

San José State University
Department of Anthropology
ANTH 136: Thought Control in
Contemporary Society Spring 2020

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Professor Marlovits
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Office Hours:	Tuesday/Thursday 1:45-2:45 or by appt.
Class Days/Time:	Tuesday and Thursday 3:00-4:15 pm
Classroom:	Clark 204
Prerequisites:	None

Course Description

In this course we will analyze the means by which different institutions and individuals control the actions, behaviors, and thoughts of people in contemporary modern societies—including our own. We will also analyze the dynamics of control—how control mechanisms change over time, as well as the means by which people are able to resist or escape such controls. The course should help you think critically about controllers, their targets, the mechanisms they employ, and the goals they seek to accomplish. It should also help you understand controlling processes affecting your everyday life.

For more than a century, social scientists and others have taken an interest in mechanisms of cultural and social control including "brainwashing" or coercive persuasion, indoctrination, groupthink, and propaganda, among others. Some argue that increasing political and economic centralization on a global scale—together with the wide reach of today's global communication technologies—have led to more efficient and total social and cultural controls. Controllers may use these techniques in an undemocratic (and sometimes dangerous) fashion to convince others to modify their behaviors, to reform their thoughts and values, or to compel them to act in predictable ways.

In this course, we will be particularly focused on analyzing control from an anthropological perspective. We will examine the use of culture as a tool—in other words, the instrumental uses of culture. To help us think critically about processes of social and cultural control, we will begin by reading the classic novels *1984* and *Brave New World* as ethnographic accounts. Then we will focus upon mechanisms of social and cultural controls in various realms including schools, families, government, science, media, and business. Although much of the course material is set in the US, we will also examine other regions. Finally, we will discuss how processes of control influence everyday life and how we might effectively deal with them.

Learning Outcomes

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Over the course of the semester, I intend to help you meet the following learning objectives:

1. Identify various mechanisms of social and cultural control operating in contemporary societies (including the US) and dynamic processes that transform them over time.
2. Analyze the ways in which institutions such as governments, corporations, religious groups, and other organizations have compelled members to behave and act in specific ways.
3. Understand the processes by which mass media, government officials, social scientists, and the advertising industry have interacted to design new means of influencing public opinion, shape habits and tastes, and create mass consumers.
4. Gain insight into the ways by which nationalism, ethnicity, and other forms of identity and membership have been incorporated into controlling processes.
5. Trace the development of communication, pharmacological, and surveillance technologies for behavior modification, and other inventions which might potentially be used for control.
6. Identify how and why individuals and groups resist or revolt against forms of social and cultural domination, and how mutual aid, education, political mobilization, direct action, and other means might be used as a means of countering social and cultural controls.

Required Texts/Readings

Textbooks

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley (any edition)

1984 by George Orwell (any edition)

Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas by Natasha Dow Schull

Militarizing Culture: Essays on the Warfare State by Roberto J. González

United States of Distraction: Media Manipulation in Post-Truth America, by Nolan Higdon and Mickey Huff

In addition, we will use a supplemental course reader available which will be distributed to students via email by the course instructor.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Course grades will be derived from six assignments:

1. *List of control mechanisms in 1984*. This assignment should be typewritten. Instructions will be distributed in class by the instructor. (10% of final course grade)
2. *List of control mechanisms in Brave New World*. This assignment should be typewritten. Instructions will be distributed in class by the instructor. (10% of final course grade)
3. *Midterm exam*. This exam will consist of short definitions, multiple choice, and an essay. You will need a blue book. See course schedule below for midterm exam date. (25% of final course grade)
4. *Final exam*. This exam will consist of short definitions, multiple choice, and an essay. You will need a blue book. See course schedule below for final exam date. (25% of final course grade)
5. *Unannounced quizzes*. Over the course of the semester, five unannounced quizzes will be given based on the week's reading. (3% each, 15% of final course grade)
6. *Term Paper*. In this assignment, you will research and write an 8-page (double-spaced, not including cover page or references) term paper that analyzes a mechanism of social control, cultural control, or ideological control that has affected your own life. The instructor will give you more information about this assignment in Week 4 of the course. Term papers are due on the date of the last regular class meeting. (15% of final course grade)

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Final Examination or Evaluation

You will take one final exam, consisting of identifications/definitions, essays, and maps. (Final exam counts for 25% of final grade. CLO 1,2,3) . Final exam will be administered in the usual class meeting room (see Course Schedule at the end of this syllabus for the date and time).

[University Policy S06-4](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S06-4.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S06-4.pdf>) states that “There shall be an appropriate final examination or evaluation at the scheduled time in every course, unless the course is on the official List of Courses in which a final is optional.”

Grading Policy

Your work will be assessed based on your effort and reasoning, as illustrated by your writing. Your assignments document your mastery of the skills critical to anthropological inquiry. More guidelines on grading information and class attendance can be found from the following two university policies:

- [University Syllabus Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>)
- [University policy F15-12](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf>)

Determination of Grades

- Grades will include minus and plus grades as illustrated below and are determined by percentage of total points possible.
- Short summaries and evaluations of instructor-approved public lectures may provide extra credit options up to 5 points.
- All assignments must be completed in order to pass. I will not accept late assignments nor will I administer makeup exams unless documents can be presented as evidence of illness, death in family, jury duty, etc. No assignments will be accepted via e-mail—I must receive hard copies of all assignments. The term paper will **also** be uploaded via Canvas and vetted through turnitin.com.
- NOTE that [University policy F69-24](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F69-24.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F69-24.pdf> states that “Students should attend all meetings of their classes, not only because they are responsible for material discussed therein, but because active participation is frequently essential to insure maximum benefit for all members of the class. Attendance per se shall not be used as a criterion for grading.”

Grading distribution is as follows:

100	-	97	A plus
96	-	93	A
92	-	90	A minus
89	-	87	B plus
86	-	83	B
83	-	80	B-

79	-	77	C plus
76	-	73	C
72	-	70	C minus

69	-	67	D plus
66	-	63	D
Below 63			F

Note that “All students have the right, within a reasonable time, to know their academic scores, to review their grade-dependent work, and to be provided with explanations for the determination of their course grades.” See [University Policy F13-1](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf> for more details. If you have questions regarding your grades (including explanations for the determination of course grades, you should visit with the course instructor during office hours.

Classroom Protocol

Mobile phones must be turned off during class and must be out of sight or else the instructor will collect the device from the student until the end of class. Text messaging is strictly prohibited during exams and quizzes. Violation of this policy will result in a zero on the exam or quiz and the filing of a report to the Office of Student Conduct, the latter of which might result in expulsion from the course. Students should be aware that according to Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, "Standards for Student Conduct," grounds for student discipline includes: "Participating in an activity that substantially and materially disrupts the normal operations of the University," {Section 41301(b)(4)} which could include use of unauthorized electronic devices in classroom settings.

All assignments must be completed in order to pass. I will not accept late assignments nor will I administer makeup exams unless documents can be presented as evidence of illness, death in family, jury duty, etc. No assignments will be accepted via e-mail—I must receive hard copies of all assignments. I will not answer any questions regarding grades via email. Federal law (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) prohibits faculty from doing so. You are welcome to discuss grades during my office hours.

The subject matter covered in this course will provoke strong and varied reactions from your peers. Throughout the semester I will insist that you treat each one of your peers respectfully and that you respond to his or her comments in a mature way, even if your of view is radically different. After having taught ANTH 136 for more than a decade, I have observed that this course is most effective when the widest range of possible viewpoints are expressed freely in the classroom.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>"

**ANTH 136: Thought Control in
Contemporary Society Spring 2017 Course
Schedule**

Schedule is subject to change with fair notice.

Readings followed by an asterisk will be distributed to students by the course instructor.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	1/23	<p>Introduction George Orwell, <i>1984</i> (Part I) Recommended: Nicolai Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i></p>
2	1/28 1/30	<p>Propaganda George Orwell, <i>1984</i> (Part II)</p> <p>Tuesday: Nolan Higdon and Mickey Huff, “How did we get here?” and “A Crumbling Fourth Estate” in <i>United States of Distraction</i> Robert Reich, “Facts are Under Seige,” <i>The Guardian</i> Dec 2, 2019</p> <p>Thursday: Douglas Kellner, "The Big Lie: How Trump Uses Classic Propaganda Techniques" Tobin Smith, “Why Fox News Slimed a Purple Heart Recipient,” <i>New York Times</i> Nov. 22, 2019 Rebecca Solnit, “Politics and the American Language” Film: "Triumph of the Will"; Clips from Slavoj Zizek Recommended: Edward Bernays, <i>Propaganda</i></p>
3	2/4 2/6	<p>Fear, Disinformation, Violence George Orwell, <i>1984</i> (Part III)</p> <p>Tuesday: Richard Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics” Carole Cadwalladr, “Fresh Cambridge Analytica Leak ‘shows global manipulation is out of control,’” <i>The Guardian</i> Jan 4, 2020</p> <p>Viewing : <i>The Great Hack</i></p> <p>Thursday: Joseph Masco, “Survival is Your Business” Anna Funder, excerpts from <i>Stasiland</i></p> <p>Recommended: Michael Taussig, “Terror as Usual”</p>

4	2/11 2/13	<p>Persuasion and Cults Aldous Huxley, <i>Brave New World</i> (Chapters 9-18)</p> <p>Tuesday: Margaret Singer, "Coming Out of the Cults"* Margaret Singer, "Continuum of Influence and Persuasion"* Margaret Singer, "How the US Marine Corps Differs from Cults"* Fresh Air, "How Twitter Helped Change the Mind of a Westboro Baptist Church Member," listen here: https://www.npr.org/2019/10/10/768894901/how-twitter-helped-change-the-mind-of-a-westboro-baptist-church-member</p> <p>Thursday: Susan Harding, "Living Prophecy at Heaven's Gate" David Niewert, "Alt-America"</p> <p>Recommended: Deborah Layton, <i>Seductive Poison</i></p> <p>ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE 2/13--CONTROL MECHANISMS IN 1984</p>
5	2/18 2/20	<p>Paranoia, Conspiracy, and Hysterical Epidemics Elaine Showalter, "Defining Hysteria" in <i>Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media</i> Katheleen Stewart and Susan Harding, "Bad Endings: American Apocalypse" <i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i> Susan Lepselter, "Secret Immobilities and the Poetics of the Uncanny" In <i>The Resonance of Unseen Things</i></p>
6	2/25 2/27	<p>Pleasure Aldous Huxley, <i>Brave New World</i> (Chapters 1-8) Paul Roberts, <i>The Impulse Society</i> (excerpt)* William Astore, "Bread and Circuses in Rome and America"*</p> <p>Thursday: Mari Ruti, "The Creed of Pragmatism" Viewing: Adam Phillips interview Recommended: Paul Goodman, <i>Amusing Ourselves to Death</i></p> <p>ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE 2/27--CONTROL MECHANISMS IN BNW</p>
7	3/3 3/5	<p>Sexuality Tuesday: Linda Coco, "Silicone Breast Implants in America"* Hanna Rosin, "Why Kids Sext"*</p> <p>Consumption, Addiction, Attention Thursday: Stuart Ewen, <i>Captains of Consciousness</i> (excerpt)* Douglas Rushkoff, "Digital Presentism" Natasha Schull, <i>Addiction by Design</i> (Introduction and Chapters 1-2) Film: "Generation Like" Recommended: Juliet Schor, <i>Born to Buy</i></p>

8	3/10 3/12	<p>Corporatization Natasha Schull, <i>Addiction by Design</i> (Chapters 3-6)</p> <p>Recommended: Joel Bakan, <i>The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit</i></p> <p>MIDTERM EXAM THURSDAY MARCH 12TH</p>
9	3/17 3/19	<p>The Attention Economy Tuesday: Jenny Odell, excerpts in <i>How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy</i> Natasha Schull, <i>Addiction by Design</i> (Chapters 7-9) Stuart Ewen, <i>PR! A Social History of Spin</i> (excerpt)*</p> <p>Thursday: Viewing: <i>Requiem for the American Dream</i></p> <p>Recommended: J. Stauber and S. Rampton, <i>Toxic Sludge Is Good for You</i></p>
10	3/24 3/26	<p>Citizens or Consumers? Dismantling the Public Interest Tuesday: Natasha Schull, <i>Addiction by Design</i> (Chapter 10 and Conclusion) and one of the following two readings: Andrew Ross, “Education for Free People” Michiko Kakutani, “How Social Media, the Great Recession, and Donald Trump Combined to bring out the ‘indigenous American beserk’” <i>New York Times</i> Dec. 27, 2019 Henry Giroux, “Class Warfare and the Advance of Austerity Policies under the New Authoritarianism”</p> <p>Thursday: Marlovits on community mental health Nikolas Rose, “Becoming Neurochemical Selves”</p> <p>Recommended: Irving Janis, <i>Victims of Groupthink</i></p>
11	3/31 4/2	<p>SPRING BREAK--NO CLASS MEETINGS</p>

12	4/7 4/9	<p>Language Lera Boroditsky, "How Language Shapes Thought"* Roberto González, <i>Militarizing Culture</i> (Introduction & Chapters 1 & 2)</p> <p>Recommended: N. Chomsky and E. Herman, <i>Manufacturing Consent</i> Film: "Good Night and Good Luck"</p>
13	4/14 4/16	<p>Distraction Jonathan Smucker, "What Facebook is Hiding from You"* Safiya Umoja Noble, excerpts in <i>Algorithms of Oppression</i> Adrian Drummond-Cole, "On the Dotted Line: Mobile Social Media and Trajectification" Roberto González, <i>Militarizing Culture</i> (Chapters 3 & 4)</p> <p>Recommended: Sherry Turkle, <i>Alone Together</i></p>
14	4/21 4/23	<p>Obedience Roberto González, <i>Militarizing Culture</i> (Chapters 5 & 6) Film: "Obedience—The Milgram Experiment"</p> <p>Recommended: Hannah Arendt, <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i></p> <p>TERM PAPERS DUE APRIL 23</p>
15	4/28 4/30	<p>Racism and Othering George Lipsitz, "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness" Henry Giroux, "Racism, Violence, and Militarized Terror in the Age of Disposability" Roberto González, <i>Militarizing Culture</i> (Chapters 7 and Afterword) Rebecca Solnit, "Ideology of Isolation" Viewing: 13th</p> <p>Recommended: Gustave LeBon, <i>The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind</i></p>
16	5/5 5/7	<p>Deprogramming Howard Zinn, "A Quiet Case of Social Change"* Higdon and Huff, "Make America Think Again" Rebecca Solnit, "Naïve Cynicism"</p> <p>Film: "The Take"</p> <p>Recommended: Howard Zinn, <i>A People's History of the United States</i></p>
FINAL	05/14	<p>Thursday May 14, 2:45-5</p>