

**Philosophy 192: Propaganda and Social Exclusion**  
**ICC 115      M W 12:30 - 13:45**

Professor: Bryce Huebner    Office: 234 New North  
Office hours: **M 15:30-16:30**, and by appointment

Propaganda and other forms of politically motivated rhetoric are commonly deployed in political campaigns, public policy campaigns, and social movements, as well as in advertising, news services, and popular culture. This is nothing new. Plato was worried about the ways in which political rhetoric and similar forms of speech impact our self-understanding as social and ethical beings; and many subsequent philosophers have been troubled by the effect of systematically distorted forms of communication. In this course, we will pursue these issues, building on many things we have learned about propaganda and social exclusion since Plato first puzzled through these issues. We will try to figure out what propaganda is, how and why it works, and its role in dehumanization and social exclusion.

**Course goals:** I will try to help you to develop the tools and techniques necessary for doing philosophy well. We will work together to find strategies for answering difficult philosophical questions, and strategies for responding to the arguments offered by others. Over the course of the semester, we will also work together to improve your abilities to understand and critically analyze difficult arguments. This process should also help you to develop and defend your own positions on these philosophical issues. But along the way, I will also provide you with resources that will help you to address the kinds of theoretical issues that arise across other academic disciplines as well.

**Required Texts:** There are two required books for this course: **David Livingstone Smith**, *Less than Human*, MacMillan Press (2012); and **Plato**, *Gorgias*, Hackett Publishing. All other required texts will be available online, and links will be provided in the course reading schedule below.

**Assignments:**

Over the course of this semester, you must:

1. Write three short papers (1000 words; worth **25% of your grade each**).
2. Take part in one group presentation during the second half of the course (worth **10% of your grade**);
3. Develop a proposal for future research (500 words; worth **10% of your grade**);
4. Display evidence that you are engaging critically with class material (as revealed by things like in-class participation, contributed discussion questions, or discussions with me outside of class; **5% of your grade**).

Your first paper must either address a philosophically significant aspect of the history of racism and dehumanization (**Due: 19 September**) or it must address David Livingstone Smith's account of dehumanization (**Due: 10 October**). You must then choose two more papers, from the following three topics: ideology (**Due: 9 November**); revolutionary speech and revolutionary art (**Due: 23 November**); or disability and social exclusion (**Due: 7 December**).

Your research proposal must: first, explain the most important insight you have gained in this class; second, explain the most significant limitation of that insight; and third, explain how you would proceed in overcoming this limitation (**Due: 12 December**).

**Submission of papers:** Papers must always be submitted anonymously, with no identifying information included other than your GUID#. If you include additional identifying information, your paper will not be graded. A wealth of psychological data suggests that subtle, often implicit prejudices can influence the evaluation of a paper. By adopting an anonymous grading strategy, I hope to guarantee as far as possible that grading is carried out in a way that is fair and reasonable. Since names will never appear on your papers, every paper will be graded exclusively on the basis of the words that occur on the page, focusing on the clarity and accuracy of the presentation, and the strength of the evidence you present for your claims.

**Grading Criteria:** In general, philosophy papers should be stylistically clear, adequately articulate the claims being defended, and provide evidence and arguments in support of their claims—thereby presenting clear and compelling arguments. In general, a 'B+' paper 1) will provide a clear articulation of the claims that are being defended, 2) will be well organized, 3) will rely on clear evidence and arguments in support of these claims, and 4) will be stylistically clear—thereby presenting a clear and well structured argument. A 'B' grade will be weaker in one of these areas—but still satisfactory—and an 'A-' will excel in one of these areas. A 'C' grade will be awarded where a paper is weak in one or two of these categories; a 'D' grade will be awarded where a paper is weak in 3 or 4 categories or omits one altogether (e.g., by lacking a thesis or lacking arguments for the truth of that thesis). An 'A' grade will only be awarded where a paper excels in each category, exhibiting a clear capacity for doing philosophy.

**Late paper and make-up policy:** The deadlines for turning in papers are firm. I only give extensions where there is evidence of illness or a family emergency, which is submitted prior to the due date. Papers are automatically penalized 1/3 of a grade (A- to a B+, B+ to a B, etc.) for each day they are late.

**Appealing a grade:** You may appeal any grade that you feel does not accurately represents your work. Appeals for re-evaluation must be made in writing, and they must provide a compelling argument for re-evaluation. I will do my best to return exams promptly; out of fairness, you will do your best to make appeals for re-evaluation in a timely manner (all such appeals must be made *no sooner than 24 hours* after your paper is returned, and *no later than one week* after your paper is returned). The agreement to reevaluate can result in three distinct outcomes: 1) raising the grade; 2) lowering the grade; or, 3) making no change to the grade. A decision to reevaluate is not a guarantee of a better grade.

**Use of external resources:** To succeed in this course, you must learn how to read and reason carefully, and you must learn how to recover arguments from difficult texts. You will not have to read anything beyond what is assigned for the course; and the best way to develop the skills required to do well in this course may depend on discussing the things we read with others. Beyond trying to clarify your thoughts by thinking out-loud in class, you may also want to get together in small groups to think through the issues we discuss; alternatively, you might *tweet* your philosophical thoughts, argue about the texts that you have been reading on Facebook, or start a *Tumblr* about other kinds of minds (who knows, you might even have other ideas about to work through your philosophical thoughts). This is all acceptable, and it may help you to understanding the issues we will be discussing. People have very different styles of thinking and learning; and you should use whatever resources suit you best to develop the skills that you need for succeeding in this class. But if you have cool ideas, please share them!

**Academic honesty:** When it comes time to write your papers, you must use the skills you have developed by thinking through the relevant issues on your own. You have all signed the Georgetown University Honor pledge and have agreed to be honest in your academic endeavors and to hold yourself to the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life. I expect you to be familiar with both the letter and the spirit of the

pledge, and I will enforce the Honor Code by reporting any and all suspected cases of academic dishonesty. The Honor Code applies to all relevant aspects of this course and it is the responsibility of each student to inform herself or himself of the relevant principles, and to abide by them throughout the semester. Of course, the key to avoiding dire consequences is to think for yourself, and do your own work on your papers. If you have any questions about what the Honor Pledge requires, please do not hesitate to ask me.

**The writing center:** The writing center provides one-on-one assistance at various stages of the writing process. All writers, even the most accomplished, can benefit from their assistance on issues as diverse as topic development, organization, and strategies for revising. To make an appointment, see: <http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu>.

**Accommodations and diversity:** There is a great deal of diversity in the teaching and learning styles that one finds in a modern university. These styles may not always mesh in ways that are conducive to the success and wellbeing of everyone in a particular course. But fortunately, there are often ways of improving things. I am happy to discuss the structure of this course, and to accommodate the multitude of different learning styles that people have to the best of my abilities. So please, stop by and talk to me in office hours, or make an appointment. I sincerely think that every student is entitled to a meaningful and stimulating classroom experience! Disabled students and students who are on record with the university as requiring particular accommodations, please stop by my office and let me know that this is the case, in confidence, during the first few weeks of the semester—and please take advantage of the services provided by the university. Finally, if you find over the course of the semester that additional accommodations are necessary, please let me know.

**Cell Phones and Computers:** Be sure to turn off the ringers on your phones when you come to class; if you forget to do so, and your phone rings, please turn it off immediately. You should also note that computer use typically has a detrimental effect on the retention and integration of information. In every psychological investigation that I am aware of, people who use a pen and paper to take notes outperform those who use computers. You may use your computer for note taking and for other purposes that are consistent with the content of the course (e.g., looking up quotes from the reading); but I would appreciate it if you would have the maturity to refrain from using your computer for non-academic purposes while in the class. Also, please remember that your computer use can be distracting to others, and it can create an environment in which it is difficult for them to learn; so, please be respectful.

**Mind your manners:** Philosophy is best done collectively and collaboratively; however, some of the questions we will be discussing may generate contentious claims, spirited discussions, vehement disagreements, and trenchant criticisms. This is at least part of what doing philosophy is all about. In discussing, disagreeing, criticizing, and arguing with one another, we must make an effort to remain courteous and respectful. I promise to do my best to raise philosophical issues and to start philosophical discussions in ways that are as sensitive as possible to the variety of viewpoints and opinions that we are sure to find among the members of this class. But I will only be able to do this if each of you helps to create an atmosphere where we can develop ideas in a friendly and welcoming environment where we all learn from one another. Perhaps more importantly, if you want to disagree with someone, or if you want to offer a criticism of their viewpoint, be sure to offer reasons for the approach that you are suggesting. If we reason through things together, we are sure to have a great semester!

**Tentative course schedule:**

8/27	In class introduction: <a href="#">“I’m not all about that bass”</a>
9/3	<b>Iris Marion Young</b> , <a href="#">“Five Faces of Oppression”</a> ; <b>Peggy McIntosh</b> , <a href="#">“White Privelege: Unpacking the invisible backpack”</a> ; <b>Jamelle Bouie</b> , <a href="#">“Why do millennials not understand racism?”</a>
9/8 9/10	<b>David Livingstone Smith</b> , “Less than Human” & “Steps Toward a Theory of Dehumanization”
9/15 9/17	<b>David Livingstone Smith</b> , “Caliban’s Children” & “The Rhetoric of Enmity”
9/22 9/24	<b>David Livingstone Smith</b> , “Learning From Genocide” (recommended) <b>Lynne Tirrell</b> , <a href="#">“Genocidal language games”</a>
9/29 10/1	<b>David Livingstone Smith</b> , “Racism Redux” <b>Angela Davis</b> , <a href="#">“Afro Images: Politics, fashion, and nostalgia”</a>
10/6 10/8	<b>David Livingstone Smith</b> , “The Cruel Animal”; “The Ambivalence and Transgression”; & “Questions for a Theory of Dehumanization”
10/15	<b>Harry Frankfurt</b> , <a href="#">“On Bullshit”</a> ; <b>Rachel McKinnon</b> , <a href="#">“Propaganda, Lies, and Bullshit in Bioshock”</a>
10/20 10/22	<b>Plato</b> , Gorgias (447a-481b)
10/27 10/29	<b>Plato</b> , Gorgias (481b-end) (recommended) <b>Jonathan Chait</b> , <a href="#">“The color of his presidency”</a> ; (recommended) <b>Ta-Nehisi Coates</b> , <a href="#">“The Champion Barack Obama”</a>
11/3 11/5	Read ( <i>at least</i> ) one: <b>Tommie Shelby</b> , <a href="#">“Ideology, racism, and critical social theory”</a> <b>Sally Haslanger</b> , <a href="#">“But mom, crop-tops are cute!”</a>
11/10 11/12	<b>WEB DuBois</b> , <a href="#">“Criteria of negro art”</a> ; <b>Alain Locke</b> , <a href="#">“Art or propaganda”</a> ; <b>Langston Hughes</b> , <a href="#">“The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”</a> (recommended) <b>Subcomandante Marcos</b> , <a href="#">“The Southeast in Two Winds”</a> , (optional) <a href="#">“The fourth world war has begun”</a> , <a href="#">“Between light and shadow”</a>
11/17 11/19	Listen: <b>Malcolm X</b> , <a href="#">“The ballot or the bullet”</a> ; Listen: <b>Stokely Carmichael</b> , <a href="#">“Black Power”</a> <b>Frantz Fanon</b> , <a href="#">“Reciprocal Bases of National Culture and the Fight for Freedom”</a>
11/24	<b>Theresa Blankmeyer Burke</b> , <a href="#">“Armchairs and Stares”</a> ; Watch: <a href="#">“Not hearing loss, Deaf Gain”</a> (from Switched at Birth); (recommended) Listen: <a href="#">Deaf President Now</a> (Stuff you missed in history podcast)
12/1 12/3	<b>Melanie Yergeau</b> , <a href="#">“Clinically significant disturbance”</a> ; Watch: <a href="#">I stim therefore I am</a> <b>Michael Berube</b> , <a href="#">“Portrait of a young man with Down Syndrome”</a>