

## **MEDIA WARS**

Signature Course

CMST 2094—GNSE 20114—GNSE 30114—MAAD 10904—SIGN 26061

T/Th 2:40-4:00

Associate Professor Jennifer Wild: [jenniferwild@uchicago.edu](mailto:jenniferwild@uchicago.edu)

Office Hours: Monday, 3:00-4:30 p.m. and by appointment

CA: Titas de Sarkar: [titas@uchicago.edu](mailto:titas@uchicago.edu)

CA: Andres Millan: [amillan@uchicago.edu](mailto:amillan@uchicago.edu)

RA: Wolfgang Boehm

Media practices and discourses evoking war or violence are common today, such as the “weaponization” of social media; “cyber warfare” and attacks; “online battlefields;” “guerilla” media tactics; “The Great Meme War” and “Infowars.com,” to name a few. In relationship with terms suggesting that we live in an age of “post-truth” dominated by “fake news” or “fact-challenged” journalism, the media wars of today may seem unique to the twenty-first century. But in fact, the history of the use of media to either combat or spread ideas dates back centuries to the earliest phases of mass media and communication. In this class, we will proceed historically, broadly conceiving of media to include print and visual, cultural, and artistic forms, cinema, television, and the internet. While we will explore how media have historically been used to construct or counter dominant systems of representation, we will also discuss how different media forms function formally, learning to analyze how they construct discourses of truth as texts (documentary; propaganda). This class will also function as a contemporary research laboratory where students will be asked to track, evaluate, and theorize contemporary or historical media that are taking part in a so-called “media war.”

Course policies regarding plagiarism, academic honesty, and disability accommodation can be found on the University of Chicago website, and on our Canvas site.

*\*Although you may take this class fully remotely, you will be expected to contribute to the collaborative assignments and exercises.*

### **Media Wars: coursebooks and materials**

All course-related materials will be found on the Canvas site (and in Panopto), or through an e-resource at the Regenstein Library.

These central course texts can be found on our Canvas Library Reserve Tab. These texts also serve as resources for initial student research:

- I. Jonathan Auerbach and Russ Castronovo, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Propaganda Studies*

- II. Mary Ann Caws, ed., *Manifesto: A Century of isms*
- III. Scott Mackenzie, ed., *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures*
- IV. Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*
- V. Aaron Tugendgraff, *Idols of Isis*
- VI. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*
- VII. The Chicago School of Media Theory; esp. terms
  - a. <https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/mediation/>

## Media Wars I. Weekly Template II. Class Organization III. Student Participation Rubric

- I. Each weekly module may be comprised of the following categories of media.
  - A technology, technological category or object.
  - A film or moving image text (FMIT)
  - A manifesto
  - A scholarly essay in history or theory
  - A sound text (musical, audio) (ST)
  - Contemporary or historical media examples, especially those drawn from on-line space, current events, and our everyday life with media.
  - Further Bibliography
    - a. *I will refer to these readings in the lectures. They are optional readings, but suggested for further research.*

### II. Class Organization

#### A. BATTALIONS

1. The class will be broken up into two sections called Battalions.
2. **Yellow** BATTALION will attend class on Tuesday.
3. **Purple** BATTALION will attend class on Thursday.
4. Both sessions will be recorded and posted for all to see.

#### B. UNITS

1. Battalions will be divided into Units.
2. There will be several Units in each Battalion. The final class enrollment size will determine the number of Units. There will be roughly 5 members in each Unit; and about 5 Units per Battalion.
3. Units, considered here, are a collective work model.
4. Each Unit will be responsible for creating a collective final project or “research dossier,” submitted at the end of week 10.
5. *Students will schedule meetings during the quarter to work with their Unit members and their CAs/Battalion Leaders) on the days of the week Unit members are not attending their synchronous class session.*
5. All Unit members will receive the same grade for the final Unit project or research dossier.

### III. Student Participation Rubric

#### 1. Class attendance and participation 20%

Students should have completed all Module rubrics, coming to class prepared to discuss them and their place in the Module's overarching themes, technologies, social and artistic movements, etc.

#### 2. Weekly Posts to the Unit Board. 40%

- Each Unit will have a Canvas Discussion Board page.
- For all weeks, starting week 2, students will post a 200-word response to one assigned visual, audio, or written course text.
- Alternately, students may post a 200-word analysis or response to an example drawn from outside of class. In this case, the student should demonstrate in their response how the example either elaborates or complicates the materials and discussion for that week.
- These posts will help to develop the contents, theme, and approach of the collective, final Unit project or dossier.

#### 3. Final Unit Project or Research Dossier: 40%

- All Unit members will receive the same grade for the final Unit project.
- The Unit project may take the following forms:
  - *Historical Role Play*: for this option, Units adopt the identity of an historical group engaged in a “media war.” For example, students may choose to embody a group of women fighting for suffrage or the right to vote c. 1900. The dossier would contain a 500-word manifesto, a 500-word written strategy, and examples of the materials they used to “fight” a media war in the terms of the media of that period (posters, leaflets, etc.).
  - *New Identity*: For this option, the Unit invents a fictional group identity, complete with a name, a monument (a drawing or description will suffice), a 1000-word manifesto that defines and engages with a set of real or fictitious issues related to their cause and their “media war.” At least 2 examples of posters, tracts, advertisements, or any other material associated with their media war should also be included.
  - Propaganda video, podcast, or slideshow (eg: PowerPoint). Videos should not be longer than 5 minutes. These options will be accompanied by a short (500 word) manifesto that defines the objectives of this piece of propaganda.

- A 5-7 page research paper on an historical “media war,” such as the Black Panthers, a Guerrilla art movement, historical news discourse.
- A 5-7 page research paper on a contemporary “media war,” such as one that is related to our current events (eg: Qanon), or a contemporary facet of “media wars” today (eg: a meme; social media; specific internet sites).
- *Units may also propose a different form for the final Unit dossier.*

### **Media Wars: Schedule**

*Contents are subject to change to adapt to our class discussions, student interests, Unit research, or current events.*

#### 1. Media/War

***NOTE: In week 1, all students attend (or watch) both sessions.***

- a. Opening lecture: the technologies of Media and War
- b. FMIT: *Plato’s Cave* (Dick Oden, 1973, narrated by Orson Welles)
- c. Manifestos:
  - i. *Inscrutabili Divinae* (1622)
- d. Essays:
  - i. Marshal McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message”
  - ii. Auerback and Castronovo, “Thirteen Propositions About Propaganda”
- e. Further Bibliography
  - i. Plato, selection from *Republic*
  - ii. Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*
  - iii. Hannah Arendt, from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

#### 2. Propaganda’s Idiom and Vernacular

***Note: Students attend their assigned class session on either Tuesday or Thursday, AND they will also meet with their Battalion leader on the alternate day. During this time, Battalions will be divided into Units.***

- a. FMIT: *The Eternal Jew* (Franz Hippler, 1940, 71 min)
- b. Manifesto: Fritz Hippler, “Film as a Weapon,” 1937
- c. Essays
  - i. Leonard W. Doob, “Goebbels’ Principles of Propaganda,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Autumn, 1950), p. 419-442.
  - ii. Auerback and Castronovo, “Thirteen Propositions About Propaganda”

- d. Further Bibliography:
    - i. Hannah Arendt, "Totalitarian Propaganda," p. 341-364 (from Ch. 11, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 1951).
    - ii. Fuentes, "Totalitarian Language: Creating Symbols to Destroy Words," *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, Winter 2013, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Winter 2013), pp. 45-66
3. Monuments
- a. FMIT: *Disgraced Monuments* (Laura Mulvey, Mark Lewis, 1991-93; 48 min)
  - b. ST:
    - i. Podcast with Prof. Tara McPherson (USC), "Platforming Hate: The Internet and the Rise of Hate Online": <https://www.upr.org/post/tara-mcpherson-platforming-hate-internet-and-rise-hate-online-tuesdays-access-utah>
    - ii. Optional: *Monument Lab* podcast, "Commemorating the 1918 Flu Pandemic with Mütter Museum Organizer Nancy Hill" <https://monumentlab.com/podcast/commemorating-the-1918-flu-pandemic-with-mutter-museum-organizer-nancy-hill>
  - c. Southern Poverty Law Center: "Whose Heritage?" Map of Confederate Monuments <https://www.splcenter.org/data-projects/whose-heritage>
  - d. Essay: Alois Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin (1903)
  - e. Optional: Units or Unit members complete the monument.lab Field Trip pedagogical handbook (Canvas). What kind of monument would your Unit construct?
  - f. Further Bibliography
    - i. <https://monumentlab.com/>
    - ii. J. Wild, "Monument in the Garden"
    - iii. Chapter from *The Idols of Isis*
    - iv. WJT Mitchell: "What do Monuments Want?" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=caGhHQT9WYY>
4. Photography, Insurgency, Recognition: The Paris Commune 150 years later
- a. FMIT: Peter Watkins, *The Commune* (the first hour).
  - b. Manifestos:
    - i. Manifesto of the Paris Commune, April 19, 1871;
    - ii. Manifesto of the Paris Commune's Federation of Artists, 1871
  - c. ST: *Le Temps des Cerises* (1866 song associated with La Commune de Paris)  
 Essay: Jeannene M. Przyblyski, "Revolution at a Standstill: Photography and the Paris Commune of 1871," *Yale French Studies* No. 101, Fragments of Revolution (2001).
  - d. Further Bibliography
    - i. Alan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* (1986)

- ii. Martin Schoeller, photographer, Instagram:  
<https://www.instagram.com/martinschoeller/?hl=en> Further Bibliography:
  - iii. NYT on Facial Recognition:  
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/03/18/magazine/facial-recognition-clearview-ai.html>
- 5. Documenting, Evidence, and the News
  - a. FMIT:
    - i. *Ku Klux Klan: The Invisible Empire* (1965, CBS reports, 47 min).  
Streaming source: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?433239-1/ku-klux-klan>.
    - ii. *Off The Pig Newsreel*. USA. 1968 (15 min)
    - iii. *Repression Newsreel*. USA. [1970]. (13.5 min)
  - b. Manifestos:
    - i. Solanas and Gettino, "Toward a Third Cinema"
    - ii. Jean Vigo, "Toward a Social Cinema" (1930)
    - iii. Documentary manifestos, from *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures*
  - c. Essay: Bill Nichols, "Documentary Modes of Representation," from Nichols, *Representing Reality*.
  - d. Further Bibliography
    - i. Louis Georges Schwartz, *Mechanical Witness: A History of Motion Picture Evidence in U.S. Courts*
    - ii. *Hour of the Furnaces*, 1968 (first part; second part is optional)
    - iii. By-Line News Reels: [https://scholar.smu.edu/jfvc\\_films/](https://scholar.smu.edu/jfvc_films/)
- 6. Protest and Visibility
  - a. FMIT:
    - i. *Love is the Message the Message is Death* (Jafa, 2018)
    - ii. *Réponse de Femmes* [Ciné-Tract] (Varda, 1975)
  - b. Manifestos:
    - i. Black Panthers, "The Ten-Point Program" (1966)
    - ii. "Womanifesto" 1975
    - iii. "Manifesto of the 343" (France, 1971)
  - c. Chapter 5, *Propaganda Handbook*, B. Mullen, "A World to Win: Propaganda and African American Expressive Culture."
  - d. Further Bibliography:
    - i. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (2015), chapters 1-3
    - ii. Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*
    - iii. *Jane : An Abortion Service* (Kate Kirtz & Nell Lundy, USA, 1996, 58 min)
- 7. The Avant-Garde
  - a. FMIT: *Has the Film Already Started?* (Maurice Lemaître, 1951)
  - b. Website: <https://www.guerrillagirls.com/projects>

- c. Manifestos by: F.T. Marinetti, Tristan Tzara, Guy Debord, Isidore Isou; The Guerrilla Girls
  - d. ST: Dada and Lettrism sound poetry recordings
  - e. Essay: Guy Debord, selections from *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967)
  - f. Further Bibliography
    - i. *The Society of the Spectacle* (Guy Debord, film, 1974)
    - ii. *Hurllements en Faveur de Sade* (Guy Debord, 1952)
    - iii. André Breton, “The Manifesto of Surrealism”
    - iv. *Looking for Langston* (Isaac Julien, 1989)
8. In Chicago, c. 2019-2020
- a. FMIT: *Unapologetic* (Johnson and O’Shay, 2020, Kartemquin Films)
 

“After two Black Chicagoans are killed, millennial organizers challenge an administration complicit in state violence against its residents. Told through the lens of Janaé and Bella, two fierce abolitionist leaders, *Unapologetic* is a deep look into the Movement for Black Lives, from the police murder of Rekia Boyd to the election of Mayor Lori Lightfoot” (Kartemquin Films)
  - b. Classes will be devoted to an in-depth discussion of this recent film.
9. Satire, Hoaxes, Pranks, and Doubt
- a. FMIT:
    - Dow*, The Yes Men. USA. 2002 - 2006. (6 min).
    - UFO* (1952)
  - b. ST: Orson Welles, “War of the Worlds” (adapted from H.G. Wells’ eponymous novel, 1898)
  - c. Essays:
    - i. Prof. Niel Verma (Northwestern) on Welles’s “War of the Worlds”
    - ii. The Art Newspaper article, Eddy Frankel, “QAnon: the Italian artists who may have inspired America’s most dangerous conspiracy theory,” <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/feature/was-qanon-america-s-most-dangerous-conspiracy-theory-inspired-by-italian-artists>
    - iii. Explore the artist-hoax, “Luther Blissett,” <http://www.lutherblissett.net/> (Referenced in the Art Newspaper article above and in below).
  - d. Further Bibliography
    - i. *The Yes Men* (Smith, Chris; Ollman, Dan; Price, Sarah. USA. 2004.) (84 min)
    - ii. ArtNet article: Ben Davis, “Is the Qanon Conspiracy the Work of Artist-Activist Pranksters? The Evidence for (And Against) a Dangerous Hypothesis,” <https://news.artnet.com/opinion/q-anon-hoax-1329983>
    - iii. Tom McDonough, “Unrepresentable Enemies: On the Legacy of Guy Debord and the Situationist International,” *Afterall* (2011).

