

# HI3001 – 1984: Past, Present, Prophecy

Thursdays 10:30-1:30, LHS-TR+43

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During the second half of the twentieth century George Orwell's *1984* became a staple (if not a cliché) of political, cultural and sociological comment. Heavily promoted by state actors after the Second World War for propaganda purposes, it took on a counter cultural life of its own during the late 1960s and 1970s. Interest in the book was reinvigorated in the 1980s thanks to the arrival of new computer, media and military technologies. In 2017 sales of the novel reached a new peak. Orwell's novel only seems to have gained in momentum and relevance; its depictions of "Big Brother," of telescreens, and of the "forever war" have been uncannily prescient. This course examines in detail the long cultural tail of Orwell's canonical text from a multidisciplinary perspective.

The course work includes an extended, intensive study of a literary text in conversation with the methods, concepts, and practices of contemporary history. Due to its interdisciplinary nature, this course will feature deliberation on and assessment of different disciplinary methods, and the assignments challenge you to express your knowledge in new modes and registers and to different audiences.

## Required Texts:

George Orwell, *1984*, Penguin Modern Classics (014118776X)

Course Reader (Available on B1 of HSS)

## Course Assignments and Assessment:

|                               |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Preparation and Participation | 10% |
| Essay 1                       | 20% |
| Essay 2                       | 25% |
| Group Presentation            | 25% |
| Reflection Exercise           | 20% |

## Prospective Itinerary

### Week 1 – This Day (or This Year) in History

January 17 – Orwell, "Shooting an Elephant;" *The Eights* (selections)

### Week 2 – Big Brother Is Watching You (You Are Watching You)

January 24 – Orwell, *1984* (Part 1); Foucault, "Panopticism;" McMullan, "What does the panopticon mean in the age of digital surveillance?"

### **Week 3 – The Cold War (and the Forever War)**

January 31 – Westad, from *The Cold War: A World History*; Wright, from *Iron Curtain: From Stage to Cold War*; from Rubin, *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War*

### **Week 4 – Slavery Is Freedom and Pain Is Pleasure**

February 7 – Orwell, *1984* (Part 2); Postman, from *Amusing Ourselves to Death*; Wallace, “Shipping Out: On the (nearly fatal) comforts of a luxury cruise;” Freud, from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

### **Week 5 – Airborne: The BBC and Listening to 1984**

February 14 – *Listen to Britain* (dir. Jennings); Bloom, from *The Wireless Past*; Mowitt, “The Object of Radio Studies”

### **Week 6 – Writing in Room 101**

February 21 – Orwell, *1984* (Part 3); Orwell, “Politics and the English Language”  
Essay 1 due

### **Week 7 – The Ministry of Fear: Scenes from the Lives of Pioneer Propagandists**

February 28 – Orwell, “Propaganda and demotic speech;” Welch, from *Persuading the People: British Propaganda in World War Two*; Clampton, from *Advertising & Propaganda in WWII: Cultural identity and the Blitz spirit*; Defty, from *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda, 1945-1953: The Information Research Department*

*Recess*

### **Week 8 – The History of a Year: 1979**

March 14 – Caryl, *Strange Rebels: 1979 and the Birth of the 21st Century*; When, *How Mumbo-Jumbo Conquered the World & Strange Days Indeed: The Golden Age of Paranoia*

### **Week 9 – The 1984 Mixtape: Optimism in the Culture Industry**

March 21 – Selected Songs and Videos

### **Week 10 – Cultures of 1984**

March 28 – Group Presentations

### **Week 11 – Orwell’s Literary Legacies**

April 4 – Murakami, from *1Q84*; Rodden, *The Politics of Literary Reputation: The Making and Claiming of ‘St George’ Orwell; Inside the Myth. Orwell: Views from the Left*; Sutherland, *Orwell’s Nose: A Pathological Biography*; Hitchens *Orwell’s Victory or Prepared for the worst: Selected Essays and Minority Reports*  
Essay 2 Due

### **Week 12 – 1984 (All Over Again)**

April 11 – Wu, from *The Attention Merchants: from From the Daily Newspaper to Social Media, How Our Time and Attention Is Harvested and Sold*; Taplin, from *Move Fast and Break Things: How Facebook, Google and Amazon have Cornered Culture and What It Means for All of Us*;

Martínez, from *Chaos Monkeys: Inside the Silicon Valley Money Machine*; Levine, from *Surveillance Valley: the secret history of the internet*

**Week 13 – Writing as Presence, Writing as Prophecy**

April 18 – In-Class Writing Workshop

3 May – Reflection Exercise Due

DRAFT - SUBJECT TO CHANGE