



OXFORD ADVANCED PRE-SESSIONAL COURSE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

The Art of Political Persuasion: A History of Propaganda and Spin?

Course Content

Since the emergence of popular politics in the eighteenth century, control of mass communications has been recognised as a vital political tool by politicians and political critics alike, in both democracies and dictatorships. In the process the very nature of modern politics has been subtly changed, shaped by the power of propaganda and spin.

This course will examine the historical emergence of this development through a consideration of the key ways in which mass communication has been utilised for political ends, from art to caricature and from film to television.

The role of key practitioners of these arts will also be explored, in both democracies and dictatorships, from the propagandist techniques of David and Goebbels, Eisenstein and Riefenstahl to the populist politics of Lloyd George and FDR, and the growth of modern spin.

Finally the course will explore the very latest manifestations of these practices as we look at the role and effect of mass communication in today's political world, from the televising of primaries to the growing power of social media.

Throughout the course students will be expected to play an active role in class discussions and the course will end with small group projects, allowing participants to present their own interpretations of the course's key themes.

Weekly Outline

1: The Origins of Propaganda and Spin
The legacy of Machiavelli
The role and work of Jacques-Louis David

2: The Birth of Political Satire
Hogarth, Gillray, Le Charivari and Punch

3: The Power of Film
The emergence of Pathé News
Mussolini and the early cult of the leader



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4: The Rise of Populism – I

The Democratic Way: the role of Lloyd George and FDR
The art of electioneering

5: The Rise of Populism – II

The Totalitarian Way: the role of Goebbels and Pravda
The vision of Eisenstein and Riefenstahl

6: The Pull of the Small Screen

Personality politics in the television age
The 'dark arts' of the spin doctors

7: The Art of Politics Today

The rise of alternative and social media
The revival of populism
The role of fact in a 'post-truth' age

8: Presentations

Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course you should be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the development of propaganda and its influence on the politics and culture of Britain and Europe
- explain how the growth of propaganda is reflected in the growth and development of media
- understand how national, political and historical contexts affect the production and interpretation of messages