

HIS-371-01, Propaganda: Political Persuasion and Communication in the Modern World
Fall 2015, TTh, 2:00-3:50
Mears 202

Instructor: Matthew D. Johnson
Mears 318 (office hours available most days M-F and by appointment)
641-269-4477
johnsonm@grinnell.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The history of propaganda requires study across numerous regions and disciplines. While conventional understandings of the term refer to the content of ideologies and worldviews, in this course we will be examining the structures, policies, and research agendas which have shaped propaganda as a tool of modern politics. To study propaganda is to open a unique door onto the connections between government, military affairs, and is also a label used to discredit the truth claims of rival political and social actors, we will also be examining a variety of case studies including, but not limited to, public relations, advertising, perception management, information operations, psychological warfare, political communication and other systems of human behavioral engineering which have emerged during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As we will see, one of the enduring questions which haunts this field is whether propaganda actually works, under what conditions, and how these effects may be convincingly measured. While this is not a course on communications theory per se, it is one which will require an open mind, an ability to think comparatively across a wide range of historical and disciplinary contexts, and a willingness to consider carefully what the sources tell us about past and present politics in the information age.

OBJECTIVES

This historical seminar presupposes familiarity with basic techniques of formulating a topic, assembling a bibliography, and articulating a question, or set of questions, which will be addressed in research paper form. Part of every week will be devoted to exploration and discussion of each step of the research process. By the end of the semester you will be well versed in the history of propaganda, modern global communications, and related issues. Extensive consultation with the instructor, writing mentors, and other members of seminar will, ideally, result in production of an original, and publishable, work of scholarship. In addition, this seminar seeks to help participants acquire knowledge and understanding concerning propaganda and mass communications-mediated relations between countries, including at the level of global government, and with specific reference to Asia where possible. We will not only master concrete facts about these relations, but also work toward developing explanations for why the past unfolded in the ways that it did.

also possess relevance for the present. Students participating in the course should come away with the following experiences and knowledge, all with application to fields of endeavor which go beyond history per se:

- Analysis and critical thinking.
- Ability to interpret intellectual debates and paradigm shifts as constructed knowledge emerging from actually occurring events.
- Formulation of a research question.
- Intensive research and long-form writing.
- Presentation of inquiry-driven research results.
- Understanding of the interests and institutions which shape propaganda.
- Ability to read and contextualize documents related to propaganda and its international context.
- Appreciation for the intellectual complexity and ethical dilemmas posed by challenges of persuasion.

For the purposes of our course, achieving these goals begins with a simple question: From a historical perspective

OUR CASE STUDIES

Within the context of propaganda and its global history students will have the opportunity to focus their research on one of the following case studies:

- The League of Nations and International Educational Cinematographic Institute
- U.S. information efforts in China during and after the Second World War
- International propaganda during the Cold War

These communicative aspects of international and transnational relations have shaped mutual perceptions as much as diplomatic, military, or economic interaction perhaps moreso. At the same time, we will pay particular attention to how information network-driven globalization has been carried out with the support of both political and non-political (or extra-political) actors.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course requires extensive discussion, and collaborative analysis of secondary texts and primary documents. Preparation for class by completing the reading and any related assignments is essential. You are expected to take notes in class and to complete all course assignments. A significant component of your preparation for class will include working with the texts to formulate answers to discussion questions, pre-circulated by email, using evidence to support your conclusions. Each day you should bring to class: 1) a copy of the assigned reading for that day (typically one of the assigned monographs listed below), 2) reading guide and discussion questions, and 3) your own notes and/or other required assignment. Notes on our

discussions, will provide the basis for much of your directly evaluated written work in this course. I cannot urge you strongly enough to consist^e this preparation will benefit your performance in all other areas of the course immensely.

All papers for this course must follow correct citation format using footnotes or endnotes in University of Chicago style; if this is unfamiliar, please consult *The University of Chicago Style Manual* (currently in its sixteenth edition) in Burling Library. Paper copies of completed work are required – emailed files will not be accepted except under extenuating circumstances and with the permission of the instructor. Extensions on written assignments for sickness or other

Propaganda and Persuasion

Propaganda and Persuasion: New and Classic Essays, Thomas C.

War of Ideologies (1917-

[Discussion of outline assignment]

2. Methodologies and Classic Cases

Week Four: Methodological Reflections; Case Study I Propaganda Under the Third Reich

**Due Monday: Preliminary outline of research interests and available sources.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 15

Propaganda and Persuasion

[Studying propaganda as a social force]

THURSDAY, SEPT. 17

**Due Monday: research proposal (draft)

TUESDAY, SEPT. 29

Armand Mattelart, *Mapping World Communication: War, Progress, Culture*, vii-52

James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*

Information acumen: The understanding and use of knowledge in modern business, ed. Lisa Bud-Frierman (Routledge, 1994), 98-110. [PWEB]

THURSDAY, OCT. 1

[Research proposal workshop]

Week Seven: National and International Opinion Management

**Due Monday: research proposal (final)

TUESDAY, OCT. 6

Mattelart, *Mapping World Communication*, 53-121

James R. Beniger, *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society*

THURSDAY, OCT. 8

[Student sources]

Week Eight: War, Progress, and Global Order

**Due Monday: week-by-week work plan for remainder of semester

TUESDAY, OCT. 13

Mattelart, *Mapping World Communication*, 125-186

Leo Marx and Merritt Roe Smith, *Does Technology Drive History? The Dilemma of Technological Determinism*

THURSDAY, OCT. 15

[Student sources]

****FALL BREAK, Oct. 19-23****

4. *The Craft of Writing*

Week Nine: What Makes a Good Introduction?

TUESDAY, OCT. 27

Kenneth Osgood,
Abroad

THURSDAY, DEC. 3

[Presentations]

**Due Friday: complete paper drafts

Week Fifteen: Presentations

TUESDAY, DEC. 8

[Presentations]

THURSDAY, DEC. 10

[Presentations]

**Drafts returned

****EXAM WEEK, DEC. 14-18****

Revised research paper due by Friday, 5pm, 12/18/2015