Every highly privileged group develops the myth of its natural, especially its blood, superiority. Under conditions of stable distribution of power and, consequently, of an estatist order, that myth is accepted by the negatively privileged group. - Max Weber

This norming is…manifested in the vocabulary of “discovery” and “exploration” still in use until recently, basically implying that if no white person has been there before, then cognition cannot really have taken place. – Charles Mills

This course is about propaganda and power. We will explore some of the ways in which groups keep themselves in power by exploiting images and language that feed into and strengthen pre-existing mythologies, mythologies that justify their higher status position. We will draw in large part on the work of theorists who have grappled with these issues in the US context, reflecting on US racial hierarchies. We will investigate how positively privileged groups construct stereotypes of less privileged groups that serve to justify the status quo. We discuss how schools, the authority and apparatus of science, and the media are enlisted in support of such stereotypes. Finally, we explore how negatively privileged groups have used social movements to undermine the stereotypes that are designed to subjugate them. Throughout, we return to the theme of the threat group hierarchies, and the mechanisms used to maintain them, pose to the possibility of liberal democracy.

Jan. 20, 22 & 25: Introduction

Wednesday, January 20: Introduction to the class

Friday, January 22 Plato The Republic, Book 8,

Monday, January 25: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude, Etienne de La Boetie; The Racial Contract, Charles Mills, Chapter 2

January 27 & Feb 1 Social Science as Propaganda


Chapter 2 of Khalil Muhammad, The Condemnation of Blackness, 2011

John Dilulio, “My Black Crime Problem, and Ours”, 1996

“’Fact’, Explanation, and Expertise”, Alasdair MacIntyre, Chapter 7 of After Virtue

Feb. 3 – 22 Education as Propaganda

February 3: “The Solitude of Self”, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 1892
“The Higher Education of Women”, Anna Julia Cooper, chapter 4 of *A Voice from the South*

February 8 & 10: The Miseducation of the Negro, Carter G. Woodson


**Feb. 24 – March 7 Stereotypes**


March 2 “Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images”, Patricia Hill Collins, Chapter 4 of *Black Feminist Thought*

March 7 Selections from *Why Americans Hate Welfare*, Martin Gilens

March 9 Midterm Exam

*Spring Break*

**March 28 & 30 Ideology I: Epistemology**


March 30: “Black Feminist Epistemology”, Patricia Hill Collins, Chapter 11 of *Black Feminist Thought*; “Inheriting Patricia Hill Collins’s Black Feminist Epistemology”, Kristie Dotson

**April 4, 6 Ideology II: Philosophy of Mind and Psychology**

April 4 “They Saw a Protest: Cognitive Illiberalism and the Speech-Conduct Distinction”, Kahan, Hoffman, Braman, Evans, and Rachlinski, 2012; “Race and the Fragility of the Legal Distinction between Juveniles and Adults”, (Rattan, Levine, Dweck, Eberhardt)


**April 11 & 13 Speech and power**

April 11 “Genocidal Language Games”, Lynne Tirrell, “Slurring Perspectives”, Elizabeth Camp
April 13 “Language as a Mechanism of Control”, Chapter 4 of Jason Stanley, How Propaganda Works

**April 18 - 27 Civic rhetoric**


April 20 “The Power of Self-Definition”, Patricia Hill Collins, Chapter 5 of Black Feminist Thought, Elizabeth Barnes, “Pride”


If you choose to enroll in the class, you will be expected to:

1. Read the assignment for each class
2. Attend class regularly and participate actively in discussion sessions
3. Write two 4-6 page essays
4. Take a midterm and final exam.

This is a reading intensive course. The amount of reading will vary with the week; I will try to reduce the amount of reading by directing you to what is most important for class discussion.

Warning: In the reading and class discussion, concrete instances of group domination and oppression will be discussed. This will be (and perhaps should be) disturbing to all; certainly they are often so to me, even in preparing this syllabus.