

CMGT 506

Images and Image Management

Fall 2013

Thursdays, 6:30-9:20pm
ASC 240

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Course Catalog Description

Course examines images and image manipulation in communication, management and social control. Synthesizes work ranging from cognition and interpersonal behavior to mass media and popular culture.

Course Themes

“Image management” is a relatively contemporary concern having become a serious academic study in the late 20th century. With the emergence of the full-service advertising agency in the 1920s in the United States (and similar function consolidation elsewhere) a field calling itself ‘public relations’ came into being. This practice would itself shift as the broader media and modern sales effort themselves developed, as would the concept of the ‘image’ over the last century.

This course examines images and image management as tools for the creation and dissemination of information, for creating social change, and for attempting to modify the behavior of others. This said, I also want you to obtain a more complex understanding of image management than this portends. Anyone interested in being involved in the production and management of any kind of ‘image’—and as you’re probably all too aware, this has increasingly been extended to us as individually managed ‘brands’—a firm understanding of not just practical conceptions of the task but of the practice’s history is vital. Crucially, having a *structural* understanding of how image management takes place today—its political economy and an understanding of how policy plays into it—is perhaps the most important aspect to understand.

Our class thus aims to give you the broadest possible view on these processes. It will extend in three directions: historical, theoretical, and practical. It will be heavily oriented toward reading and discussion of key texts: we’ll be exploring bonafide classics of the field, such as work by Edward Bernays and Walter Lippman, to more philosophical takes, to historically-oriented work, to treatments of contemporary issues and methods.

By the end of the course, you will:

- Have a firmer grasp of the evolution of image management from its historical roots to the present,

- Explore classic texts, debates and critiques regarding the thought behind fields like “public relations” and image management;
- Gain a deeper understanding of the business of image management and its political economy in today’s media environment;
- Explore emerging politics regarding developing image management practices;
- Develop literacies to critically analyze contemporary image management, particularly in regards to concepts like class, race, and gender;
- Become informed about current developments in the field of image management in the broader modern media landscape, applying what you have learned to their analysis.

We will be following current events closely. In addition to this, our class will rely heavily on your reading, digesting, and discussing the material during our class meetings. Your grade will be determined based on your class participation, a team paper/presentation, and a final exam.

Required Texts.

Please obtain these via your favorite online bookseller. All other readings will be posted on the course Blackboard site.

- Sarah Banet-Weiser. (2012). *AuthenticTM: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*. New York: New York University Press.
- Jean Baudrillard. (1983). *Simulations*. Semiotext(e).
- Edward Bernays. (1923). *Crystallizing Public Opinion*. New York: Ig Publishing.
- Edward Bernays. (1928/2005). *Propaganda*. New York: Ig Publishing.
- Stuart Ewen. (1996). *PR! A Social History of Spin*. New York: Basic Books.
- Walter Lippmann. (1922/1997). *Public Opinion*. New York: Free Press.
- Robert McChesney. (2013). *Digital Disconnect*. New York: The New Press.
- Siva Vaidhyanathan. (2011). *The Googlization of Everything (and Why We Should Worry)*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Following current events. In addition to our readings, you should be keeping tabs in off-moments on key happenings in the world of advertising and marketing. Your final paper will be based on current events of your choosing; utilizing RSS and Twitter feeds to stay on top of emergent developments will not only help you to hone your topic, but will serve you well as a habit to get into going forward, if it isn’t one that you have already. To help you toward this end, here are some starting points:

- Free Press distributes a weekly newsletter called the “Media Fix” about media policy and politics, with material that regularly overlaps with our class discussions. Please subscribe to their newsletter as soon as you can at <http://www.freepress.net/media-fix>
- For the true policy wonks (or want-to-be wonks) among you, the Benton Foundation publishes a daily roundup of media-oriented matters: <http://benton.org/headlines>
- Jeff Chester’s Center for Digital Democracy operates a semi-regularly updated blog that speaks to issues of new technologies and privacy: <http://www.democraticmedia.org/blog>
- Follow relevant trade press for your interest. This is easy to do: if ‘public relations’ is your interest (or ‘marketing’ or ‘image management’), one of the places Google does excel is in giving you starting points. Once you find a source you like, then do this search: “related:[URL of site you liked]” and numerous more will come up. If you need help, let me know.

Assignments

- *Final exam (20%)*. There is one exam at the end of the course, which will be an essay exam aiming to tie together the various strands we have covered.
- *Final Paper (20%)*: In teams of two, students will write a 15 to 20 page paper responding to an emergent controversy relating to theoretical issues we discuss, today's imagemaking practices, the political economy of imagemaking, or representation. This will be due **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6**.
- *Final Presentation (20%)*. You and your partner will present your findings, research, and ideas on the last day of class. More details will be forthcoming.
- *Project development labs (20%)*. Two times before your final paper you will post to the 'discussion' section of our class Blackboard site a brief summary of your topic as it develops, what you have learned about it so far at the time of posting, and importantly, *some tie to the broader themes, theories and events* found in the course readings. These will only be viewable by those of us in this class, and you should not be anxious about the outside world casting aspersions on your initial efforts. Each post should be three to four well-thought-out paragraphs. It should address and critically engage with at least one of the readings for the weeks leading up to the post (wrestle with the readings, pose new questions, agree/disagree with author's position, draw connections with other readings, ask questions about the readings, etc.). **They will be due by FRIDAY at NOON of the weeks assigned**. These are intended to get you started early on your final projects and are a chance for me to give you early feedback on them.
- *Theory and application efforts (10%)*. Twice during the semester you will be required to come to class prepared with tangible examples that illustrate the points of our authors, ready to discuss them. You will sign up during the first day of class for your particular sessions.
- *Participation and attendance (10%)*. This class, while fairly large, will feature extensive discussion: it's the only way to make sense of many of the concepts that we will be encountering. As such, attendance will be taken every class.

Course Policies

Late submissions of any kind will NOT be accepted. All deadlines are firm. If you are aware of a conflict that will prevent you from completing an assignment on time, you are responsible to contact the instructor in advance. Emergencies will require written documentation.

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's Academic Integrity Code as detailed in the SCampus guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violations or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in the student's expulsion.

It is particularly important that you are aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, fabricating information or resources for a project, passing work for another class off as original effort here, or submission of a paper authored by someone other than yourself. If you have doubts about any of these practices, please confer with the instructor.

Resources on academic honesty can be found on the Student Judicial Affairs Web site (<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS>). There you will find a “Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism” and “Understanding and Avoiding Academic Dishonesty.” You are responsible for abiding by these guidelines. Please review them if you are unfamiliar.

Accommodations / Disability Services and Programs information

Any student any student requesting academic accommodation based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to your instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776, and their website is http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html

Library access

As a USC student, you have access to all the library resources and the Annenberg Librarian, Chimene Tucker (cetucker@usc.edu), is available to assist you with any inquiry. For your projects (for reasons we’ll even be discussing in class), you’ll want to take advantage of the “dark web” resources at your fingertips over a sole reliance on Google.

Course Schedule and Readings

Readings are subject to change, but any changes will be announced in class and noted on blackboard. All readings on blackboard are denoted with “[BB]” and are posted in the “Assignments” section. *While I foresee few changes to the below, always please consult the “Assignments” section of blackboard to ensure you are doing the correct reading each week.*

1. August 29: Welcome

2. September 5: Some provocations: War, structures, and controlling messages

- W. Lance Bennett, Regina G. Lawrence, and Steven Livingston. “Press politics in America: The case of the Iraq War.” From *When the Press Fails: Political Power and the News Media From Iraq to Katrina* (2008). [BB]
- W. Lance Bennett, “Inside the profession: Objectivity and the political authority bias.” From *News: The Politics of Illusion* (2012). [BB]
- Daniel Boorstin. “From news gathering to news making: A flood of pseudo-events.” From *The Image* (1961) [BB]

3. September 12: Two divergent lenses – political economy / simulacra and simulation

- Robert McChesney, “How can the political economy of communication help us understand the Internet?” From *Digital Disconnect* (2013).
- Jean Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra,” from *Simulations* (1983).

4. September 19: Gender, race, class and imagemaking

- Patricia Hill Collins, “Mammies, matriarchs, and other controlling images,” from *Black Feminist Thought*. [BB]
- Angela McRobbie, “Notes on postfeminism and popular culture: Bridget Jones and the new gender regime,” from *All About the Girl* [BB]

5. September 26: The roots of imagemaking, 1

- Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (excerpts)

6. October 3: The roots of imagemaking, 2

- Edward Bernays, *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (excerpts)
- Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (excerpts)
- Edward Bernays, “The engineering of consent” [BB]

7. October 10: The roots of imagemaking, 3

- Stuart Ewen, Chapters 7-9, 11-13 from *PR! A Social History of Spin*

8. October 17: The roots of imagemaking, 4

- Stuart Ewen, Chapters 14, 15, 16 from *PR! A Social History of Spin*

9. October 24: Structures of imagemaking – to the present

- Robert McChesney, “The Internet and capitalism II.” From *Digital Disconnect* (2013)
- Dan Schiller, “Parasites of the quotidian.” From *How to Think About Information* (2006) [BB]

10. October 31: The measured 'image'

- Joseph Turow, “A new advertising food chain” and “Targets or Waste” [BB]
- John Cheney-Lippold, “A new algorithmic identity” [BB]

11. November 7: Opted in

- Siva Vaidhyanathan, *The Googlization of Everything* (2011) – Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6

12. November 14: Brand culture and self-branding

- Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Authentic™* (2013) – Chapters 1, 2, 3 (4 optional)

13. November 21: Activism and broader systems - putting it all together

- Monroe Price, “Public diplomacy and the transformation of international broadcasting.” (2003) [BB]
- Sasha Costanza-Chock, “Mic Check! Media cultures and the Occupy movement” (2012) [BB]
- Writers for the 99%, *Occupying Wall Street: The Inside Story of an Action that Changed America* (excerpts) [BB]
- Jodi Dean, “Communicative Capitalism: circulation and the foreclosure of politics.” [BB]

—November 28: THANKSGIVING, NO CLASS—

14. December 5 – Wrap up and review – team presentations.