Media Activism
MCC-GE 2153

Description: This participatory and discussion-oriented course explores the politics of media activism: its tactics, its strategies and its goals. The course will rely on both a survey of the existing theory and scholarship on media activism, as well as close analyses of actual activist practices within both old and new media and on a local, national and global scale. Special attention will be paid to questions of creativity and efficacy, addressing questions concerning the value of media activism as both an aesthetic and political activity.

Requirements:
1) Attendance, diligent reading, and active participation in all class discussions: 10%
2) Class presentations: 10%
3) 15-20 page analytic essay: 40%
4) At least 10 case study posts on Actipedia.org: 10%
5) Group media activist project, planned and executed: 30%

Books:
- Gene Sharp, From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation (see link)
- John Downing, Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements
- T.V. Reed, The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Right Movement to the Streets of Seattle
- Todd Gitlin: The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and the Unmaking of the New Left
- David Armstrong, A Trumpet to Arms: Alternative Media in America
- Raoul Vaneigem, The Revolution of Everyday Life (link)
- Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle (ideally Ken Knabb’s translation, link)
- Stephen Duncombe, Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy (on Blackboard)
- Jacques Rancière, The Politics of Aesthetics
- Richard Viguerie and David Franke, America’s Right Turn: How Conservatives Used New And Alternative Media to Take Over America
- Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayers, Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice
- Rita Raley, Tactical Media

Essays and Selections:
- Umberto Eco, “Towards a Semiological Guerilla Warfare” (link)
- Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “The Industrialization of the Mind” and “Constituents of a Theory of the Media” (Blackboard)
- The Bible: Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and The Acts (link)
- Laurie Ouellette, “Will the Revolution be Televised: Camcorders, Activism and Alternative
Television in the 1990s” (Blackboard)
- Simon Frith and John Street, “Rock Against Racism and Red Wedge: From Music to Politics, from Politics to Music” (Blackboard)
- George Lipsitz, “Immigration and Assimilation: Rai, Reggae and Bhangramuffin” (Blackboard)
- Ulysses, “Hip Hop Revolution (and the Arab Spring)” (link)
- Andre Breton, “(First) Manifesto of Surrealism” (Blackboard)
- James C. Scott, “The Arts of Political Disguise” (Blackboard)
- Redstockings, “Redstockings Manifesto” (link)
- Jacques Rancière, “The Emancipated Spectator” (Blackboard)
- Andrew Boyd, et al., Beautiful Trouble: Toolbox for the Next Revolution (coming link)
- David Garcia and Geert Lovink, “The ABC of Tactical Media” (link)
- Critical Art Ensemble, “Electronic Civil Disobedience” (link)
- John Emerson, “An Introduction to Activism on the Internet” (link)
- Abbie Hoffman, from Revolution for the Hell of It (Blackboard)
- Jerry Rubin, from Do It! (Blackboard)

All books and articles can be either found free on-line (see links), accessed via Blackboard (for reference purposes only, do not copy or download), or ordered on-line via Amazon, Alibris, et al.

Semester Schedule:

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Name</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Present</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 23</td>
<td>Class Introduction: Media Activism</td>
<td>WATCH:</td>
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<td>- Bringing Down a Dictator</td>
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<td>Jan 30</td>
<td>Theorizing Media, Theorizing Activism</td>
<td>READ</td>
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<td>- Gene Sharp, From Dictatorship to Democracy</td>
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<td>- Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “The Industrialization of the Mind” and “ Constituents of a Theory of the Media”</td>
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<td>- Umberto Eco, “Towards a Semiological Guerilla Warfare”</td>
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<td>- John Downing, Radical Media, chapters 1-4 (Blackboard)</td>
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<td>PRESENT</td>
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<td>- Contemporary Media Activist Examples</td>
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<td>Feb 6</td>
<td>In the Beginning was The Word: A Long History of Media Activism</td>
<td>READ</td>
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<td>- The Bible: Gospels and The Acts</td>
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<td>- John Downing, Radical Media, chapters 13-14</td>
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<td>- Historical Examples</td>
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<td>Feb 13</td>
<td>Social Movements and Mainstream Media</td>
<td>READ</td>
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<td>- Todd Gitlin, The Whole World is Watching</td>
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<td>PRESENT</td>
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<td>- Mainstream news on Occupy Wall Street</td>
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<td>Feb 20</td>
<td>NO CLASS – PRESIDENTS’ DAY</td>
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Feb 27  Underground Press in the 1960s  
READ  
- David Armstrong, *A Trumpet to Arms*  
VISIT  
- Tamiment Underground Press collection  
PRESENT  
- Contemporary Activist “Press”  

March 5  Broadcasting Revolution  
READ  
- John Downing, *Radical Media*, chapters 15, 16, 20 & 21  
- Laurie Ouellette, “Will the Revolution be Televised: Camcorders, Activism and Alternative Television in the 1990s”  
WATCH  
- Liberation Newsreel  
- Paper Tiger TV  
PRESENT  
- Contemporary PSA  

March 12  NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK  

March 19  Sounds of Rebellion  
READ  
- T.V. Reed, *Art of Protest*, chapters 1 & 6  
- Simon Frith and John Street, “Rock Against Racism and Red Wedge”  
- George Lipsitz, “Immigration and Assimilation: Rai, Reggae and Bhangramuffin”  
- Ulysses, “Hip Hop Revolution (and the Arab Spring)”  
PRESENT  
- Contemporary “political” music  

March 26  Private Public Media  
READ  
- Redstockings, “Redstockings Manifesto”  
- Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*  
- James C. Scott, “The Arts of Political Disguise”  
- John Downing, *Radical Media*, chapters 10 & 11  
- T.V. Reed, *Art of Protest*, chapter 3  
PRESENT  
- Feminist media interventions  

April 2  Art, Activism and Artistic Activism  
READ  
- Andre Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism” (first)  
- Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*  
- T.V. Reed, *Art of Protest*, chapter 4, 7  
- Andrew Boyd, et al *Beautiful Trouble*
VISIT
- Gran Fury exhibit at NYU galleries

PRESENT
- Contemporary Examples of Artistic Activism

April 9 Ethical Spectacle?
READ
- Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Ken Knabb’s translation)
- Stephen Duncombe, “Ethical Spectacle” from *Dream* (on Blackboard)
- Jacques Rancière, “The Emancipated Spectator”
- Jerry Rubin, from *Do It!*
- Abbie Hoffman, from *Revolution for the Hell of It*

PRESENT
- Examples of Spectacle, ethical and otherwise

April 16 Conservative Activism and the Media
READ
- Richard Viguerie and David Franke, *America’s Right Turn*
- John Downing, *Radical Media*, chapter 8

PRESENT
- Examples of Conservative Media Activism

April 23 Internet Activism
READ
- Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayers, *Cyberactivism*
- John Emerson, “An Introduction to Activism on the Internet” (free on the web)

PRESENT
- Examples of Internet Activism

April 30 Tactical Media and other Digital Interventions
READ:
- Rita Raley, *Tactical Media*
- David Garcia and Geert Lovink, “The ABC of Tactical Media”
- Critical Art Ensemble, “Electronic Civil Disobedience”

PRESENT
- Examples of Digital Activism

May 7 (Our) Media Activism
PRESENT
- Class Campaigns

*All Assignments Are Due in the Final Class*