

PHIL 109  
FIRST YEAR SEMINAR: PROPAGANDA

Fall 2022

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| <b>Instructor:</b> Megan Hyska   | <b>Time:</b> T/Th: 2-3:20 |
| <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:megan.hyska@northwestern.edu">megan.hyska@northwestern.edu</a> | <b>Place:</b> Kresge 3438 |

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**Office Hours:** In-person (Kresge 3-349) Thursdays 3:30-5:30 and by alternative arrangement.

**Course Materials:** All readings are either posted on Canvas or available at links in the body of (the digital copy of) this syllabus.

**Course Description and Objectives:**

Democracy works when people are able to make conscientious, informed decisions about the kind of society they want to live in. Thinkers from antiquity to the present have been concerned with the various ways that this ability can be undermined by propaganda, both in purported democracies and in explicitly authoritarian regimes. On the other hand, some thinkers have suggested that propaganda isn't always bad, and is perhaps a necessary component of liberatory social and political movements. In this course we will be asking three central questions: What is propaganda? How does propaganda function in the world today? And finally, how can propaganda be resisted by those who are harmed by it?

This seminar will also involve some coursework dedicated to helping you acquire skills that will help you in your transition to university. These skills include:

- setting and evaluating academic goals
- communicating effectively, both orally and in writing
- doing research
- understanding standards of academic integrity
- knowing when and how to ask for help

**Course Outline:**

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| DAY         | READINGS AND COURSEWORK  |
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| 1,<br>09.20 | Introduction, no readings or assignments   |
| 2,<br>09.22 | Cory Wimberly, excerpt from <i>How Propaganda Became Public Relations: Foucault and the Corporate Government of the Public</i> |
|             | Submit Goals Assignment and post discussion question before class.   |
| 3,<br>09.27 | Anne Quaranto and Jason Stanley, excerpt from "Propaganda"   |
|             | Reading Response 1 due. Paper Pitch 1 assignment due by 9pm.   |

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| 4,<br>09.29 | College Skills 1: Using the Library, doing research.   |
|             | Read partner's Paper Pitch before class. Finish Library Book Assignment (explained in class) by 5pm. |

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| 5,<br>10.04 | Hannah Arendt, excerpt from <i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i> |
|             | Reading Response 2 due.   |

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| 6,<br>10.06 | College Skills 2: Seeking Help                          |
|             | Hand in Annotated Bibliography Assignment before class. |

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| 7,<br>10.11 | Lisa Wedeen, excerpt from <i>Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria</i> |
|             | Reading Response 3 due.   |

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| 8,<br>10.13 | Ukraine and colonial propaganda, readings TBD         |
|             | Reading Response 4 due. Draft of Paper 1 due by 10pm. |

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| 9<br>10.18 | Class cancelled, individual meetings in lieu. |
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| 10,<br>10.20 | Amilcar Cabral, <i>National Liberation and Culture</i> |
|              | Reading Response 5 due.                                |

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| 11,<br>10.25 | College Skills 3: Academic Integrity       |
|              | Goal Check-in assignment due before class. |

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| 12,<br>10.27 | W.E.B. Du Bois, <i>Criteria of Negro Art</i> , and Alain Locke, <i>Art or Propaganda?</i> |
|              | Reading Response 6 due. Revised Paper 1 due by 10pm.                                      |

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| 13,<br>11.01 | Patricia Hill Collins, excerpt from <i>Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images</i> |
|              | Reading Response 7 due.  |

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14,     Class cancelled  
11.03

Paper Pitch 2 due.

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15,     José Medina, excerpt from *Resisting Racist Propaganda: Distorted Visual*  
11.08    *Communication and Epistemic Activism*

Reading Response 8 due.

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16,     Edward S Herman and Noam Chomsky, excerpt from *Manufacturing Consent:*  
11.10    *The Political Economy of the Mass Media*

Reading Response 9 due. Read partner's Paper Pitch 2 before class.

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17,     Reporter's Collective, Pt 4 of *Eyeball Politics: How Facebook Gave BJP a*  
11.15    *Leg-Up*

Reading Response 10 due.

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18,     C. Thi Nguyen, *Polarization or Propaganda?*  
11.17

Reading Response 11 due.

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19,     Shoshanna Zuboff, excerpt from *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*  
11.22

Reading Response 12 due.

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**Grade breakdown:**

Paper 1 30%

Paper 2 35%

Participation and presentation 15%

Reading responses and other assignments 20%

**Major Deadlines:**

Paper 1 draft: October 13th, 10pm

Paper 1 revised: October 27th, 10pm

Paper 2: December 5th, 12pm

**Assignments:**

*Papers:*

You will hand in two polished papers over the course of the quarter (due dates above). Late papers will be docked 5% for each day that they're late.

Paper 1: 1000-1250 words (approx 4-5 pages double-spaced), 3+ sources. This paper will be progress in 4 stages; first you will hand in a paper pitch which you will discuss and workshop with a peer in class;

second, you will hand in an annotated bibliography; third, then you hand in a full draft, which you will have an appointment with me to get comments on. Fourth and finally, after integrating this feedback, you will hand in a final copy. Your grade will be based on the overall quality of the final paper as well as the progress made over the course of the revision process.

Paper 2: 1250-1500 words (approx 5-6 pages double-spaced), 3+ sources. You will hand in a paper pitch and workshop this pitch with a peer, but there is no mandatory instructor consultation process for this paper. That said, you are strongly encouraged to come see your instructor to chat through ideas and get feedback on rough drafts.

Both papers will have the form of a case analysis. This requires you to do each of the following:

1. Choose an example that you feel qualifies as propaganda. This could be a contemporary example, or one from history; it could be from the United States or any other country in the world. It might be a speech, a pamphlet, an excerpt from a longer written work, a piece of visual art, a film, an advertisement, a tweet, a photograph, a play, or a piece in any other medium that interests you. It can be something widely agreed to be an example of propaganda or something the status of which as propaganda might be controversial. Choose something that you find interesting/ enraging/ effective (or perhaps curiously *ineffective?*)/ dangerous/ illuminating! **NB:** In order to force you to think creatively, you may *not* choose a WWII propaganda poster from either Axis or Allied Powers unless you seek special permission from me.
2. Present an argument as to how the case works as propaganda– to do this, you should provide information about the context in which it appeared, as well as alluding to some of the theorists we will talk about in class (or others). You must show that you can select sources appropriate to your citation needs (see “Working with Sources” handout, available on Canvas). You’ll also, however, be relying on your own powers of analysis and argumentation.

You should make sure to address questions like:

- Who was this piece of propaganda aimed at?
- What did the piece’s creator(s) aim to have this audience believe or do?
- How did the piece’s creators think that the piece would bring about this effect in the audience?
- Was the piece effective/ likely to be effective? Why or why not?

The most important thing for these case analyses is that you make them interesting and original– write about something you care about, and where you have something interesting to say. Even if the piece you’re describing is truly loathsome, avoid pure polemic in favor of careful analysis. You’ll also be assessed for technically proficient writing and tight argumentation. I want to see that you’ve anticipated possible objections to your core argument and made it stronger to defend against these objections.

Paper formatting requirements are as follows:

- Double-spaced
- All sources properly cited using a consistent citation style (it doesn’t matter to me whether you choose APA, MLA, etc., but you’ve got to pick one and stick to it). Regardless of your chosen citation style, you will have both a bibliography at the end of the paper and some sort of annotation mechanism (e.g. footnotes, endnotes, in-line parenthetical citations) in the body of the paper.
- Pages numbered
- I’m not picky about precise fonts or margin sizes, though do note that it is the word count, not a certain number of pages, that you need to satisfy (so large margins won’t really help you ;))

*Reading responses:*

On days when Reading Responses are due, they must be in by 11:30 am before our class meeting and should be uploaded on Canvas. These should be approximately 200 words long. Except under special circumstances, I will not accept reading responses that are handed in late. They are not meant to be summaries of the readings, but rather a set of comments on what you found interesting or perplexing. At the end of each response, you should include one discussion question. Reading responses should refer to and *cite* specific comments in the reading. Responses without citations will receive a 0 and students will be asked to re-write.

When grading these responses, I will be looking for clear, technically proficient writing as well as evidence that you have grappled with the reading. Responses will receive 0, 1 or 2 as their grade. If you receive less than a 2 *but did hand the assignment in on-time*, you can make up the points by correcting issues with the response and *coming to my office to discuss these changes*. Except in unusual circumstances, makeup points may not be petitioned for by Canvas or e-mail without also having an in-person meeting with me. Note that you will not usually receive written comments on responses, but that I'm happy to give more in depth feedback if you make an appointment to come see me.

*Attendance and Participation:*

This is a discussion-based class, not a lecture. It goes without saying that in order to participate you need to attend, but it's also vital that you come to every class prepared to discuss the readings or other assigned material; the fact that participation is part of your grade reflects this. The reading responses are in part designed to help make you feel prepared for this conversation, but if you're still struggling to feel comfortable speaking in class, please come chat with me so we can discuss strategies.

This is an in-person class, so by default in-person attendance is required in both lecture and discussion section. Except in extraordinary circumstance, in order for an absence to be excused it must be communicated to me *in advance* of the class you will be missing. Note that the university has instructed faculty *not* to hybridize classes except under special pre-approved circumstances— this means that if you can't come to class in person, we will not be able to zoom you in to participate synchronously in lecture or section.

Per WCAS regulation, a student can not pass this course unless they are present for at least 50% of course meetings.

*Presentation:* On every day of the quarter where there is a reading assigned (except for day 2) a student will be responsible for giving a 10-15 minute introduction to the reading in which they summarize its key arguments and conclusions. They will conclude their presentation by offering 3-5 discussion questions, and will assist in leading discussion for the rest of the class period. The presenting student will have prepared a set of slides with key terms, ideas, and questions to use during their presentation. You are still responsible for having handed in a reading response on the day of your presentation, but this shouldn't really amount to doing extra work; your introduction will in some ways be like an extended reading response (though note, you do not have to have this whole introduction written down). Your presentation counts toward your participation grade. As a discussion leader, you should make sure to have done any research necessary in order to give proper context for the reading: tell us who the author is, the historical context in which they're writing, and, if the author alludes to any concept, entity or event that may not be familiar to all students, be prepared to explain it to the class. A sign up sheet for presentations will be circulated at the beginning of the quarter.

**Prohibition of Recording of Class Sessions by Students:** Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact [AccessibleNU](#). Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also prohibited. Under the University's [Copyright Policy](#), faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created

specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording, or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

**Academic Integrity:** Students in this course are required to comply with the policies found in the booklet, “Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic Guide”. All assignments submitted for credit in this course must be submitted electronically unless otherwise instructed by the professor. Your written work may be tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern or to download the guide, visit: <https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html>

**Students with Disabilities:** Northwestern University is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact AccessibleNU to move forward with the university’s established accommodation process (e: [accessiblenu@northwestern.edu](mailto:accessiblenu@northwestern.edu); p: 847-467-5530). If you already have established accommodations with AccessibleNU, please let me know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we can work together to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations, is confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

**Support for Wellness and Mental Health:** Northwestern University is committed to supporting the wellness of our students. Student Affairs has multiple resources to support student wellness and mental health. If you are feeling distressed or overwhelmed, please reach out for help. Students can access confidential resources through the [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#), [Religious and Spiritual Life \(RSL\)](#) and the [Center for Awareness, Response and Education \(CARE\)](#).