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Fall 2008
T & Th 2:00-3:15
Office: Rm 602, 715 Broadway
T&Th: 3:30-5, Fri: 12-5

The Struggle for *The Word* **K20.1055**

Description: The history of the media is the history of struggle, a battle waged over words and images: who produces them, who has access to them, and whose interests are served by them. Media power has traditionally been the province of elites, from Church and State to multinational communication conglomerates. But this is only one side of the story, for everyday people have also fought for their right to speak and be spoken to. Media has moved from the elite to the masses, in the process becoming "democratized"...but also often commodified. Beginning with the printed word, and moving from the Bible through plays and popular song; pamphlets, penny press and advertisements; and ending with the radio, this course will use the history of the word to explore enduring questions of power and culture.

Requirements: 1) Attendance, diligent reading, and active participation in *all* class discussions.
2) Three short essays--8 pages each--over the course of the semester.

Notes:

- I'm always open to suggestions on assignments. A video, poem, song, performance, web page, etc. in place of one of the written assignments is possible and could be very exciting. Just talk to me first.
- All papers handed in on time can be re-written for new grades, but the re-write must be returned within two weeks of first receiving back the corrected paper.
- Syllabus, assignments, links--as well as on-line class forum--can be on the class site on Blackboard

Books:

- Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture*
- Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*
- Lawrence Levine, *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History*
- Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*
- Andie Tucher, *Froth & Scum: Truth, Beauty, Goodness and the Ax Murder in America's First Mass Medium*
- Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*
- *Recommended:* James Joyce, *Ulysses*, especially chapters 1, 13, 17 & 18

Essays:

- “Adam and Eve,” *Genesis*; “Ten Commandments,” *Exodus*; “In the Beginning...” *Gospel of St. John*; *The Bible: King James Version*
- Benson Bobrick, “Comparative Translations of the English Bible” from *Wide as The Waters*
- Marcel Thomas, “Manuscripts” from *The Coming of the Book*
- Gerard Winstanley, “True Levellers Standard Advanced”
- "Ye ould deluder Satan," Massachusetts School Law of 1647
- Thomas Leonard, “The Wicked Printer” from *The Power of the Press*
- Thomas Jefferson, "On the Press," from *Thomas Jefferson on Democracy*
- Frederick Douglass, "Learning to Read," from *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*
- *Primary Documents #2* “Sensationalism”: selections from *Book of Martyrs*, chapbooks, *Juvenile Key*, *New York Sun* and Walter Lippmann's "Blazing Publicity"
- reprint from *Freedom's Journal*
- letters to the *Jewish Daily Forward*, from *A Bintel Brief*
- James Joyce, selections from *Ulysses*, including chapters 1, 13, 17 & 18
- Karl Marx, "The Fetishism of the Commodity..." from *Capital: Vol. 1*
- Edward Bernays, "The Engineering of Consent," from *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*
- *Primary Documents # 5* “The March of Radio” selections from the *Congressional Record*, *Radio Digest*, *Annals of the American Academy* and other period news sources.
- “The Radio Act of 1927”
- Stephen Duncombe, “Zines” and “Identity,” from *Notes from Underground*

All books can be bought at Bluestockings Books, 172 Allen Street (one block south of Houston, and the F train’s 2nd avenue stop) Copies of the essays can be accessed, for reference purposes only, via Blackboard.

Semester Schedule:

Sep 2 T Class Introduction

Sep 4 Th In the Beginning was The Word

READ: from *The Bible: King James Version*, and Benson Bobrick, “Comparative Translations of the English Bible”

SEE: Illuminated manuscripts

Sep 9 T Struggle for The Word

READ: Marcel Thomas, “Manuscripts” and Gerard Winstanley, “True Levellers Standard Advanced”

Sep 11 Th Spreading of The Word

READ: Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*

Sep 16 T New Interpretations

READ: Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*

Sep 18 Th Heresy

READ: finish *The Cheese and the Worms*

- Sep 23 T** **New Worlds Born**
READ: Read: Massachusetts School Law, and Thomas Leonard, “The Wicked Printer”
First Assignment handed out
- Sep 25 Th** **Print and Politics**
READ: Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*
- Sep 30 T** **Print and Power**
READ: Thomas Jefferson and Frederick Douglass, and Starr’s *The Creation of the Media* pp 84-123
- Oct 2 Th** **Songs of Freedom**
READ: Read: Lawrence Levine's "Slave Songs and Slave Consciousness" in *The Unpredictable Past*
- Oct 7 T** **Participatory Culture**
READ: Lawrence Levine's "William Shakespeare and the American People" in *The Unpredictable Past*
- Oct 9 Th** **Who Gets to Write?**
READ: Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*
DUE: First Assignment
Second Assignment Handed Out
- Oct 14 T** **COLUMBUS DAY – NO CLASS**
- Oct 16 Th** **Democracy or Meritocracy**
READ: Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*
- Oct 21 T** **Selling the News**
READ: "Sensationalism Issue" of *Primary Documents*; start Andie Tucher's *Froth & Scum*
- Oct 23 Th** **Jefferson's Nightmare**
READ: Walter Lippmann's "Blazing Publicity" (last essay in “Sensationalism”)
And continue on with *Froth & Scum*
- Oct 28 T** **Intelligent Audiences**
READ: *Froth & Scum*
- Oct 30 Th** **Virtual Community**

READ: reprint from *Freedom's Journal* and "A Bintel Brief: Letters to the Jewish Daily Forward

Third Assignment Handed Out

DUE: Second Assignment

Nov 4 T The Culture of Advertising

READ: James Joyce, selections from *Ulysses*, including chapters 1, 13, 17 & 18; and Karl Marx "The Fetishism of the Commodity..."

Nov 6 Th Creating the Consumer

READ: *Captains of Consciousness* up to p. 48

Nov 11 T All That Is Solid Melts Into Air...

READ: *Captains of Consciousness* pp. 51-109 (and beyond)

Nov 13 Th Engineering Consent

READ: finish *Captains of Consciousness*, and read Edward Bernay's "Engineering of Consent"

Nov 18 T A New Medium for the Word

READ "March of Radio" *Primary Documents*

DUE: Third assignment

Fourth assignment handed out

Nov 20 Th The Public Interest

READ: "The Radio Act of 1927"

Nov 25 T The Power and the Glory

WATCH: *The Radio Priest*

Nov 27 Th THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS

Dec 2 T The Power and the Glory II

Discuss the video

Dec 4 Th Return of the Repressed: Zines and Subcultural Writing

READ: Stephen Duncombe, "Zines" and "Identity"

Dec 9 T Print in the New Millennium: E-mail, Blogs, and Texting

Dec 11 Th Last Class

Wrap up semester

**All Assignments are Due in my Office: Rm 602, 715 B'way
Friday, December 12**