COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course aims to raise awareness of bias and ideology in the media that surround us daily. The course does not promote a particular political viewpoint, but challenges you to engage media critically, thereby becoming better informed citizens. In one major component of the course, we will analyze case studies of media coverage of recent controversial topics (the 2003 invasion of Iraq, hydraulic fracturing, the Ukrainian Civil War). In each case study, we will draw from a variety of news sources, both domestic and foreign, of different political persuasions to identity both the core issues and how each source presented them. In addition, we will tackle such topics as: decoding advertising and understanding its influence; how notions of identity and alterity are constructed in cinema and literature; scrutinizing the ‘objectivity’ of documentary cinema; engaging psychoanalytical theory to better understand ideological processes; and analyzing media and signification in the age of postmodernism.

MAIN LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

* To acquire skills in handling sophisticated concepts and incorporate them into discussions and writing that address philosophy and hermeneutics
* To adduce concrete and eloquent examples when making an argument
* To familiarize ourselves with diverse and alternative sources of information
* To identify ideological messages and bias in news, advertising, and other media through an increased awareness of rhetorical devices, cinematic techniques and the problems of selection and omission
Required Reading/Viewing List:

Althusser, Louis, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (1971)
Baudrillard, Jean, Simulacra and Simulation (1995) (selected passages)
Berger, John, Ways of Seeing (2009) (selected passages)
Colletta, Lisa, “Political Satire and Postmodern Irony in the Age of Stephen Colbert and Jon Stewart.” Popular Culture (42:5), 2009
--, Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (1992) (selected passages)
Manufacturing Consent (documentary film, Achbar, 1991)
McLuhan, Marshall, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (1966) (selected passages)
Williamson, Judith, Decoding Advertisements (Ideas in Progress) (1994)
Zizek, Slavoi, The Sublime Object of Ideology (1989) (selected passages)

Course Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Week 1: Introduction</th>
<th>Practical matters. BRING A PRINTOUT OF THE SYLLABUS TO CLASS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2: Manufacturing Consent: How free is our freedom of speech and press?</td>
<td>Screening of Noam Chomsky’s Manufacturing Consent (documentary film, 1992) Case study: coverage of the failed 2013 Gun Control Reform</td>
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<td>Week 4: Media as Message: How does ideology inhere in the various media themselves?</td>
<td>Case study: coverage of the 2003 invasion of Iraq Marshall McLuhan – Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (date)</td>
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<td>Week 5: Being Critical</td>
<td>The Diane Rehm Show, “Informing the News: The Need for</td>
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Mid-Term Paper Due: Research & Position Paper |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
Slavoi Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (selected passages)  
Mid-Term Paper Due: Research & Position Paper |
| Week 8: Constructions of Self and the Other in Cinema and Literature | Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (selected passages)  
Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (selected passages)  
*The Eternal Jew* (Hippler, 1940) |
Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (selected passages)  
| Week 10: Signification and Media in the Age of Postmodernism | *The Lorax* (2012) and *The Lego Movie* (Lord, 2014) (selected passages)  
The Colbert Report, “Movies that are Destroying America” Feb. 27, 2012 |
<p>| Week 11: Neo-liberalism &amp; the Subtle Art of Appropriation |  |</p>
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<tr>
<th>[Final Due Date]</th>
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<td><strong>The Promised Land</strong> (van Sandt, 2012)</td>
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