

Propaganda, Ideology, and Democracy
MW 11:35-12:25

Propaganda, Ideology & Democracy

African American Studies 198; Philosophy 177; Education Studies 177b; Cognitive Science 277; Ethics, Politics, and Economics 494

Spring 2020

...when white men rise up against oppression, they are heroes: when black men rise, they have reverted to their native savagery. The uprising in the Warsaw ghetto was not described as a riot, nor were the participants maligned as hoodlums: the boys and girls in Watts and Harlem are thoroughly aware of this... -James Baldwin

This course is about propaganda, ideology, and liberal democracy. Here are some clichés about these notions. Propaganda and ideology are problems for liberal democracy. Propaganda strengthens ideology; ideology makes propaganda possible. That much, we can all agree upon. But what *is* propaganda and what *is* ideology and what *is* liberal democracy? And *how* do propaganda and ideology mutually reinforce each other? What do we know about the psychological, the social, and the linguistic *mechanisms* at work here

Let's suppose, as seems obvious, that there *are* democratically problematic ideologies and democratically problematic propaganda. What makes an ideology democratically problematic? What makes propaganda democratically problematic? How are deviations from democratic values explained by democratic ideology and propaganda? What is the role of history? This is, first and foremost, a class in African American Studies. We will address the philosophical questions in this long philosophical tradition, with US racial ideology being the central example.

Lately, the topic of propaganda and misinformation have been highly salient in the news. The goal of this class is to set this moment into a larger historical perspective – not to normalize it, but to explain it.

There are no prerequisites for this course. It is appropriate for students at any level.

January 13

Introduction

January 15 & 17 *Democracy*

January 15

Jane Adams, "A Modern Lear"

January 17

W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of the Ruling of Men"

Recommended: Chapters 1-3 of How Propaganda Works

Ideology Jan 22-29

January 22

Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus"

January 27

Sally Haslanger, "But Mom, Crop Tops are Cute"

January 29

Katie Rotella and Jenifer Richeson, "Motivated to Forget: The Effects of In-Group Wrongdoing on Collective Guilt"

Rebecca C. Hetey and Jennifer L. Eberhardt, "Racial Disparities in Incarceration Increase Acceptance of Punitive Policies"

Recommended: How Propaganda Works, Chapter 5

Racial Ideology

February 3

Hannah Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, Chapter 6, "Race Thinking before Racism"

February 5

Frederick Hoffmann, Race Traits of the American Negro

February 10

W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Study of the Negro Problems"

Aldon Morris, A Scholar Denied, Chapter 1

February 12

Ida Bae Wells, Southern Horror: Lynch Law in all its Phases

February 17

Khalil Muhammad, *Condemnation of Blackness*, Chapter 2 “Writing Crime into Race”,
February 19

Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Chapter 1
February 24

Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Chapter 2
February 26

Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* Chapter 3-4
March 2 & 4

Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America*”

Propaganda

March 23 & 25 Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Part III

March 23, Chapter 10, “A Classless Society”

March 25, Chapter 11, “The Totalitarian Movement”

Fascist Propaganda April 1 and 3

Jason Stanley, *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them*

April 6 & 8 Conspiracy Theories

Quassim Cassam, *Conspiracy Theories*

In depth case study of a classic text, given the theoretical background

April 13 & 15, 20 & 22

W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*

Requirements

1. There will be weekly 1-2 page (maximum) “reflections on the reading” assignments. These will be graded Pass-Fail. The goal here is to ensure that everyone has grappled with the weekly reading, or minimally some aspect of it. These are not comments on all of the week’s readings. They are rather invitations to reflect on some aspect of part of the reading that was most meaningful to you in light of our central concepts:

propaganda, ideology, and liberal democracy. Students are required to complete each assignment. The idea here is as much for the students to record some reaction to the reading and reflect upon it in writing.

2. There will be three 5-7 page essays, assigned two weeks in advance.
3. The essays as well as completion of *all* the reflections on the reading will determine 85% of final grades. Regular attendance in lecture and section, as well as participation in section discussion will be factors as well, especially in tie breaks (e.g. between an A- and a B+ grade).