papers will be accepted and read, and, of course, penalized. Please type papers with enough margin room for my comments. Please do not use folders or binders, etc. You can staple or paper clip the pages at the top left corner. I will evaluate each of your efforts, provided that they are turned in on time; late papers constitute a breach of contract for a written commentary or evaluation. Evaluation will be based on to what extent you successfully complete the assignment and to what extent your paper exhibits proper use of academic writing conventions. I will use “numbers” as well as commentary to evaluate your papers and presentations.

Guidelines for the essay “Notes toward a theory of propaganda.” How do you conceptualize this phenomenon called propaganda? Using your notes, our class discussions, your reading of Ellul and O’Shaughnessy and at least one other model or theorist of propaganda, discuss which model of propaganda seems to have more explanatory power. About eight to ten pages would be average. In your essay, you should discuss the following. 20% of final grade. Due session # 8.

1. What do you perceive to be the major differences among the major models of political propaganda? Which “definition” appeals to you among the many and why?
2. How can you account for these differences?
3. How do these models reflect principles of culture and/or communications theories?
4. How do these models account for audiences?
5. How do these models account for the role of technology?
6. What do you think of the authors’ positions? Which model, theory or approach seems more valid to you and why?
7. Discuss anything else you think is significant about these models and this topic.

Guidelines for the Campaign Propaganda Paper: This essay works as our final exam: a documented essay discussing an example or a series of examples of a genre of campaign propaganda past or present. For example, an essay on the “Swift Boat Veterans for Truth,” or the YouTube/CNN debates would be acceptable. You could discuss a series of ads, a series of debates, a series of press conferences, interviews, campaign speeches, rhetorical motifs, et al. Choose either Ellul’s or O’Shaughnessy’s model of propaganda analysis as your approach. Or, if you like, create your own model of propaganda from what we’ve studied this semester. About ten to twelve pages would be average. Please provide a one page proposal somewhere around midterm, so that I can help you if necessary. I will offer commentary and advice providing this proposal is given to me in a timely manner. Due session # 15*, 30% of final grade. There is an alternative to this assignment.

Guide to the alternative for the final exam. Develop an annotated bibliography of at least 10 texts on a relevant topic in political propaganda using the approach and the questions in the guidelines detailed below. The ratio of books to journal articles should be around 60% books to 40 % articles – if possible; if you keep me informed, I am open to discussion on this issue. Due session # 15*, 30% of final grade.

1. What are the main premises, arguments, conclusions, etc. for each text?
2. Can you ascertain the basic theoretical assumptions the author has about communications? For example, what might be his theory of the audience, or of medium effects?
3. What is the methodology for gathering the data of the text? How does the author analyze his/her data?
4. How does each text relate to Ellul’s Propaganda: the Formation of Men’s Attitudes and the O’Shaughnessy text?
5. What do you think of the author’s positions? Which premises, arguments, conclusions, theses, etc. seem more valid to you? What criteria are you using for your evaluation?
6. Write a summary conclusion after the annotations in which you discuss the differences among the works. How would you account for the differences, if any? For example, are there differences in their understanding of propaganda? in their conceptualization of communication? Or, in their conceptualization of technology?

Guidelines for the Entertaining Politics analysis. Do not respond to the following as though writing an exam answer. I would like a unified essay, double-spaced and paginated; leave enough margin room for my comments. A length of 6-8 pages would be average. Due session # 11 and 15% of your final grade.

I. Do not summarize the book for me. Do not quote except briefly.
II. What are the main premises, arguments, conclusions, theses, etc. of this book?

III. What are the basic communication and/or cultural assumptions underlying this book? What do you think of them?

IV. What are the methodologies for gathering their data? In your view is his method acceptable or do you have any questions about it?

V. How does the author analyze his data? And, what do you think of his analysis?

VI. How does Ellul’s concept of propaganda and O’Shaughnessy’s concept of propaganda relate to this book?

VII. What do you think of this book? Which premises, arguments, conclusions, theses, etc. seem more valid to you? Why?

VIII. What in your judgment are the political and/or cultural ramifications of this text?

IX. Anything else you think is significant.


Guide To the Class Response Essay (two of them)

These essays do not evaluate how the class (or series of classes) was conducted; rather these reaction papers are a response to the intellectual content of one session or a group of related sessions. This is an opportunity for you to engage in your own critical thinking with regard to the problem posed in the course. A length of 2-3 typed pages would be about average. Due during the latter part of the semester and 10% of your final grade.

Course Caveats

Evaluation standards and policies. Plagiarism is unacceptable and I follow University procedures in this matter. A = Excellent. To earn this grade, you need to have done outstanding work in all respects. This work demonstrates comprehensive and solid understanding of course material, and presents thoughtful interpretations, well-focused and original insights, and well-reasoned commentary and analysis. You also need to demonstrate skillful use of source materials, illuminating examples and illustrations, fluent expression and no grammar or usage errors. B = Good. To earn this grade, your work demonstrates a complete and accurate understanding of the course material, presents a reasonable degree of insight and broad levels of analysis. Work reflects competence, but stays at a general or predictable level of understanding. Source materials, examples, illustrations, are used appropriately and articulation/writing is clear. Papers have been carefully proofread. C = Adequate/Fair. To earn this grade, your work is generally correct, superficial, incomplete, or expresses some significant errors or weaknesses. Source materials may be used inadequately or inappropriately, and arguments lack concrete, specific examples and illustrations. Writing/articulation may appear vague, hard to follow, or loaded with other technical errors. D = Unsatisfactory. To earn this grade you have generally misunderstood almost everything we have done and/or said, and almost everything you have read. In fact, you probably didn’t do much of the reading to begin with – you have made serious errors in understanding, you fail to express the most rudimentary aspects of the course. Sources may be used entirely inappropriately or not at all, and writing/articulation appears deficient. F = Failed. Your work was not submitted or attempted; and you failed to participate at every level. Plus (+) or minus (-) grades indicate your range within the aforementioned grades.

Recommended Reading

The literature of propaganda is huge. The following list recommends some reading in the field of political propaganda and can be used for your annotated bibliography. Many of these texts have been used in previous versions of this class. If this field is of interest to you, many of the following would be required reading. If you find other texts or know of other texts that seem worthwhile for this course, please pass them on to me.


Marco Calavita. “‘The Candidate’: an Ellulian Response to McGinniss’s ‘The Selling of the President’” in Counterblast.org (Volume # 1). This essay is recommended reading and can serve as a model for your film/ad essay, however, this essay is not eligible for your annotated bibliography if you choose to do one.


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<th>Ses</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>9/04</td>
<td>Introduction: Course overview and discussion of class requirements; definitions; we review the course pack and discuss propaganda vs. persuasion. Our theme for this evening is: making the case for propaganda. Intellectual/Political Bio due.</td>
<td>We review the syllabus; Menand, Holbrook and Patterson.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>9/18</td>
<td>Student presentations: theories and models continued, along with a look at the modern IPA. Student discussion with Unspun; students prepare and present brief discussions and visual aids for this text.</td>
<td>Course pack and chapters from Brooks and Jamieson.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>10/02</td>
<td>Contemporary theorists of propaganda: Lecture/presentation: Introduction to O’Shaughnessy; student presentations: rhetoric, myth and symbol, Part I.</td>
<td>O’Shaughnessy, Part I.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>10/09</td>
<td>Student presentations: case studies in propaganda: party propaganda, 9/11 and war; weapons of mass deception. Part II.</td>
<td>O’Shaughnessy, Part II.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>10/16</td>
<td>Contemporary theorists of propaganda: Lecture/presentation (along with student presentations): an evening with Jacques Ellul.</td>
<td>Ellul.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>10/30</td>
<td>Student presentations: Televisual Propaganda: Nixon’s campaign propaganda: the Checkers speech; intro to presidential debates.</td>
<td>Articles from course pack.</td>
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**Thanksgiving recess, November 27-12/01**
Happy Thanksgiving!!

| 13. | 12/04 | Lecture/presentation: some student presentations as well: political advertising on television and cable | Articles in course pack. |
| 14. | 12/11 | Final class session: negative political advertising. All questions answered; all answers questioned. | Articles in course pack. |
| 12/17 | Final exams due. | |

Assignment dates review: this also has to be reviewed.

1. Intellectual biography due session # 1.
2. Propaganda theory papers due session # 8.
3. Two reaction papers due anytime after session # 5.
4. Book analysis due session # 11.
5. Final Exam or alternative due session # 14.*

Any student attending NYU who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility and/or learning disability, or is Deaf or Hard of Hearing should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212 998-4980, 240 Greene Street, www.nyu.edu/csd.