Media Seductions:

Influence Theory from Plato to Battlefield 2

Elizabeth Losh

Lectures are Tu/Th 2-3:20 PM in Ledden Auditorium

Contact: lizlosh (at) ucsd (dot) edu

Office Hours: Tu/Th 11:30-12:30 249 Pepper Canyon Hall

Q&A Sessions about Writing Assignments: 10/4 5PM and 11/15 5PM in the Dogg House

Review Session for the Final Examination: 12/3 5PM in the Dogg House

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.
the others, because a good hypertext is available online)

Materials on Electronic Reserves

**Grading**

20%: [Assignment 1](#) (Summarizing: Providing an overview of a chapter from Carr) and [Grading Rubric](#)

10%: [Library Assignment](#) (Explication: Analyzing details of an object in the Dr. Seuss Collection) and [Grading Rubric](#)

30%: [Assignment 2](#) (Curation: Integrating multiple sources about the comic book panic) and [Grading Rubric](#)

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**

9/27 Tuesday ([Slides for Lecture 1](#))

Reading: The Syllabus!

Opening song: "Rasputin" by Boney M.

Closing song: "Technologic" by Daft Punk

**Week 1: The Internet**

10/2 Tuesday

Reading: Reading: *The Shallows* 1-2

Opening song: "Computer World" by Kraftwerk

Closing song: "Internet Connection" by M.I.A.

10/4 Thursday:
Reading: *The Shallows* 3-4

**Week 2: Culture, Art, and Technology**

**Smart Classroom Exercise**

10/9 Tuesday:

Reading: *The Shallows* 7-10

**Ideas Draft of Assignment 1 Due!**

10/11 Thursday: Mimesis and Catharsis

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

**Week 3: Theatre**

10/16 Tuesday: Suspending Logic and Cultivating Sympathy


**Working Draft of Assignment 1 Due!**

10/18 No Class

**Week 4: Novels**

10/23 Tuesday: Reading the text as satire: Bath and reading practices in contemporary England

Reading: Volume I (pages 1-102) in the Longman Cultural Edition) of *Northanger Abbey*.

10/25 Thursday: Reading the text as parody; gothic novels

Reading: Volume II (pages 102-198) in the Longman Cultural Edition) of *Northanger Abbey*.

**Week 5: Visual Culture and Persuasion**

10/30 Tuesday: Political Cartoons

*Dr. Seuss Went to War*
Assignment 1 due!

11/1 Thursday: Plays, Popular Songs, and Melodrama in the story of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*

Reading: George Aiken, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Week 6: Photography

11/6 Tuesday: Photography and the Spanish Civil War

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

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

11/8 Thursday: Media and Human Rights

Reading: Ch 5-9 of *Regarding the Pain of Others*

Possible Special Guest: Sam Gregory of *WITNESS*

Week 7: Mass Psychology

11/13 Tuesday: Media and the Nazi Racial State: Degenerate Art and Patriotic Melodrama

Viewing: *Harlan: In the Shadow of Jew Süss*

Viewing: *Degenerate Art*

Library Assignment Due!

11/15 Thursday: From Hot Media to Cool Media

Viewing: *Confidential File*

Reading: 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*

Week 8: Comics

11/20 Tuesday Horror Comics of the Fifties

Reading: *Understanding Comics* Ch. 1-5
11/22 Thursday: Thanksgiving! No Class!

Week 9: Comics Continued

11/27 Tuesday *Understanding Comics* Ch. 6-9 and exploration of *Underground & Independent Comics, Comix, and Graphic Novels*

**Ideas Draft of Assignment 2 Due!**

11/29 Thursday *A Clockwork Orange*

**Viewing: A Clockwork Orange**

Week 10: Videogames

12/3 Tuesday The Contemporary Debate about Videogames

**Working Draft of Assignment 2 Due!**

12/5: Thursday Writers Workshop

Finals Week: Monday *Paper on Comics (Assignment 2) 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.

Final Examination

Enjoy the *Boney M. Christmas Album* over Winter Break!