

**CARLETON UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
PHIL 2900, TRUTH AND PROPAGANDA**

TERM: Fall/Winter, 2013-14

INSTRUCTOR: Randal Marlin

CLASS TIMES: Mon. & Wed. 8:35 a.m.-9:55 a.m.

OFFICE: 3A56 Paterson Hall

OFFICE HOURS: Mon. & Wed. 10:15 a.m.- 12 noon. Other times by arrangement.

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Prerequisite: A course in Philosophy or Second-year standing.

Evaluation

There will be an essay worth 40% of the final mark. Details about this essay are provided below. Two formally scheduled, three-hour examinations worth 30% each will be held in December and April.

Required texts

1. Randal Marlin, *Propaganda and The Ethics of Persuasion* (Second Edition)

2. Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda*

(Both of the above will be available at New Octopus Books, 116 Third Avenue, just west of Bank St.)

Please note that last year's Coursepack, "Truth and Propaganda," contains readings that are still relevant this year, but because many of the readings are now on-line through Ares it will not be re-published this year. The few texts from that Coursepack that are not available through Ares but are still assigned can be obtained at the Reserve desk in the main (McOdrum) Library.

One other book may also be assigned, if it is available in time, in place of some of the readings of the last four weeks. The book is edited by Nancy Snow, and is scheduled for publication in early March by LSU Press.

Highly recommended:

David Welch, *Propaganda: Power and Persuasion*

David Nyberg, *The Varnished Truth*

Garth S. Jowett & Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*

Garth Jowett & Victoria O'Donnell, eds., *Readings in Propaganda and Persuasion: New and Classic Essays.*

Stephen J.A. Ward, *The Invention of Journalism Ethics*

George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant!*

Wendell Potter, *Deadly Spin*

Lee Wilkins & Clifford G. Christians, eds., *The Handbook of Mass Media Ethics*

Ben Fritz, Bryan Keefer, and Brendan Nyhan, *All the President's Spin*

James L. Turk & Allan Manson, eds., *Free Speech in Fearful Times*

Yahya R. Kamalipour & Nancy Snow, eds., *War, Media and Propaganda: A Global Perspective*

Anthony Pratkanis & Elliot Aronson, *Age of Propaganda*

Other reading materials will be on reserve in the main library, and on the Internet. On the latter see, among many other sources, ***Global Media Journal, Canadian Edition, Vol. III, No 2*** devoted to "Propaganda, Ethics and Media," December, 2010. It is most important that students be able to access the Net conveniently.

Course description

What is propaganda? We often hear this term used pejoratively as an accusation. But ambiguities make the nature of the charge unclear. This course aims at providing an understanding of techniques of persuasion, both ancient and modern, in the light of which propaganda as a phenomenon can best be understood. Students should get a heightened awareness of the many influences on their opinions and attitudes, not all of which would necessarily be termed "propaganda." Misleading use of language and statistics, advertising imagery, political disinformation, press agentry, ideologically motivated funding of "think tanks," reporting and editorial biases, all make it difficult for the ordinary citizen to make sound democratic choices. Knowledge of the various persuasive techniques will, it is hoped, improve individual freedom and autonomy. The ethics of various forms of persuasion is examined. The question of social and legal controls over communication is also treated, in the context of, e.g., hate propaganda, media ownership, world information imbalance, censorship and curriculum materials in schools, etc. The problem of relativity of "truth" and the concept of bias and objectivity are recurring questions that receive attention.

Guide to the Essay

One essay, of about 3,000 words, will be required, due Wednesday, February 12, 5 p.m. at the latest. Essays with their dossiers are usually too big to fit the drop-off box, but I plan to be in my office to receive them during the afternoon of the 12th. Late essays will not ordinarily be accepted.

Students should hand in, along with their essay, a dossier of the materials discussed (e.g. photocopies or print-outs of news stories or commentaries, press releases, audiotapes, videotapes, downloaded materials from the Internet, etc.). It is very important to present these in an orderly, easily retrievable format. A large, at least 11"x14," scrapbook may be advisable if you are working with newspaper clippings. Some formatting guidelines can be found in the American Psychological Association website:

<<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/faqs/index.aspx>>, but any generally accepted academic style can be used, if used consistently.

In the essay the student should produce some sample of current propaganda and analyze it, giving reasons for viewing the material as propaganda, discussing its likely or intended impact on the recipient, and commenting on the ethics of using such a form of appeal. By "current" is meant anything subsequent to February, 2013.

Suggested Topics. New suggestions will be made from time to time as events unfold. The following subjects are fertile fields for propaganda.

(1) U.S. politics, with congressional elections in November, 2014, there is plenty of propaganda to be analysed already. Websites like Truthout, Nation of Change, Altnet, PR Watch, Fact Check, Source Watch, Common Dreams, Straight Goods (a Canadian Website), Consortium News, etc. can be relied on to give viewpoints contrasting with the mainstream media. Newspapers like *The Guardian*, *The Independent* (caution: recently acquired by a wealthy Russian), and TV news outlets such as Al Jazeera are also worth consulting for contrasting views. It will be up to you to determine as best you can who, given the conflicting viewpoints, is engaged in deliberate distortion, omission or fabrication,

warranting the description "propaganda" (using the term in the negative sense). Maybe both sides are guilty of this. Note that since the U.S. court case called *Citizens United*, corporations can spend unlimited amounts of money to support a favoured candidate or policy. Expect lots of propaganda. Watch for disputes within different factions of the Republican Party regarding ideology associated with what has been dubbed the "Tea Party."

(2) There are City of Ottawa issues. The prospect of a downtown casino is one such issue, locating and constructing mass transit another, and regular overturning of zoning limits for high rise development a third, with concerns about the extent of developer influence over City Hall.

(3) As Edward Snowden correctly predicted, the revelations he made about seemingly unrestrained U.S. surveillance over general populations instead of being limited to justifiably targeted groups, have led to mainstream media focussing on his own personality more than on the issues he raised. In this respect his fate resembles that of Bradley Manning and Wikileaks founder Julian Assange. Some mainstream media accounts focus on damages to U.S. security produced by these leakers (the amount of damage being in dispute). Or they hint that Snowden was disloyal, fleeing to China and Russia. In the alternate media the case is made that the U.S. has abandoned rule of law and democratic ideals in pursuit of power, and that the leakers merely provided evidence to show this; and furthermore that U.S. illegalities in pursuing the leakers confirms the lack of respect for due process. This is a fertile field for propaganda study, likely to be continued in some form or another in the months to come.

(4) The Quebecor (Sun Media, TVA) success in obtaining a licence for an all-news channel, Sun TV News, is seen by many, including Margaret Atwood, as a move to bring Fox News-style reporting to Canada, with its polemical treatment of issues. Such fears were fueled by a meeting between Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and his media spokesman at the time, Kory Tenecyke, and Rupert Murdoch in New York March 30, 2009. Rupert Murdoch, who has enjoyed legendary influence over political leaders worldwide through the massive reach of his print media and broadcasting empire (Fox News, the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Times* of London, are only a few examples of many) recently got into hot water regarding his racy *News of the World*, which was exposed for hacking scandalously into people's private correspondence. Murdoch killed his *News of the World*, but a public inquiry was still held to investigate, among other things, his influence over politicians. The pattern of Quebecor, certainly as evidenced in the *Ottawa Sun*, has been to attack a competitor, the *CBC*, with a vehemence and regularity that suggests bias. Keep an eye out for more of the same. Of particular interest is the opposition by media competitors of Bell Canada Enterprises to the latter's \$3.4 million takeover of Astral Media. It was interesting to see media conglomerates argue that other media conglomerates are not in the public interest. The CRTC eventually OK'd a modified form of the takeover. To make sense of the result I recommend Professor Dwayne Winseck's (Communications) discussions in his blog Mediamorphis. From there you may be able to find examples of distortion and propaganda relating to the public benefit, or otherwise, from the takeover.

(5) Bell, Rogers and Telus have been engaged in a sustained PR battle to persuade the public that government moves to allow foreign competition in the telecom industry would not be in the public interest. Many Canadians feel that fees charged for mobile phones are far too high and would welcome competition to reduce them. Watch for propaganda in this fight for public support.

(6) The treatment of Maher Arar was shown by Kerry Pither and the government inquiry into his treatment to have important propagandistic ramifications. Treatment of others accused of terrorism such as Omar Khadr (convicted following confession after years in Guantanamo prison, a circumstance that could be seen as duress-inducing) has also been controversial. Watch for one-sided accounts about these or similar cases that further anti-Muslim or anti-American propaganda.

(7) The issue of global warming, climate change, and the fate of the Kyoto accords. Watch for "astroturf" from the oil industry and others. A very hot summer in 2012, with drought affecting especially many farmers in the U.S. corn belt, has caused many people to think that the science predicting this kind of thing might have been right, and worth more attention. Watch for continuing propaganda on this matter.

(8) Quebec politics and the fallout from the Lac Mégantic disaster will be worth watching for many reasons. Corporate profit versus public safety, public regulation versus private freedom of action, come into play and each side may be making use of propaganda. The federal government has some jurisdiction over transportation. The issue of Quebec independence has been for a while in abeyance, but it can easily re-surface. Watch for different ways in which incidents, such as enforcement of Quebec's language law, get reported in media (French and English) with different commitments or sympathies. Keep in mind that a sharp line between information and propaganda is not always easy to draw.

(9) There is a fight for public opinion in the matter of genetically engineered (GE) or modified foods or organisms (GM, GMO), dubbed "frankenfoods" by critics. Monsanto is a key player in this battle. Some make the case that the federal government is influenced too much by the corporate lobbying of the big food industries.

(10) The war concerning tobacco controls is always a worthy topic. Watch for possible new developments.

(11) The economic downturn has produced a lot of analysis and forecasting, and suggestions for government spending to alleviate the crisis. But not all of the suggestions are disinterested. Watch for sustained propaganda favouring certain vested interests, either in Canada, the United States, or Europe.

(12) A big threat to world peace exists in relation to Iran's proceeding with development of nuclear energy, ostensibly for peaceful purposes, and Israel's adamant refusal to allow Iran to have a nuclear military capability. The issue is multi-faceted, and much hangs on understanding exactly what is meant by a "nuclear capability." That is a weasel word that could be interpreted to mean "have a bomb" or "have materials that could be made to produce a bomb in months or years if such were needed for self-defence." Keeping track of the arguments on both sides, and of those of their allies, should produce good material for analysis.

(13) Oil pipeline construction raises environmental and safety concerns that the oil industry seeks to allay. An essay could compare what the industry says in public and discuss aspects of the communications that you find to be propagandistic. The Keystone XL is the pipeline in the U.S. in need of approval, and a west-east pipeline is at issue in Canada.

(14) A Canadian Website, openparliament.ca gives a lot of information about what is going on in Parliament, with texts of speeches, bills, committee hearings, etc. You could work at detecting propaganda in the way things are dealt with here, or you could use the

information to detect propaganda in the way the media reports on these goings on. Another Website, democratize.ca actually gets readers to vote on bills after providing information about what the bills mean.

(15) Peace talks between Israel and Palestine tend to generate propaganda from sympathisers on both sides. Especially important in many cases is not so much what is said as what is not said, and what is done while the peace talks are underway.

Some topics, in addition to those mentioned, are regular sources for good essays. Watch in case any of these comes to the fore. These include abortion, animal rights, oil supplies and the likely "peak" date, nuclear power (with overlapping concerns about nuclear weaponry and arms sales), "political correctness," ecological concerns, sports subsidies, gun control, and conflicts in Central America, Africa or elsewhere. The rights of various groups in society may come into conflict with business or other interests. These rights may be in connection with employer/employee relations, language, religion, or property; they may relate to women, aboriginal people, gays, particular age groups, etc. The rhetoric of deficit reduction, cost-cutting and job creation needs to be watched carefully for consistency. When a particularly striking instance of alleged rights-violation captures press attention, various opposed interest groups tend to speak out in relation to the case, and a fertile field for propaganda analysis may develop. The topic of marijuana control would be good except that there is so much available on the internet that a higher than usual standard will be set for any such essays; the challenge will be to deal with something current and with some originality.

Some pointers on propaganda campaign analysis can be found in Jowett & O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, Chapters 6 and 7, or in Eleanor MacLean, *Between the Lines*, p. 164. Many students have found the former especially useful for structuring their essays.

Plagiarism

This is a serious offence. It involves submitting work of others as one's own, failing to give proper credit for the source of ideas presented. See the current Undergraduate Calendar, under "Instructional Offences," for the nature and scope of penalties for this offence.

Review Period

If a class is missed by the instructor during normal term time, the review period will be treated as a make-up class with full pertinence for the final examination. Otherwise, the review period time will be used for additional office consultation

Departmental and Carleton University Policies A full statement of these can be found appended to the printed version of this outline or at the departmental Web site at www.carleton.ca/philosophy. This information should be consulted.

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (2013-14)

Assignments:

Unless specifically told otherwise by their instructors, students:

- must not use a plastic or cardboard cover or paper clips
- must staple the paper (there is a stapler on the essay box)
- must include the following in the lower right corner of the cover sheet:
 - student name
 - student number
 - course number and section
 - instructor's name
- The Philosophy Department does not accept assignments by FAX. You may send them by courier, if necessary.
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work – see dates in next column.
- Assignments handed in through the essay box (just inside the glass doors, Paterson Hall, Floor 3A) must be dropped into the box by **4:15** on a regular business day in order to be date-stamped with that day's date. Assignments handed in after 4:15 or on a non-business day will be stamped as having been handed in on the next business day.
- Students are required to keep copies of their assignments. If your paper is lost at any point, you will be considered not to have submitted it if you cannot produce a copy immediately on request.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a final assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral of examination/assignment. For deferred examinations, you must apply within 5 working days after the scheduled date of your exam. To apply for deferral of a final assignment, you must apply within 5 working days of the last scheduled day of classes. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. (Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations, section 14.3, or <http://www4.carleton.ca/calendars//ugrad/current/regulations/acadregsuniv14.html#14.3>)

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The **Paul Menton Centre** for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no

later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*) at <http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/>

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Important Dates:

Sept. 5	Classes start (after Orientation events).
Sept. 18	Last day for registration and course changes in Fall and Fall/Winter courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from Fall term or two-term courses.
Oct. 11	University Day – no undergraduate classes.
Oct. 14	Thanksgiving Day – university closed.
Oct. 28 – Nov. 1	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 25	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
Dec. 9	Last day of classes, Fall term. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for Fall term courses.
Dec. 9	Last day to withdraw from Fall term courses (academic purposes only).
Dec. 10	No classes or examinations take place. Review classes may be held, but no new material may be introduced.
Dec. 11-22	Final examinations for Fall courses, mid-terms for Fall/Winter courses.
Dec. 22	Take-home exams are due.
Jan. 6	Winter term classes begin.
Jan. 17	Last day for registration and course changes in Winter term classes.
Jan. 31	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter courses or winter portion of two-term courses.
Feb. 17-21	Winter Break, classes suspended.
Mar. 25	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
Apr. 8	Last day of Fall/Winter and Winter term classes. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for Fall/Winter and Winter term courses.
Apr. 8	Last day to withdraw from Fall/Winter and Winter term courses (academic purposes only).
Apr. 9-10	No classes or examinations take place. Review classes may be held, but no new material may be introduced.
Apr. 11-26	Final Examinations. Exams will not be held Apr. 18-20.
Apr. 18	Good Friday – university closed.
Apr. 26	Take-home exams are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:	3A35 Paterson Hall www.carleton.ca/philosophy 520-2110
Registrar's Office:	300 Tory www.carleton.ca/registrar 520-3500
Student Academic Success Centre:	302 Tory www.carleton.ca/sasc 520-7850
Writing Tutorial Service:	4 th Floor, Library http://www1.carleton.ca/sasc/writing-tutorial-service/ 520-6632
MacOdrum Library	http://www.library.carleton.ca/ 520-2735