Problems in Propaganda and Persuasion
Kilachand Freshman Seminar
KHC XL103

Prof. Peter J. Schwartz
Department of World Languages and Literatures
Office: 745 Commonwealth Ave., STH 615
Office Hours: W 2:00-3:30, R 2:00-3:30 and by appointment
email: pjs8@bu.edu

Course description

In 1928, Edward Bernays – an American nephew of Sigmund Freud, and a man widely recognized as one of the founders of modern advertising and propaganda practice – opened his seminal work Propaganda with this observation: “The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.” Further, he reasoned that because “many of man’s thoughts and actions are compensatory substitutes for desires which he has been obliged to suppress,” it is the task of the propagandist to move people to action by appealing not to their reason but to their emotions. In this course, we will investigate how such appeals work, or have worked, in the recent history of Germany, Russia, Poland, Italy, China, Japan, the United States, and the Middle East. Beginning with classic theories of mass propaganda and persuasion, we will move through case studies of propagandistic mobilization by appeal to moral outrage at wartime atrocity reports, to fear of exclusion from dominant power structures (“The Emperor’s New Clothes”), to intergenerational resentments, and to sexual, racial and class insecurities and the fear of death. We will also inspect the dynamics and iconography of totalitarian ruler-cult (Mussolini, Stalin, Hitler, Mao), compare strategies of mobilization for total war and techniques of military recruitment, and look at the ways in which changing media technologies inform propaganda techniques.

Assignments

The course will be taught as a discussion seminar. Each class will begin with short (5-minute) student presentations of the assigned primary and secondary materials, to be followed by open discussion. Some of the assigned visual materials (short and longer films, videos, poster art) will be available for viewing online; other materials will be presented at scheduled screenings before the class sessions in which we’ll discuss them (please see the schedule for details).
Most classes will be preceded by a screening or online viewing of visual or audiovisual material. In preparation for class discussion, you will post a short essay to the class Blackboard Learn discussion board (about 250 words) in which you respond to the viewed material in the light of whatever critical or theoretical texts are assigned for that day. Think of these as mini essays in which you express one idea as clearly and concisely as possible. In some cases I will provide topics or questions to guide you. A good post: (a) makes a helpful and/or critical observation about the material viewed; (b) relates that material clearly in some way to the assigned texts; (c) critically evaluates the material in relation to the work we have done in the class to date. Please also comment when appropriate in constructive and substantial ways on your classmates’ posts.

I will assign two short essays (3-4 pages each) and one longer paper (7-8 pages) over the course of the semester. To the extent possible, I would like to have this writing develop out of students’ own interests, and to have the longer paper proceed from the concerns of the two shorter papers. I will require revisions of these papers.

I would like you to submit these longer assignments electronically, so I can edit & comment on them legibly with Microsoft Word’s markup function; please send these to me at pjs8@bu.edu as attached Word documents, cc yourself, and check to be sure that the document was attached and is readable. I will not accept “lost in cyberspace,” “forgot to attach the file,” or “file corrupted” as excuses!

In general, I am available and eager to meet with you in my office to discuss the class, your work, your interests, decisions about a major or minor, or your larger academic goals. My office hours are: **Wednesdays 2:00-3:30, Thursdays 2:00-3:30**, in STH 615, which is at 745 Commonwealth Avenue. Please do not hesitate to make an appointment to meet me outside of office hours if your schedule does not permit you to visit me during them.

There will be no midterm exam, unless I decide otherwise. I reserve the right to administer pop quizzes on suspicions of slacking. There will be a final exam, which will consist of two one-hour essays. No make-up exams will be offered.

I will be scheduling a number of video screenings at Geddes Language Center (685 Commonwealth Avenue, 5th floor), mostly Tuesday evenings at 5 PM (that is, right after class). These will normally be between 1 and 2 hours long. I will also leave such videos as I can on reserve at Geddes for those of you who can’t make the scheduled screenings, though in the case of complex screenings of multiple short videos this may be difficult. These videos are a mandatory part of the course; if you can’t make a common screening, it is your individual responsibility to arrange an alternative screening for yourself.

Daily attendance in class is mandatory. You are expected to show up punctually for class, and, once there, to participate in discussion. **You cannot get an A in this class if you do not talk, no matter how good your written work is.** More than three (3) unexcused absences will begin to affect your grade; more than seven (7) unexcused absences will automatically earn you an F in the course. Students should notify the instructor of any foreseeable absence or lateness in advance, in person or by email.

Students are expected to abide by all the university standards on plagiarism and academic conduct. Please consult the College of Arts and Sciences Academic Conduct Code

https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/

for clarification of official standards. Plagiarism from any source (including the internet), cheating on exams, and other academic misconduct will not be tolerated in any form. **THIS MEANS YOU!**
Approximate credit distribution for final grade

20% Attendance, preparedness and in-class participation in discussion
10% Individual in-class presentations of assigned materials
10% Short written assignments, including study questions
10% Paper #1 (3-4 pages)
10% Paper #2 (3-4 pages)
20% Paper #3 (7-8 pages)
20% Final exam

Required texts

For purchase, at the BU bookstore:


All other required texts will be available in .pdf format in the “Course Documents” section of the Blackboard Learn site for this course:

learn.bu.edu

I’ll be handing out occasional xerox copies as well, all of which I shall also make available on the Blackboard course website. I will also post a number of useful links under “external links,” and I will be happy to accept suggestions from students concerning additional relevant links.

I will announce new postings to the website, and make sundry other announcements, by email – if you normally use an address other than your BU address, please be certain to set up mail forwarding to your preferred address!
Class Schedule: Meetings, Themes, Readings, Screenings

Tuesday, September 5     Introduction

Sigmund Freud, “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death, I: The Disillusionment of the War” (1915), 275-88, esp. 287.

Thursday, September 7     Definitions of Propaganda


Tuesday, September 12     Propaganda, Public Relations, Advertising


Thursday, September 14     Propaganda, Public Relations, Advertising


Tuesday, September 19       The Mobilization of Outrage: Atrocity Propaganda, I

German Atrocities in Belgium in WWI

[anti-German atrocity poster & film propaganda from WWI – check IWM]


evening film screening: Andrzej Wajda, Katyn (Poland, 2007, 2 hours)
Thursday, September 21  The Mobilization of Outrage: Atrocity Propaganda, II
The Nazis Discover Katyn, 1943

discussion of Katyn with Prof. Anna Elliott (WLL)

Andrzej Wajda, Katyn (feature film, 2007)

The Graves of Katyn (1955 Polish propaganda film, IWM)


Tuesday, September 26  The Emperor’s New Clothes

Hans Christian Andersen, “The Emperor’s New Clothes”

Irmgard Keun, After Midnight, excerpt (bicyclist’s arrest & crowd response)


Thursday, September 28  The Mobilization of Sexuality, I


Klaus Theweleit, Male Fantasies, I: “Men and Women,” 1-57.

Tuesday, October 3  The Mobilization of Sexuality, II

Inejiro Asanuma assassination, 1960: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWEPwauIL9M

Kenzaburo Oe, “Seventeen.”

J. Keith Vincent, “Mishima, Ōe, and the Signs of Fascism“

discussion of homofascism with Prof. J. Keith Vincent (WLL)

evening film screening: Gustav Ucicky, Mutterliebe (1939)
Thursday, October 5    Nazi Ideals of Motherhood

Gustav Ucicky, *Mutterliebe* (Mother Love, feature film, 1939)

Mark Mazower, “Healthy Bodies, Sick Bodies,” *Dark Continent* 76-103


**Tuesday, October 10    Monday schedule – no class**

watch film online for Thursday 10/12: Fritz Hippler, *Der ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew, 1940):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DOI3FqCZJE

Thursday, October 12    The Mobilization of Racial Resentment, I

Anti-Semitism – Blood Libel & World Domination

Fritz Hippler, *Der ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew, 1940)


**Tuesday, October 17    The Mobilization of Racial Resentment, II**

American Dog-Whistle Politics

Ian Haney López, "Dog Whistle Politics: Coded Racism and Inequality for All," lecture at Brown University, 4/16/15 (1 hour):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MsnbQ14h4l

The Rachel Maddow Show, “Trump dog whistles heard loud and clear by racists,” 3/2/16


Thursday, October 19      Ruler Cult, I: Mussolini


Tuesday, October 24      Ruler Cult, II: Stalin


To be shown in class:

*Lenin in 1918* (feature film, USSR, 1939, excerpt)
*Fall of Berlin* (feature film, USSR, 1950, excerpt)

**evening film screening:** Leni Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will* (Germany 1935, 2 hours)

Thursday, October 26      Ruler Cult, III: Hitler

Leni Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will* (1935)


please visit this excellent online collection of Cultural Revolution poster art before Thursday’s class, reading the captions (after having reading Leese):
http://chineseposters.net/themes/mao-cult.php

Thursday, November 2      Ruler Cult, IV: Mao


discussion of poster art of the Cultural Revolution with Prof. Cathy Yeh (WLL)

watch 3 videos online for Tuesday 11/7:
Walter Ruttmann, *Deutsche Panzer* (German Tanks, 1940, 7 mins):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GOdBVECZtc

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2S8hIKMDqM

*Die deutsche Wochenschau*, 8/4/1942 (29 mins):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9tAofdDPh0
Tuesday, November 7  
Mobilization for World War II: Nazi Germany


Walter Ruttmann, *Deutsche Panzer* (German Tanks, 1940)

*Die deutsche Wochenschau*, 8/4/1942 (The German Newsreel, 1942)


  watch 2 films online for Thursday: *Why We Fight: Prelude to War* (1942) [1 hour]:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcAsIWfk_z4
  *The Autobiography of a Jeep* (USA, 1943, 9 mins):
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTEe2uyWjI4

Thursday, November 9  
Mobilization for World War II: USA

Frank Capra, *Why We Fight: Prelude to War* (1942)


Tuesday, November 14  
Mobilization for World War II: Animated Cartoons

We will watch and discuss these in class:

*Der Störenfried* (Disturber of the Peace, Germany, 1940)
*Das dumme Gänselein* (The Silly Goose, Germany, 1944)

*Fascist Boots on Our Homeland* (USSR, 1941)
*The Vultures* (USSR, 1941)
*Newsreels #1-4, 1941* (USSR, 1941)

*Der Führer’s Face* (Disney, USA, 1943)
*Education for Death: The Making of a Nazi* (Disney, USA, 1943)
*Private Snafu: Spies* (USA, 1943)

*Baby Kangaroo’s Birthday Surprise* (Japan, 1940)
*Sankichi the Monkey: The Air Combat* (Japan, 1942)

Thursday, November 16  
**The Cold War: Building a Wall**

*discussion of the Berlin Wall with Prof. Jonathan Zatlin (History)*

*The Wall* (USA, 1962)


**evening film screening:** Craig Baldwin, *Wild Gunman & RocketKitKongoKit* (1 hour total)

Tuesday, November 21  
**War and the Media Massage, I: The Cold War**

Craig Baldwin, *Wild Gunman* (USA, 1978)

Craig Baldwin, *RocketKitKongoKit* (USA, 1984)


**Thanksgiving Recess**

**evening film screening:** Carmelita Hinton, *Morning Sun* (documentary film, 2003, 2 hours)

Tuesday, November 28  
**Mobilizing Generational Resentment: Mao’s Red Guards**

*discussion of*  *Morning Sun with Prof. Carmelita Hinton* (George Mason U)


**evening film screening:** Harun Farocki, *War at a Distance* (2003, 1 hour)
Thursday, November 30  
**War and the Media Massage, II: The Gulf War**

Harun Farocki, *Erkennen und verfolgen* (War at a Distance, Germany, 2003)


**Tuesday, December 5  
Mobilizing Fear: Effects of Mortality Salience**


**Thursday, December 7  
Military Recruitment Strategies: ISIS & the US Army**


*Dabiq & Ramiyah* (English-language ISIS propaganda magazines), selected articles:


watch videos online for Tuesday (20 minutes total):

Eli Pariser, TED Talk on the “filter bubble”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8ofWFxS25s


...and try out this tool: http://graphics.wsj.com/blue-feed-red-feed/#/trump

Tuesday, December 12     Contracted Horizons
Frames of Reference & the Internet Filter Bubble


Geoffrey Fowler & Jon Keegan, “Red Feed, Blue Feed: Liberal vs. Conservative Facebook,” Wall Street Journal online, 5/19/16

WSJ’s “Blue Feed, Red Feed” tool: http://graphics.wsj.com/blue-feed-red-feed/#/trump


December 13-15     Study Period