

University of Georgia
Freshman Seminar 1010, Spring 2009
Politics and Propaganda in Cartoons

Prof. Maurits van der Veen

Class

Tuesday, 3:30-4:45
214 Candler Hall
Office hours: Wed. 2-4pm & by appt.

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Course description

This seminar investigates the political and propaganda uses of cartoons and caricatures. We will look at animated propaganda as well as editorial cartoons. The power of images, animated or printed, to shape or challenge an audience's beliefs has long been recognized. Not only is a picture worth a thousand words; the impact of cartoons may exceed that of photo or film because it is often easier in this medium to get a message across through caricature and humor.

It comes as no surprise, then, that cartoons have been used for political purposes for several centuries. One of the earliest political cartoons known was Benjamin Franklin's classic "Join or Die", which illustrated the importance of a union among the British colonies in North America by depicting a snake cut into pieces labeled with the names of the individual colonies. Thomas Nast's powerful attacks on the Tammany Hall political machine in New York City a century later are similarly famous. New technologies introduced in the twentieth century made animation possible, and it took little or no time for this medium to be used for political propaganda too, for example by the Soviet Union in the 1920s.

The seminar is divided into three parts. First, we will study the development of political cartooning in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. We will focus in particular on changes over time in the style and content of cartoons, comparing early cartoons to contemporary takes on similar topics. What explains, for example, the striking differences between a Ted Rall cartoon today and one by Thomas Nast from more than a century ago? Next we will watch a number of animated cartoons created during World War II and the Cold War, by both sides in each conflict, to get a sense of the ways animation can be put to political use. We will also look at some present-day animations, such as those by JibJab. Finally, we will look more closely at modern-day sensitivities regarding editorial cartoons. Which areas are taboo for editorial cartoonists? Which cartoons generate the largest volumes of hate mail, and why? In our final session, we will discuss the future of editorial cartoons and political animation — are editorial cartoons in newspapers a dying format, as some have argued?

Course policies & requirements

In order to get the most out of our classroom discussions, it is crucial that you do the assigned reading (or online browsing) prior to class. For many class sessions, you will be asked to find and choose one or more cartoons you like or dislike. All these assignments combined account for 20% of your grade. An additional 20% of the grade is for general class participation. Two short written papers, analyzing 5 cartoons on a single topic, are worth 30% each. More information about these assignments will be provided in class.

Office hours &c

My office hours are Wednesdays, 2-4pm and by appointment. Please do come see me if you have any questions on or problems with the reading material, online sources of cartoons, the writing assignments, or the course in general. If you need to reach me to make an appointment, I am most easily reached by e-mail.

Course material

Three books are required for the class, and are available for purchase at the UGA bookstore. The remaining readings can be downloaded through the library's electronic journals subscriptions or can easily be found online. The books are:

- Dewey, Donald, ed. 2007. *The Art of Ill Will: The Story of American Political Cartoons*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Lewin, J.G., and Huff, P.J. 2007. *Lines of Contention: Political Cartoons of the Civil War*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Lordan, Edward J. 2005. *Politics, Ink: How Cartoonists Skewer America's Politicians, from King George III to George Dubya*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Recommended

- Lamb, Chris. 2004. *Drawn to Extremes. The Use and Abuse of Editorial Cartoons*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Calendar

I. History of political cartooning

Tue. Jan. 13 *Introduction*

- Do: Find a recent editorial cartoon you like & bring it to class.
(Be prepared to explain why you like it)

Tue. Jan. 20 ***Birth of the political cartoon***

Read: *Politics, Ink*, chapters 1-2.
Art of Ill Will, pp. 1-6

Tue. Jan. 27 ***Nineteenth century cartooning***

Read: *Politics, Ink*, chapter 3.
Art of Ill Will, pp. 6-10, 20-25, 33-45, 77-86-9, 125-127

Tue. Feb. 3 ***The Civil War in cartoons***

Read: *Lines of Contention* (whole book)
Do: Pick favourite & least favourite cartoons from *Lines of Contention*

Tue. Feb. 10 ***Cartooning for rights: suffrage & labour***

Read: *Politics, Ink*, chapter 4
Art of Ill Will, pp. 45-55, 90-105, 128-134, 170-184, 225-239
Do: Pick favourite Labour or Suffrage cartoon
(from *Ill Will* or links on course website)
Write: Discuss & analyze 5 cartoons on a single topic (anything prior to WWII),

II. Animated propaganda

Tue. Feb. 17 ***Communism versus capitalism before World War II***

Read: *Art of Ill Will*, pp. 135-144
Do: Look through Swarthmore College's Soviet Propaganda
Poster Collection: <http://tritych.brynmawr.edu/cdm4/post.php>

Tue. Feb. 24 ***World War II***

Read: *Art of Ill Will*, pp. 145-148, 185-186
Do: Look through the National Archive's online exhibition
"Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art from World War II"
[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/
powers_of_persuasion_intro.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/powers_of_persuasion_intro.html)

Tue. Mar. 3 ***The Cold War***

Read: Karl F. Cohen. "Animated Propaganda During the Cold War",
Parts 1 & 2. (Animation World Magazine, 2003).
http://mag.awn.com/?article_no=1611
http://mag.awn.com/?article_no=1734

March 10-14: Spring Break

III. Modern political cartooning

Tue. Mar. 17 ***Cartooning since World War II***

Read: *Politics, Ink*, chapter 5-6
Art of Ill Will, pp. 10-20, 25-33, 145-158

Tue. Mar. 24 ***Images & stereotypes***

Read: *Politics, Ink*, chapter 7
Art of Ill Will, pp. 55-73, 162-163, 190-191, 242
Do: Find a cartoon that exploits a stereotype in a positive way,
and one that does so in a negative way.

Tue. Mar. 31 ***The Iconography of 9/11***

Read: *Art of Ill Will*, pp. 107, 221-224
Hoffman, Donna R., and Alison D. Howard. 2007. "Representations of 9-11 in
Editorial Cartoons." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 40(2):271-274.
Do: Find a 9/11 cartoon you consider offensive.

Tue. Apr. 7 ***Cartoons and terrorism***

Read: *Art of Ill Will*, pp. 115, 190-191
Do: Pick favourite & least favourite cartoons from *Art of Ill Will*

Tue. Apr. 14 ***Taboo topics, hate mail, etc.***

Read: Cartoons of "USA Patriot Art"
<http://www.solidarity.com/hkcartoons/artshow/artshow.html>
• Links to online articles about censoring & hate mail on website

Tue. Apr. 21 ***The Danish cartoon crisis***

Read: Müller, Marion G., and Esra Özcan. 2007. "The Political Iconography of
Muhammad Cartoons: Understanding Cultural Conflict and Political
Action." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 40(2):287-291.
Spiegelman, Art. 2006. "Drawing Blood" *Harper's Magazine*, June, pp. 43-52.
Write: Discuss & analyze 5 cartoons on a single topic (anything after WWII),

Tue. Apr. 28 ***The future of political cartooning***

Read: *Politics, Ink*, chapter 9.