

POLS 4551E: Propaganda and American Politics

Please make sure to read the entire syllabus.



Dr. Audrey A. Haynes

Maymester 2026

Time: Determined by you!

Classroom: Anywhere in the world!

Office: Suite 103 Baldwin Hall

Student drop-in hours: by appointment if you are in Athens.

Email: polaah@uga.edu (I check often and will respond asap)

Overview:

In this online course we will explore the world of propaganda within politics and societies in general. We begin with the biological hardware -- that is, our brain, as the way it operates is the main reason propaganda takes some of the forms it does. We will then examine the definition of propaganda and comparisons with other forms of communication. We will compare propaganda with persuasion -- and some days that will leave us scratching our heads trying to determine which is which as it can sometimes be difficult to tell unless you know the source and their objectives. Moreover, when you start paying attention, you are aware of it all around you -- even coming from sources you agree with for the most part.

We will examine theories of propaganda and utilize tools (logic, detective work) to analyze it, deconstruct it, and determine its effects. In addition, we will examine propaganda's history from ancient Rome to modern America and see how its use has developed and evolved over time. We will learn to create our own propaganda and produce our own research on the use of propaganda.

I try to keep the Maymester very simple and doable. If you go through the lecture slides (read through them or listen to the video version), do your readings, complete your short assignments and quizzes, you will be prepared for the exams.

Course goals for students:

1. Be familiar with the basic structures of the brain and how some of our biological processes make it easier for propagandists to manipulate us. Understand the key theories and concepts related to the psychology of human attitude development and decision-making.
2. Develop a clear understanding of propaganda; be able to compare propaganda with persuasive and informative communication.
3. Understand that propaganda itself is simply a tool -- perhaps a less desirable one; it can be used for both objectively good and bad efforts. It can be effective, and it can fail. It is certainly not foolproof and often requires a great deal of time and effort.
4. Discuss the origins and development of propaganda over the course of history, with an

emphasis on the major points of change in technique, delivery tools, audience, or source.

Examine consistencies relating to propaganda over time

5. Be able to critique a variety of theories of propaganda with the view to understand models of propaganda.
6. Understand the human psychology that underlies these theories.
7. Deconstruct political ads, as well as other advertising, into the components of propaganda.
8. Human interaction. Because this is an online course designed for students who are often away during the summer, working and interning while trying to take a major course, it is streamlined. There is no research paper, the peer interactions and active learning portions are far less given time and space constraints. But if you are craving human interaction to discuss the topic, please email me and we will set up an optional zoom for students who wish to participate.

Required Reading and Assessments:

You will be reading selected chapters, articles, and watching media sources, available within our eLC course, from a variety of other books and articles. There is no required textbook per se, but what is required will be available within the confines of our eLC course page. You will have ample

Table 1: Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool	Material Covered	Percentage
Test 1 (online)	Module 1,2 content	15
Test 2 (online)	Module 3,4 content	15
Test 3 (online)	Module 5,6,7 content	20
Miscellaneous Assessments	Quizzes and Activities	50

Module information and descriptions of projects are located on the course eLC page.

time and access to read the materials prior to exams.

This course will use the +/- system. A 93.00 is required for an A. 90-92.99 will earn an A-. 88-89.99 is a B+. 87.99 to 83 earns a B. and so on.

Make-Up Policy

Students are expected to complete all work by the last day of class. For the Maymester, I do not set any specific deadlines. The goal is to complete a module every two days, so by end of week one you should be taking exam 1. But you are allowed to pace yourself (within reason). No one should be waiting until the last few days to complete all of their work. It will have a negative impact on your learning outcomes and likely your assessments as well. There is no opportunity to make up work after the last day of class. Your only option will be to take an Incomplete.

Attendance Policy

There is no attendance policy, but I will check to see if you are actively engaged in the course. Students not checking in regularly with the course materials will be emailed

Academic Honesty Policy and AI Policy:

All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” All students are responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.

<https://ovpi.uga.edu/academic-honesty/academic-honesty-policy/student-honor-code>

Unless included as part of the assignment, use of Artificial Intelligence in any form (be it ChatGPT, Grammarly, Gemini etc.) is prohibited in your work. The only accepted use of AI is that which we find in our routine programs for writing, i.e. spelling and grammar check.

Use of these tools to answer test questions will result in an automatic zero and you will be required to redo the work in person as well as have the incident report to Academic Affairs. Please know that your brain gets stronger when you use your brain. AI is good for some things, but it is not reliable, nor does it transfer knowledge or understanding to your brain. You may use it as a research assistant for your paper, but it cannot be used to compose material, and all material must be vetted.

There is an academic honesty pledge quiz that you will be taking in the checklist for our start module. When you pledge to be honest and adhere to the rules of the class, you are pledging to not utilize AI unless it is specifically included in the prompt or directions.

Students with Disabilities/Challenges

Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations to participate in course activities or meet course requirements should contact the instructor or designate during regular office hours or by appointment.

Accommodations for Disabilities (e.g., If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, please register with the Disability Resource Center. They can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting <http://drc.uga.edu>.) See <https://drc.uga.edu/sample-access-statements/> for additional examples.

UGA Well-being Resources

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community.

Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services.

They also administer the Embark@UGA program which supports students

experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.

UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.

- Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu
- Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu
- University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273
- Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu
- Disability Resource Center and Testing Services: drc.uga.edu Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting <https://well-being.uga.edu>.

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; changes announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

FERPA Notice (e.g., The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants students certain information privacy rights. See the registrar’s explanation at reg.uga.edu/general-information/ferpa/. FERPA allows disclosure of directory information (name, address, telephone, email, major, activities, degrees, awards, prior schools), unless requested in a written letter to the registrar.)

NOTE: See following pages for University Maymester 2026 Calendar. Our specific activities and due dates will be available in eLC.

Event	Date	15 Days of Classes; 150 minutes daily
Classes Begin	May 12	Tuesday
Drop/Add	May 12–13	Tuesday–Wednesday
Midterm	May 21	Thursday

Event	Date	15 Days of Classes; 150 minutes daily
Holiday: Memorial Day — No Classes	May 25	Monday
Withdrawal Deadline	May 26	Tuesday
Classes End	June 2	Tuesday
Final Exams	June 3	Wednesday
Grades Due at noon	June 8	Monday