The Struggle for *The Word*

**IDSEM-UG 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 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
- Plagerism, in any form, is not tolerated. For a full review of Gallatin’s policy on plagerism see http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html

*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*

*Essays:*
Genesis 1-3, Exodus 20, Matthew 13, John 1: 1-14 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
Benedict Anderson, “Cultural Roots” and “The Orgins of National Consciousness” from Imagined Communities
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”
Stephan 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: do not copy or download, via Blackboard.

Semester Schedule:

Sep 7 W Class Introduction

Sep 12 M In the Beginning was The Word
READ: Genesis 1-3, Exodus 20, Matthew 13, John 1: 1-14 The Bible: King James Version, and Benson Bobrick, “Comparative Translations of the English Bible”
SEE: Illuminated manuscripts

Sep 14 W Struggle for The Word
READ: Marcel Thomas, “Manuscripts” and Gerard Winstanley, “True Levellers Standard Advanced”

Sep 19 M Spreading of The Word
READ: Carlo Ginzburg, The Cheese and the Worms

Sep 21 W New Interpretations
READ: Carlo Ginzburg, The Cheese and the Worms

Sep 26 M Heresy
READ: finish The Cheese and the Worms
Sep 28 W  Reading a Nation  
READ: Benedict Anderson, from *Imagined Communities*  
First Assignment handed out

Oct 3 M  New Worlds Born  
READ: Read: Massachusetts School Law, and Thomas Leonard, “The Wicked Printer”

Oct 5 W  Print and Politics  
READ: Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*

Sep 30 T  Print and Power  
READ: Thomas Jefferson and Frederick Douglass

Oct 10 M  No Class – Columbus Day

Oct 12 W  Songs of Freedom  
READ: Read: Lawrence Levine's "Slave Songs… " in *The Unpredictable Past*  
DUE: First Assignment  
Second Assignment Handed Out

Oct 17 M  Participatory Culture  
READ: Lawrence Levine's "William Shakespeare… " in *The Unpredictable Past*

Oct 19 W  Who Gets to Write?  
READ: Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*

Oct 24 M  Selling the News  
READ: “Sensationalism Issue" of *Primary Documents*; start Andie Tucher's *Froth & Scum*

Oct 26 W  Jefferson's Nightmare  
READ: Walter Lippmann's "Blazing Publicity" (last essay in “Sensationalism”)  
And continue on with *Froth & Scum*

Oct 31 M  Intelligent Audiences  
READ: *Froth & Scum*

Nov 2 W  Virtual Community  
READ: reprint from *Freedom's Journal* and  "A Bintel Brief: Letters to the Jewish Daily Forward  
DUE: Second Assignment  
Third Assignment Handed Out

Nov 7 M  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 9 W**  
**Creating the Consumer**  
READ: *Captains of Consciousness* up to p. 48

**Nov 14 M**  
**All That Is Solid Melts Into Air...**  
READ: *Captains of Consciousness* pp. 51-109 (and beyond)

**Nov 16 W**  
**Engineering Consent**  
READ: finish *Captains of Consciousness*, and read Edward Bernay's "Engineering of Consent"

**Nov 21 M**  
**A New Medium for the Word**  
READ “March of Radio” *Primary Documents*

**Nov 23 W**  
**No Class – Pre-Thanksgiving**

**Nov 28 M**  
**The Public Interest**  
READ: “The Radio Act of 1927”  
**DUE: Third assignment**  
Fourth assignment handed out

**Nov 30 W**  
**The Power and the Glory**  
WATCH: *The Radio Priest*

**Dec 5 M**  
**The Power and the Glory II**  
Discuss the video

**Dec 7 W**  
**Return of the Repressed: Zines and Subcultural Writing**  
READ: Stephen Duncombe, “Zines” and “Identity”

**Dec 12 M**  
**Print in the New Millennia: E-mail, Blogs, and Texting**

**Dec 14 W**  
**Last Class**  
Wrap up semester

**TBA**  
Make-Up Class for Nov 23rd: Trip to MoMA exhibit: Talk to Me: Design and the Communication between People and Objects

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