

Propaganda and Society

Professor: Todd Nesbitt

Contact: todd.nesbitt@cerge-ei.cz

Course Description:

This course explores mass persuasion and propaganda in a developmental context with an emphasis on understanding approaches and techniques. It traces the emergence of strategic persuasive communication and propaganda from its origins to the present day. The basic principles, philosophy, and techniques of mass persuasion in different periods are considered, with an emphasis on contemporary contexts. Students will learn to identify different propaganda techniques, and will gain the tools to evaluate and debunk propaganda campaigns. A developmental approach is used in order to allow the opportunity to see aspects of continuity and change in approaches. A combination of classic and contemporary texts in the area of propaganda and disinformation will be studied. Various approaches to propaganda will be examined across a variety of media, with an emphasis in the second half of the course on emerging computational and participatory propaganda.

Learning Outcomes

Specialist knowledge:

Students will be able to:

- Comprehend the philosophical, historical and functional underpinnings of propaganda;
- Trace the history of mass persuasion from ancient civilization to today's global technological society;
- Identify and discuss criteria that are indicative of a media propaganda campaign;
- Explain how and why particular major media of communication have been used for mass persuasion in different societies at different times;
- Identify and explain contemporary methods of computational propaganda and disinformation

Specialist skills:

Students will be able to:

- Recognize and critically evaluate propaganda campaigns;
- Analyse and explain the role of audience analysis and goals and objectives in the development of persuasion materials;
- Examine applications of persuasion in the "emerging technologies" and explain their possible effects on the present and future users of these technologies;
- Conduct basic independent research on propaganda;
- Become knowledgeable with some key academic literature on propaganda and persuasion

Grading Policy:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A	93-100	Outstanding work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

UPCES Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy

The UPCES program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristic, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

UPCES Diversity Policy

UPCES fully embraces diversity and strives to create a safe and welcoming environment for students from all backgrounds. Prague is a wonderfully diverse community and UPCES is no different. All students should feel at home while studying abroad and UPCES will do its utmost to make sure that becomes a reality. Although unique challenges may arise, we believe that students from all walks of life will encounter wonderful opportunities for enrichment as they explore a new culture while studying abroad.

Schedule

WEEK	AGENDA	READINGS
Week 1	Introduction to Propaganda and Society	<i>Encyclopedia of Prop. & Mass Persuasion</i> (Cull, Culbert, Welch)
Week 2	Propaganda until the 20 th Century	<i>Propaganda Through the Ages</i> (Jowett & O'Donnell)
	Mass Society and Mass Propaganda	<i>Propaganda and Disinformation: How a Historical Perspective Aids Critical Response Development</i> (Bennet)
Week 3	Effects of Propaganda and Persuasion	<i>Propaganda and Persuasion Examined</i> (Jowett & O'Donnell)
	20 th Century Propaganda & Psychological Warfare	<i>The Seven Propaganda Devices</i> (Sproule) + <i>Atrocities, Investigations and Prop: Lessons from WWI</i> (Lawson)
		<i>Information-Age Conflict in the Post-Cold War Era</i> (Taylor)
Week 4	Examining Propaganda: Process and Construction	<i>How to Analyze Propaganda</i> (Jowett & O'Donnell)
		<i>Int. studies on disinformation related to Covid 19</i> (various)
	Computational Propaganda	<i>Computational Prop. & the Rise of the Fake Audience</i> (Delwiche)
Week 5	Network Propaganda and Information Warfare	<i>From Disinformation to Fake News</i> (O'Shaughnessy)
		<i>Participatory Propaganda</i> (Wanless, Berk)
Week 6	Manufacturing Consent	<i>Fake News, Russian Bots, and Putin's Puppets</i> (McLeod)
	Can Democracy Survive the Internet?	<i>Post-Truth and the Changing Information Environment</i> (Kalpokas)