Media Seductions:

Influence Theory from Plato to Battlefield 2

Elizabeth Losh

Lectures are Tu/Th 2:00p - 3:20p in SOLIS 104

Office hours are Thursdays 3:30-5:30 in PCYN 249

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Course Description

In the fifth century B.C.E. the Greek philosopher Plato warned that seemingly positive innovations that allowed human beings to represent, record, and communicate their experiences in new ways might have unexpected negative consequences. He cautioned that the “new media” of ancient Athens might corrupt the young with images of sex and violence, dumb down popular culture into a state of amnesia, foster the moral deception of a gullible citizenry, and encourage blasphemous behavior that would destabilize society. In the millennia since Plato, we have seen moral panics about paintings, novels, plays, newspapers, photographs, films, comic books, television shows, videogames, and social network sites that have galvanized public opinion, spurred policy-making decisions, and fostered philosophical reflection and scientific inquiry. This course on the culture, art, and technology of media influence looks at many kinds of texts that have been associated with powerful forms of persuasion – both in the present and in the past. Such new media have been credited with ending slavery and colonialism, but they have also been blamed for murderous obedience to totalitarian leaders and violent martyrdom in the name of global jihad.

Required Texts

Carr, Nicholas. 2010. The shallows: what the Internet is doing to our brains. New York: W.W. Norton.
Richards, Jeffrey. 1997. Early American drama. New York: Penguin Books (not as necessary as the others, because a good hypertext is available online)

Materials on Electronic Reserves

Q&A Sessions about Writing Assignments:

7PM at the Dogg House on October 6 (for Assignment 1)
12 Noon at the Smart Classroom on November 4 (for Assignment 2)

7PM at the Dogg House on November 21 (for Assignment 3)

Review Session for the Final Examination 3-4 PM on December 5 at the Dogg House.

Special First Paper Clinic with Writing Workshop tutors 7-9 PM on Monday, October 10 at the Writing Studio (The Orange Room Next to the Digital Playroom on the Second Floor of Pepper Canyon Hall). Get there early! Pizza will be served!

Grading

20%: Assignment 1 (Paraphrase and Description: Working with Sontag and an item from the Spanish Civil War archive) and Grading Rubric 1

20%: Assignment 2 (Explication: Analyzing details in horror comics of the fifties) and Grading Rubric 2

20%: Assignment 3 (Curation: Integrating sources and commentary for close reading Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses) and Grading Rubric 3

25%: Final Examination

15%: Class Participation (although numerically participation accounts for a minor percentage of your grade, failure to participate is grounds for failure in the class; participation includes attending lectures and discussion section and avoiding lateness)

Syllabus

Week 0: Introduction

9/22 Thursday: Overview (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 1)

   Opening song: "Rasputin" by Boney M.

   Closing song: "Technologic" by Daft Punk

Week 1: Photography: Regarding the Pain of Others

9/27 Tuesday: Authenticity (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 2)

Reading: Ch 1-4 of Regarding the Pain of Others and Shots of War: Photojournalism During the Spanish Civil War

Special Guest: Luis Martin-Cabrera of the Department of Literature and the Spanish Civil War Memory Project

   Opening song: "Jarama Valley" by Woody Guthrie
Closing song: "Spanish Bombs" by the Clash
Bonus track: "Ballad of Ira Hayes" by Johnny Cash

9/29 Thursday: Mediation and Immediacy (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 3)
Reading: Ch 5-9 of Regarding the Pain of Others
Opening song: "Strange Fruit" by Billie Holiday
Closing Song: "Vigilantee Man" by Woody Guthrie
Bonus Track: "Song for Troy Davis" by Nellie McKay

Week 2: Novels: Northanger Abbey

10/4 Tuesday: Reading the text as satire; Bath and reading practices in contemporary England (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 4)
Special Guest: Sam Gregory of WITNESS
Reading: Volume I (pages 1-102) and "Gothic Romance, Sensibility and the Sublime" (pages 211-229 in the Longman Cultural Edition) of Northanger Abbey.
Opening song: "Gothic Vimperg" by Novel 23
Closing song: "Rage over a Lost Penny" by The Jane Austen Era

10/6 Thursday: Reading the text as parody; gothic novels (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 5)
Reading: Volume II (pages 102-198) of Northanger Abbey
Opening song: "I Died So I Could Haunt You" by Stars
Closing song: "My Wife and My Dead Wife" by Robyn Hitchcock & The Egyptians

Ideas Draft of Assignment 1 Due!

Week 3: Media for Social Change: The Debates about Abolitionism and Colonialism

10/11 Tuesday: Plays, Popular Songs, and Melodrama in the story of Uncle Tom’s Cabin (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 6)
Reading: George Aiken, Uncle Tom's Cabin (in Early American drama)
Opening song: "Fight the Power" by Public Enemy
Closing song: "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" by Gil Scott-Heron

10/13 Thursday: The Forbidden Book ([Slides](#) and [Podcast](#) of Lecture 7)

Reading: San Buenaventura, "The Colors of Manifest Destiny" (on ted.ucsd.edu)

Reading: Cartoons from *The Forbidden Book*

Viewing: Bontoc Elegy (on electronic reserves)

Opening song: "The Apl Song" by The Black Eyed Peas

**Working Draft of Assignment 1 Due!**

Week 4: The History of Media Theory

10/18 Tuesday: Plato and Aristotle ([Slides](#) and [Podcast](#) of Lecture 8)

Special Guest: Lia Friedman of the Library!

Reading Plato *Phaedrus* (257c-279c) and *Republic* (2.377a-379e, 3.387a-392c, 7.514a-7.518d, and 10.595a-10.603e) and Aristotle *Poetics* (1448a-1454a) and Rhetoric Book I, [Chapter 2](#)

Opening song: "The Magnificent Seven" by The Clash

Closing song: "Vicarious" by Tool

10/20 Thursday: Suspending Disbelief and Cultivating Sympathy: The Age of Sensibility ([Slides](#) and [Podcast](#) of Lecture 9)


Opening song: "Channel Z' by the B-52s

Closing song: "Brazil" by Cornelius

**Paper on Sontag and on a Spanish Civil War artifact (Assignment 1) due!**

Week 5: Media Theory and Media Practice

10/25 Tuesday: The Contemporary Debate about Videogames ([Slides](#) and [Podcast](#) of Lecture 10)
Reading: Review Plato, Aristotle, Burke, and Johnson

Opening song: "The Girl at the Videogame Store" by Parry Grip

Closing song: "Automotivation" by Cabaret Voltaire

10/27 Thursday: Media and the Nazi Racial State: Degenerate Art and Patriotic Melodrama (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 11)

Viewing: Degenerate Art

Viewing: Harlan: In the Shadow of Jew Süss

Opening song: "Springtime for Hitler" from The Producers


Week 6: Comics

11/1 Tuesday Understanding Comics (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 12)

Viewing: Confidential File

Reading: Understanding Comics Ch. 1-5, the Testimony of William Gaines and Frederic Wertham, and materials from Four Color Fear: forgotten horror comics of the 1950s and The Horror: comic books the government didn't want you to read

Opening song: "Midnight Stroll" by the Revels

11/3 Thursday Horror Comics of the Fifties (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 13)

Reading: Understanding Comics Ch. 6-9 and exploration of Underground & Independent Comics, Comix, and Graphic Novels

Opening song: "Comic Book Love" by Allegra

Week 7: Media Conditioning

11/8 A Clockwork Orange (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 14)

Viewing: A Clockwork Orange

Opening song: Theme from A Clockwork Orange (based on Henry Purcell's Funeral Music for Queen Mary) by The Starshine Orchestra/Singers

Closing song: "Singing in the Rain"
Ideas Draft of Assignment 2 Due!

11/10 A Clockwork Orange and The Satanic Verses (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 15)

Reading: Begin Rushdie

Opening song: A Clockwork Orange (based on Beethoven's Finale 9th Symphony) by the London Philharmonic Orchestra

Closing song: "Alabama Song" by The Doors

Working Draft of Assignment 2 Due!

Week 8: Media and Remix Culture

11/15 Tuesday: Rushdie, The Satanic Verses. Use the study guide! (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 16)

Reading: The Satanic Verses I-III

Opening song: "O Rabba" by Udit Narayan & Sapna Awasthi

Closing song: "Everytime I dream" by Yusuf Islam

11/17 Thursday: Rushdie, The Satanic Verses (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 17)

Reading: The Satanic Verses V-VI

Opening song: "Aaja Nachle" by Bally Sagoo

Closing song: "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" by the Charlie Daniels Band

Paper on a story from a fifties horror comic (Assignment 2) due!

Week 9: Blasphemy and Terrorism (finish reading Rushdie and start reading Carr)

11/22 Tuesday: Rushdie, The Satanic Verses (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 18)

Reading: The Satanic Verses VII and IX

Opening song: "Tunak Tunak Tun" by Daler Mehndi

Closing song: "Acceptable in the Eighties" by Calvin Harris

Ideas Draft of Assignment 3 Due!
11/24 Thursday
Thanksgiving Holiday: No Class
Reading: Start Reading Carr

Week 10: The Internet

11/29 Tuesday The Shallows
Reading: The Shallows 1-4 (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 19)

Opening song: "Computer World" by Kraftwerk
Closing song: "White Shadows" by Coldplay

Working Draft of Assignment 3 Due!

12/1 Thursday The Shallows
Reading: The Shallows 7-10 (Slides and Podcast of Lecture 20)

Opening song: "Walking" by Ash Grunswald
Closing song: "Online" by Brad Paisley

12/5 Monday Paper on The Satanic Verses (Assignment 3) due in the CAT Offices! Turn in the paper version between 9AM and 12 Noon in the box with your section leader's name! No extensions! Electronic copy must be turned in as a Turnitin assignment to TED by midnight.

12/8 Thursday 3:00p - 5:59p Final Examination

Enjoy the Boney M. Christmas Album and some great k-pop tunes over Winter Break!