

HISTORY 4990

PROSEMINAR

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M301

Tuesday 4:30-7:00

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or by appointment

Propaganda and Censorship

Required text: Jowett, Garth & Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*

Introduction: (From Robert Cole, *Propaganda in Twentieth Century War and Politics: An Annotated Bibliography*, Lanham, Md., 1996)

Propaganda has played and continues to play, a major role in war and politics in the twentieth century. There are various reasons for this. The twentieth is the century of total war and mass politics, democratic and otherwise. That being the case, governments, armies, political parties, ideological movements, and individuals with an ax to grind have recognized the value of persuading large numbers of people to see things their way. Note that only two of the five items in this list are extensions of the State, and therefore a source of "official" propaganda. Fully as much political and war propaganda has been conceived, created, and disseminated voluntarily, however much the effect may have been to benefit the State, as has been disseminated by the State. Finally, in the twentieth century, the technologies of mass communications made propaganda possible and potentially effective on an unprecedented scale.

A mass audience and mass communication are central to propaganda dissemination. Persuasive material may address the individual, as in the "Uncle Sam Wants *You*" posters from World War II, but the *You* is both one citizen and all citizens. Similarly, the 1935 German film *Triumph of the Will*, a propaganda documentary of the 1934 Nazi Party rally at Nuremberg, was addressed to millions of individual Germans; however, it appealed to them collectively as the German nation. All of this suggests the simple fact that propaganda is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Political scientist Harold Lasswell defined propaganda as "the making of a deliberate one-sided statement to a mass audience"; Michael Balfour, who served in the British

Ministry of Information in World War II, referred to the phenomenon (with tongue-in-cheek) as "the art of inducing people to leap to conclusions without first examining the evidence." Both descriptions indicate any systematic, widespread effort made by government, political party or ideological movement, or individual with access to channels of mass communications, to *propagate* (understood as to broadcast or spread with intent to persuade) a particular doctrine, practice, or cause.

Balfour's ironic sense may or may not have embraced a judgment on the morality of propaganda. Certainly the question of whether propaganda is a good thing or a bad thing is addressed by many of the authors listed in the textbook, many of whom have used, in connection with "propaganda," phrases having negative connotations such as "psychological manipulation," "brainwashing," and "disinformation." Some have described propaganda use as destructive of democratic politics; others have averred that in certain circumstances propaganda is a necessary evil; still others, taking a positive high road, see propaganda as a means through which good things can be achieved--victory in war against fascism, or the spread of democracy, for example. In any case, by no means have writers on either the history and or the theory of propaganda arrived at a consensus. The term *propaganda* derives from the purpose endowed upon a congregation of Cardinals, *Sacre de Congregato Propaganda Fide*, created in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV for the purpose of directing the foreign missions of the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestant Church of England created the Society for the Propagation of the Christian Gospel in Foreign Parts for a similar purpose. The object in both cases was to propagate religious doctrine. The means included preaching, publishing, and doing good deeds; these were the "channels" of propaganda, through which audiences were promised eternal salvation if they would but conform to the doctrines being propagated.

The principle remained the same in the propaganda of war and politics in the twentieth century. The doctrines in this case were political ideology, the party platform, the just cause in war, opposition to war, public policy and dissent from it, or social reform and control which always has been defined in part by political necessity. The Great War of 1914-18 (World War I) was the first "total" war in history, and propaganda played a great role in it. Propaganda was disseminated to affirm the righteous cause, sustain morale, discomfit the enemy, placate allies, and pressure neutrals. The process continued in each war thereafter, down to and including the

1991 Gulf War and the 2003 war in Iraq, differentiating only to the extent that propagandists had access to ever more elaborate technologies of mass communications. Political propaganda followed a similar pattern, almost paralleling on a party or movement level, the factors of cause, morale, discomfiting, placating and pressuring that characterize war propaganda. The "spin doctors" of today differ from their predecessors only in the multiplicity of methods and channels by which and through which they can disseminate their material.

With all of this in mind, certain questions arise: What does propaganda do, how does it differ from information, and how does it achieve its ends?

First, information is simply that: information. Propaganda, on the other hand, is information arranged in such a way as to appeal to the emotions of a given audience, for the purpose of persuading that audience in a particular direction. The propagandist must first identify that audience, and then discover what emotions already exist within it and prepare the material accordingly. The British and German experiences in World War II are instructive. British propagandists learned that both home audiences and those in neutral European countries responded best to practical and information-grounded assessments of the progress of the war, couched in patriotic language in the first instance and in value-laden language in the second: appeals to democracy and warnings against the evils of fascism, respectively. The British also appealed to neutrals' concerns regarding postwar European economic and political relations, which was a practical consideration. For audiences in enemy-occupied countries, British propaganda promoted expectations of liberation and the defeat of fascism, and in enemy countries, doubt regarding the outcome of the war, and the character and quality of fascist leadership. Nazi propaganda followed similar lines at home, save that the appeal to patriotism was more racially and ethnically biased. However, in neutral countries and those Germany had occupied, propaganda was predicated upon intimidation. The degree of success for any propaganda overseas remains a question. It is certain that Britain and its allies won the war while the Germans lost, but it is not certain that propaganda was the primary reason. On the other hand, it does seem likely that propaganda was a major factor in maintaining a "stiff upper lip" at home among all of the belligerent nations.

The question of how propaganda achieves its ends (or perhaps better, attempts to achieve its ends) involves what the propagandists do on a daily basis, and how they do it.

Characteristically, they tell the truth selectively, suppress (censor) information that might be harmful to the cause, praise those values associated with the presumed social, political and other assumptions of the audience, and also appeal to its inherent prejudices of class, race, or culture. If the propagandists have understood their audience and structured their material accordingly, if they have placed the appropriate "spin" on the factual information at their disposal, if they have disseminated what realistically promotes the cause and suppressed (without being found out) that which can retard it, then they may achieve their purpose. Of considerable interest here is the content of sources which, on the one hand proclaim the great success of propaganda in particular cases, and on the other proclaim with equal fervor how little was actually achieved. Some of the most skeptical comments come from those who have been practitioners of the propagandists' art, which is hardly surprising.

The point was made earlier that propaganda is a process of persuading groups rather than individuals. Therefore, propaganda is predicated upon the availability of such mass communications media as books, pamphlets, and flyers, mass produced and distributed; the press (the oldest mass communications medium, in which manipulated news, censored news, and the political cartoon have become effective propaganda weapons), film, both documentary and feature, radio broadcasting, and most recently television broadcasting. Even the "mass meeting," the political rally with tens of thousands in the audience, has been most useful from a propaganda perspective when its content could be shared beyond the confines of parade ground, stadium or arena with a larger audience *via* film, radio, television, or Internet.

A separate note about film as propaganda. While cinema existed for some time before 1914, it hit its stride as a communications medium during and after World War I. By the outbreak of World War II tens of millions of citizens in the United States, France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union attended the cinema each week. Consequently, during that war film was among the most useful propaganda channels employed by each belligerent. Film came in three basic forms: documentaries, including newsreels, features, and cartoons. The documentary, for example *Desert Victory* (1943), brought information to the audience, but presented it in such a way as to preclude a careful examination of the evidence supporting the information. The feature film, such as the Hollywood production *Mrs. Miniver* (1942), worked to influence the audience in favor of its message by showing soldiers as heroes, civilians as hard-

working and determined in the face of adversity, and the enemy always losing in the final scenes. American war propaganda feature films always included a "speech" at some point, usually but not always delivered by the hero or heroine, in which all of the points the film sought to make were brought together in a single emotional appeal. British films followed similar patterns, as in *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*, but usually were more subtle. Nazi features showed Jews, the British, Russians, and French, or some other group, to be as evil as the Nazi Party always had claimed they were.

The propaganda cartoon had a particular role to play, for its purpose was to persuade through providing humorous entertainment at the expense of, for example, leaders or soldiers of enemy countries. Artists achieved amazing mad-cap results when they confronted the likes of Hermann Goering and Adolf Hitler with Bugs Bunny or Daffy Duck. In whatever form it was presented, film engaged its audiences for World War II propaganda purposes fully as effectively as television would do for political propaganda in later years.

The nature of channels for reaching a propaganda audience naturally raises certain questions. What is that audience? How does it function? Does it have a reality beyond its individual members? Here is where propaganda theory draws heavily upon the behavioral methodologies found in both psychology and sociology. Simply put, the place of the individual within a group, the impact of group pressure upon an individual, and group conditioning of individual responses, are the sort of issues which may be usefully addressed by behaviorists. Propagandists ignore these insights at their peril. Much of the writing on propaganda produced by political scientists, opinion specialists, and communications experts is predicated upon paradigms suggested by behavioral theory.

The modification, or, conversely, reinforcement of group behavior is central to propaganda technique. However, the process involved, offering material designed to encourage a particular response, has an "alter ego," so to speak: the process of *denying* certain kinds of information. This is censorship. Ultimately, it must form part of any discussion of propaganda. While the propagandist strives to provide particular interpretations of events, ideas, values, credos, heroes, myths, and realities in order to persuade, that process often faces the necessity of denying the validity of alternative interpretations. However, denial involves a form of debate, one possible outcome of which is that the audience may incline toward the wrong position.

Therefore, the propagandist makes an ally of the censor, for a better way of denying alternative points of view may be simply to suppress them, thus leaving the audience with only one way of looking at the interpretations provided.

Censorship as an ally of propaganda has been around as long as propaganda itself. For example in the seventeenth century, the Inquisition censored writings by Galileo and others which challenged the Aristotelian precepts upon which rested Church teaching regarding the nature of the universe. Gabriel Nicholas de La Reynie, Paris prefect of police during the reign of Louis XIV, censored theater which parodied Louis' mistress, Madame de Maintenon. In the eighteenth century, Jonathan Swift's satire on British rule in Ireland, *A Modest Proposal* (1729), was censored in England, and both Voltaire and Rousseau suffered from the "blue pencil" in France. In the twentieth century, censorship has been a feature of wartime and of political systems in which freedom of speech and information are considered neither necessary nor advantageous. Examples include political news in both Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, war news distributed in all belligerent countries and in many neutral countries during both world wars. David Gray, United States ambassador to Ireland remarked in 1945 that "censorship in Ireland is one of the scandals of Western civilization."

The reasons behind censorship were always the same: totalitarian states denied free speech and access to information on the grounds that the information sought was "false," and therefore dangerous to the state and to its citizens; nations at war censored war news on the grounds that publication of some kinds of information might be of aid to the enemy or else dangerous to domestic morale; and neutral countries used censorship as a weapon to protect themselves from the possibly unneutral affects of propaganda disseminated among their citizens--and in the process, made a kind of propaganda in favor of neutrality. In each of these situations and many others, the function of propaganda was served by suppressing information and viewpoints that were at odds with its content. Without censorship, propaganda could be at least partially disarmed.

The Course:

The object of this course is two fold: (1) to learn the techniques for doing historical research using primary materials, and writing up the results; and (2) to learn how to do all of this

with reference to the subject of propaganda and censorship.

The Work:

There is a single culminating point in the course, and that is the construction of a research paper. That paper will be some aspect of the use of propaganda in war, politics, or other.

Selecting a Topic:

You must select a topic, and **as soon as possible**. The deadline for this will be our third class period, **January 22. The topic will be submitted to me on that day, in writing, in the form of a prospectus. The prospectus (this is the equivalent of a paper proposal for a conference) must include the following:**

1. Topic by name: that is, a proposed title which is at least suggestive of the subject matter.
2. A skeleton bibliography, that is, a list of materials that may pertain to the topic. This bibliography will grow as you proceed with the research and writing. It should contain reference to primary source material as well as such secondary sources as journal articles and monographs.
3. A one page preliminary overview of the topic in which you describe what you have in mind for the research and what you expect to prove, and, based upon the reading you have done to this point, what reason you have for thinking you can prove it.

Discussing the Topic:

As soon as possible after you have submitted your prospectus, you must come to my office where we will go over the prospectus, talk about what you have accomplished so far and where you might usefully go in terms of further research. If you cannot come during my office hours, make an appointment. I shall expect to have seen everyone not later than **Tuesday, February 5. You will note that my office hours are listed at the top of this syllabus.**

Presenting the Paper:

All students will present their paper orally to the class, as if to an academic conference audience. That means reading the paper, clearly and with intent to communicate its content. Therefore: **avoid embarrassment; make sure your paper is well written; read it aloud to a long-suffering friend or spouse, who can tell you if it makes any sense, and if you are reading it in such manner as to make it possible to follow the contents.** Your professor will be helpful on this score, if you will pay attention. Also: do not plan on using power point, as our classroom is not so equipped. It does have an overheads projector however, so if you want to use overheads to illustrate aspects of your paper, come see me with the originals and we will get them made in the History office.

The presentations will take place on **April 1, 8, 15, 22**, the final four class meetings.

NOTE: all of you will hand a copy of the final draft of your paper to me at the beginning of class on April 1, which means that everyone must have a final draft of their paper completed by that date. There can be *no exceptions*; there will be *no acceptable excuses*; if the copy is *not* presented to me at that time, it will be an automatic grade reduction of 25 % of the final grade. This is necessary for the simple reason that it would be unfair to allow some members of the class more time to prepare than others. In simple fact, every student has approximately 11 weeks in which to do the research for and write her/his paper.

Grading: Your grade for this course rests on your paper, which includes the quality and diversity of research as reflected in the paper (and that means evidence of a genuine search for primary materials), quality of writing as reflected in the paper which includes organization and overall construction of paragraphs and sentences, which is to say style; and finally, whether or not you make deadlines for your prospectus and conference with your professor to discuss the prospectus. **Under deadlines include attendance on all presentation days, whether you are presenting or not.**

It breaks down in this manner:

Prospectus: 20 pts.
Conference with professor to discuss your paper:
20 pts.
Attendance: 20 pts.
Paper: 100 pts.
Total: 160 pts.

Class Schedule:

Week one, January 8: Introduction of the Course, and discussion of useful background reading and possible research topics. Read the overview of Propaganda and Censorship at the beginning of this syllabus, and chapter one of *Propaganda and Persuasion*.

Week two, January 15: Propaganda and Censorship introductory talk: What is Propaganda? What is Censorship?

Week Three, January 22: Natural Functions of Propaganda and Censorship. Prospectus will be turned in at the beginning of class. Have as much read of *Propaganda and Persuasion* as possible.

Week Four, January 29: History of Propaganda

Week five, February 5: The Nature of Research and Writing.

Week six, February 12: Everyone should have met with me to discuss papers by this class time. Also, beginning with this Tuesday there will be no formal class meeting at the regular time. You will, by now, be well into your research and writing, and I expect you to use class time from

this date until April 1 to pursue those objectives. I will be in my office from 4:30 to 6:00 every Tuesday during the weeks that we don't meet, in case you want to stop in for advice, and I will make access possible after 5 p.m. through the door that opens into the long hall of the History office. Also, a number of students in the past have expressed an interest in having showings of propaganda films during class time in these weeks when we are not meeting formally. If you are interested, we can have a television and vcr set up to look at propaganda films. Examples of such films might include: *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (USSR), *La Marseillaise* (France), *The Lion Has Wings; One of Our Aircraft is Missing; 49th Parallel* (Britain), *Tender Comrade; Big Jim MacLaine; Mrs. Miniver* (USA), *Mädchen in Uniform; Jud Süß* (German).

Week seven, Feb. 19: ditto

Week eight, Feb. 26:: ditto.

Week nine, Mar. 4: ditto

Mar. 11: Spring Break. I will not be in my office.

Week ten, Mar. 18: Back to regular procedure.

Week eleven, Mar. 25: ditto

Week twelve, April 1: Presentation of Papers, Part One. **A final draft of all papers must be handed in at the beginning of class period on that day. No exceptions, no excuses.**

Week thirteen, April 8: Presentation of Papers, Part Two.

Week fourteen, April 15: Presentation of Papers, Part Three

Week fifteen, April 22: Presentation of Papers, Part Four.

Criteria for completed papers:

Your completed paper must meet the following technical criteria:

1. 10-12 pages in length, maximum. Customarily, a 12-page paper takes 20-22 minutes to present, which means that if you stick to this length, we can get all of the papers presented during the time at our disposal, with perhaps a few minutes to comment on each one. If your project involves the use of overheads or videos, we will arrange to have the appropriate equipment available.

2. A complete bibliography of materials used and those at least referred to in the course of your research, appended in a style that we will establish in class.

3. Endnotes or footnotes according to a style we will establish in class.

Your *thesis* must be stated clearly and argued in close association with the *evidence* gleaned from your *research*. Your paper must be more than a recitation of facts or a simple narrative of events, but rather must advance an interpretation of the evidence. As well, it should take into account existing works on propaganda that are relevant to the propaganda subject you have chosen, many of which sources are indicated in *Propaganda in Twentieth Century War and Politics* (see below), and of the arguments advanced in these works. When all is said and done, you should have written something that is original and inclusive of some kinds of primary materials, and, of course, it will have been written better than anything you have ever written before.

Remember: Interlibrary Loan can be used for sources, provided one moves quickly, and I shall be happy to verify your *bona fides* to IL if you need to use it. Also, you will be able to use propaganda films in stock in Audio-Visual in the Merrill Cazier (the Sci-Tech library). Consult with staff at the library reference desk for assistance in accessing library collections of film or other documentary materials.

These primary sources are available in the USU Library.

Culbert, David, ed. *Film and Propaganda in America: A Documentary History*, 4 vols. USU library has vol. 2 parts 1, 2 at least; U. of U. has entire set. USU call number: PN1993.5 U6f47 1990

Information Control and Propaganda: Records of the Office of War Information (There is a printed guide to the collection available as well.) USU call number: D77.u6 1987

History of the Office of Censorship (Microform: 85/155 (E), NB FM 3794 in Merrill Library)

Bibliography source: Cole, Robert, *Propaganda in Twentieth Century War and Politics: An Annotated Bibliography* (USU Library call number: Z7204.S67 C65 1996)

Encyclopedic source: Cole, Robert, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Propaganda*, 3. vols. (USU Library call number: HM268.E53)

Both are also available in the History Department seminar room, M323L

Useful journals include:

Historical Journal of Radio, Film, and Television (Available at BYU)

Journal of Contemporary History

Journal of Popular Film and Television

Military Affairs

Public Opinion Quarterly