

**SOCIOLOGY OF PROPAGANDA**  
**SOC 300B**

Dr. CJ Churchill  
St. Thomas Aquinas College  
Tues./Thurs. 9:50-11:15

- **Not a General Education Requirement Class**
- **Satisfies upper level sociology class option for electives portion of the Social Sciences curriculum**

“Why, of course, the *people* don’t want war. Why would some poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when the best that he can get out of it is to come back to his farm in one piece? Naturally, the common people don’t want war; neither in Russia nor in England nor in America, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood. But, after all, it is the *leaders* of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a Parliament or a Communist dictatorship....[T]he people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country.”

Hermann Goering, a Nazi official second in command to Hitler, as quoted in *Nuremberg Diary* by Gustave Gilbert (1947)

“All propaganda has to be popular and has to adapt its spiritual level to the perception of the least intelligent of those towards whom it intends to direct itself.”

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (1933)

“From a marketing point of view, you don't introduce new products in August.”  
White House Chief of Staff and former automobile industry lobbyist Andrew Card explaining on Sept. 6, 2002, why the Bush administration waited until after Labor Day 2002 to promote American military action in Iraq.

“Only the mob and the elite can be attracted by the momentum of totalitarianism itself; the masses have to be won by propaganda.”

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1966)

“Like the effect of advertising upon the customer, the methods of political propaganda tend to increase the feeling of insignificance of the individual voter. Repetition of slogans and emphasis on factors which have nothing to do with the issue at stake numb his critical capacities. The clear and rational appeal to his thinking are rather the exception than the rule in political propaganda – even in democratic countries. Confronted with the power and size of the parties as demonstrated in their propaganda, the individual voter cannot help feeling small and of little significance.”

Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (1941)

“In such cases, issues are cast as melodrama, emotions usually replace reason, images replace argument, and choices dressed as heroes or villains are strutted across the stage. The groundlings acclaim a hero, affirming decisions made by men and women they do not know and have never seen except perhaps in the media. Advertising and public relations practitioners are always big players in such a process, inventing ingenious rationales for ‘what has to be done’ or making heroes out of personalities, ideas, or causes.”

Robert Jackall & Janice M. Hirota, *Image Makers: Advertising, Public Relations, and the Ethos of Advocacy* (2000)

**Course Description:** The messages and symbols used to portray those who govern and their policies as positive and/or necessary are called propaganda. Prior to the mass media, it was possible for average citizens to live at a distance from propaganda. But with the development of television, radio, mass circulation newspapers, and the internet as well as the mass production of goods and industrialized warfare, the public realm has become saturated with propaganda. It is often difficult to distinguish between propaganda and objective reporting and commentary because the mass media frequently offers as “news” declarations of fact and intent issued by government officials with little skepticism or critical analysis. This is troubling in a democracy when political technicians take their cue in the dissemination of propaganda from commercial advertising and public relations experts who specialize in the distortion of reality. This course examines the history of propaganda and its contemporary manifestations in order to answer two general questions: (1) Are those who control the messages we receive able to control our thinking? and (2) If citizens of modern democracies are susceptible to persuasion by propaganda, what are the consequences for the future of democracy in a bureaucratized, technologically driven world?

### **Learning Objectives:**

A hard working student should complete this course with the capacity to do the following:

- Locate the sources and impact of propaganda in everyday life
- Listen and respond critically to the messages of politicians and advertisers
- Write critically and insightfully about the role of propaganda in contemporary society
- Understand how perception manipulation is a standard practice of modern organizations and bureaucracies
- Develop the capacity to be an informed citizen in a mass media saturated democracy

Sociology of Propaganda (SOC 300B:CRN20503)  
St. Thomas Aquinas College  
Spring 2010

**Dr. Churchill's Web Site:** Go to <http://stacweb.stac.edu/~cchurchi/> for links to this syllabus (bottom of page), additional course material, and links to web sites relevant to sociology.

**Final Grade:** Participation = 20%  
Presentation = 10%  
Paper #1 = 20%  
Paper #2 = 20%  
Final Paper = 30%

**NOTE:** *Any work which you do not complete will be worth 0 points.*

**Due Dates:** To be announced.

**Office Location:** Maguire 12

**Office Hours:** Mon. 11:15-11:45  
Tues. 11:15-2:00  
Wed. 11:15-12:00

**Office Telephone #:** (845) 398 – 4387

**E-mail:** cchurchi@stac.edu

## **RESOURCES:**

### **I. Required Texts (available in College bookstore):**

Ellul, Jacques. (1965) *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes.*

Howard, Martin. (2005) *We Know What You Want: How They Change Your Mind.*

Jackall, Robert, ed. (1995) *Propaganda.*

Orwell, George. (1949) *1984.*

Phillips, Peter and Mickey Huff with Project Censored, ed. *Censored 2010: The Top 25 Censored Stories of 2008-09.*

### **II. Limited selections photocopied from the following texts (to be distributed in class; articles from the mass media and political journals will also be distributed):**

Arendt, Hannah. (1966) *The Origins of Totalitarianism.*

Borjesson, Kristina. (2002) *Into the Buzzsaw: Leading Journalists Expose the Myth of a Free Press.*

Critical Arts Ensemble. (1998) *The Electronic Disturbance.*

Ewen, Stuart. (1977) *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture.*

Fellman, Gordon. (1998) *Rambo and the Dalai Lama: The Compulsion to Win and Its Threat to Human Survival.*

Keen, Sam. (1991) *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination.*

Rampton, Sheldon and John Stauber. (2003) *Weapons of Mass Deception: The Uses of Propaganda in Bush's War on Iraq.*

### III. Web Sites:

- “Democracy Now!”: [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org)
- FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting); [www.fair.org](http://www.fair.org)
- Media Matters for America: [www.mediamatters.org](http://www.mediamatters.org)
- Media Research Center: [www.mediaresearch.org](http://www.mediaresearch.org)

### IV. Periodicals

- *Adbusters* ([www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org))
- *Advertising Age* ([www.adage.com](http://www.adage.com))
- *AdWeek* ([www.adweek.com](http://www.adweek.com))
- *Campaigns & Elections* ([www.campaignline.com](http://www.campaignline.com))
- *Center for Media and Democracy: Publishers of PR Watch* ([www.prwatch.org](http://www.prwatch.org))
- *In These Times* ([www.inthesetimes.com](http://www.inthesetimes.com))
- *The Nation* ([www.thenation.com](http://www.thenation.com))
- *O’Dwyer’s PR Daily* ([www.odwyerpr.com](http://www.odwyerpr.com))

### VI. Other Related Books:

- Ellul, Jacques. (1964) *The Technological Society*.
- Fromm, Erich. (1941) *Escape from Freedom*.
- Jackall, Robert & Janice M. Hirota. (2000) *Image Makers: Advertising, Public Relations, and the Ethos of Advocacy*.
- Machiavelli, Niccolo. (1532). *The Prince*.
- May, Elaine Tyler. (1988) *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*.
- Mills, C. Wright. (1956) *The Power Elite*.
- (1951) *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*.
- Reich, Wilhelm. (1946). *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*.
- Schlosser, Eric. (2002) *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*.
- Snow, Nancy. (2002) *Propaganda Inc.: Selling America’s Culture to the World*.
- Speier, Hans. (1986) *German White-Collar Workers and the Rise of Hitler*.

### Requirements & Policies:

- 1) *Participation*: This is a seminar. You are required to make comments, ask questions, and participate in debate during class sessions.
- 2) *Special Accommodations*: If you are entitled to special accommodations, it is your obligation to let me know in advance of *each* relevant assignment and to show me proof of your entitlement each time.
- 3) *Reading*: To be done as assigned.
- 4) *Projects*: Guidelines for each project will be distributed in advance.

- 5) *Attendance*: More than 2 absences will harm your grade. Seven (7) absences will result in failing the course, regardless of whether absences are excused. Disruptive behavior such as reading newspapers, doing work for other courses, or sitting in a manner indicating you are asleep during class will result in your being marked absent. Coming into class late and leaving early will also be noted and will harm your grade.
- 6) *E-mail and phone*: Do not email or call me with questions about assignments, scheduling, or grades. These issues must be addressed to me directly in class or during office hours.
- 7) *Electronic communication devices*: All means of electronic communication (email, text messaging, etc.) are prohibited in class. If you plan to use a laptop computer during class for note taking, you are required to see me about this at the beginning of the semester. Use of electronic communication in class will result your being instructed to leave class for the day, marked absent for that session, and a lower participation grade.
- 8) *Grading*: The standard in grading all student work in this course can be found in the St. Thomas Aquinas College Catalog on the next to last page of this syllabus. While the STAC grading scale does not include minuses (e.g. A -, B -, C -), my own scale does. See back page of the syllabus for a conversion chart.

All grade questions must be discussed with me in person, not by telephone or by email. Athletic obligations and vacation plans are your burden to accommodate. Tests and due dates will not be altered to fit these external activities. A test missed because of a valid, documented excuse will be replaced with a make up test. Absences without a valid excuse during a test result in 0 points for that test.

### **STAC Academic Integrity Policy**

Academic Integrity, a commitment to honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility, is the foundation of the learning process. All members of the St. Thomas Aquinas College community are held to the highest standards of academic honesty. While we recognize the participatory nature of education, we take academic integrity very seriously, and the College policy on academic dishonesty details consequences that can include dismissal from the College. That policy can be found in both the Student Handbook and the College Catalog.

As a student in this class, you must demonstrate your commitment to academic integrity by submitting work which originates in your own imagination, analytical faculties, or your own knowledge, which you have done yourself, and which represents your very best efforts. When appropriate, your work should be supplemented and supported by other sources; however, you must always insure that these sources are properly cited using the recommended documentation system.

**Academic Accommodations:** Students requiring accommodations for a documented disability should notify the instructor before the end of the first week of class.

## WRITING GUIDE

The most important rule to remember in writing papers is to be clear and to the point. If you read your paper aloud to yourself, you will hear whether what you have written is clear or garbled. Reread your written work a couple of times before handing it in. Any sentences or paragraphs which do not make sense to you will make even less sense to me. An excellent guide for clear writing is *The Elements of Style* by Strunk & White. This is a slim and inexpensive paperback available in most bookstores.

The following rules apply to all writing:

- 1) **Plagiarism: DO NOT PLAGIARIZE.** Plagiarism is a serious offense. If you use *anyone* else's writing in your papers without quoting and citing them properly, you will receive an F on your paper and you may receive an F for the entire course. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated under any circumstances in this course.
- 2) **Format:** All papers must be typed and double-spaced. Do not use excessive margins or font sizes to extend the length of your paper. If you do, your grade will suffer.
- 3) **Cover Page:** All papers must have a cover page which contains the following: (a) paper title, (b) your name, (c) the course and section for which the paper is written, and (d) the date on which the paper is handed in. The cover page does not count toward the length of the paper.
- 4) **Numbering:** Number all pages except for the cover page.
- 5) **Contractions:** Do not use contractions. For example, instead of writing "don't" or "haven't" write "do not" or "have not". Contractions are informal and do not belong in academic writing.
- 6) **References and Citations:** Any time you quote or reference work which is not your own, you must provide a full citation for that work in a footnote or endnote as well as provide a full bibliographical reference. This pertains to any printed or spoken idea or words you are using which are not your own. If you are quoting a source from the Internet, you are required to provide proof that the source is reliable (that is, show me that it is an academic or mass media source). It is your obligation to prove that any Internet site is a legitimate source of information.

***Web sites are never acceptable citations unless approved by professor in advance and provided with an annotation in the bibliography.***

For guides on formatting footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographies, go to the library and locate the citation guidelines of the Modern Language Association (MLA). You may also use *The Chicago Manual of Style* as a guide.

**STAC Grading Standards**  
(Excerpted from College catalogue; emphasis added.)

**A (94-100%)**

Excellent. Indicates *unusually high achievement*. Students who merit A, in addition to fulfilling the minimum requirements, give evidence of the *ability to work independently, read rather widely on their own initiative*, organize the materials of the course in relation to its wider implications, give evidence in skill subjects of habitual *errorless mastery*.

**B+ (87-93%)**

Very good-superior. Indicates achievement *demonstrably above average* and an intelligent fulfillment of course requirements in a manner that *approaches the excellence of the highest grade*.

**B (80-86%)**

Good. Signifies a *consistently high level of achievement* and indicates that the course requirements have been fulfilled in an intelligent and *above-average* manner.

**C+ (75-79%)**

Very satisfactory. Signifies a more acceptable degree of understanding and consistent achievement than a C. Indicates that a *student has mastered the basic course material, attended classes regularly, fulfilled assignments as required*, and given *evidence of mastery* of the skills required for the course.

**C (70-74%)**

Satisfactory. Signifies *acceptable understanding & consistent achievement* of quality that satisfies the required graduation grade.

**D (65-69%)**

Inferior-passing. Indicates understanding and achievement *below the average level* expected of students and therefore warrants only minimum approval.

**F**

Failure. Indicates that the student's work does not merit a passing grade.

**GRADING CONVERSION CHART  
 STAC to Dr. Churchill**

<b>STAC</b>		<b>Dr. Churchill</b>	
<i>Letter</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Letter</i>	<i>%</i>
A	94 – 100	A+	100
		A	95 – 99
		A –	94
B+	87 – 93	B+	87 – 93
B	80 – 86	B	84 – 86
		B –	80 – 83
C+	75 – 79	C+	75 – 79
C	70 – 74	C	74
		C –	70 – 73
D	65 – 69	D+	67 – 69
		D	65 – 67
F	0 – 64	F	0 – 64*

**\*NOTE:**

If you hand in work which earns an F, the percentage equivalent for that F is usually 64%. If you fail to hand in an assignment, the F you receive for it has the percentage equivalent of 0%. In the latter case, the F is technically worth far less than an F for a completed assignment and will have far more damaging consequences for your overall grade. **In all cases of plagiarism and cheating, an F is worth 0% and the violation is recorded in a permanent file in the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Depending on the severity of the incident, you may also fail the entire course.**