

COMM 506
Images and Image Management
Summer, 2006
TTH 6:00-10:10
ZHS 163

“The making of the illusions which flood our experience has become the business of America, some of its most honest and most necessary and most respectable business.”

Daniel J. Boorstin
The Image

“This would be the successive phases of the image:

- it is a reflection of a basic reality
- it masks and perverts a basic reality
- it masks the *absence* of a basic reality
- it bears no relation to any reality whatever:
it is its own pure simulacrum.”

Jean Baudrillard
Simulations

“Class understatement describes the technique: if your money and freedom and carelessness of censure allow you to buy any kind of car, you provide yourself with the meanest and most common to indicate that you’re not taking seriously so easily purchasable and thus vulgar a class totem.”

“If the function of the middle class housewife’s plaque is to assure her that her drudgery has value, the function of these plaques is to assert that God loves proles, which He doubtless does, although there seems no reason for constantly harping on it.”

Paul Fussell
Class

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Course Overview: Image management is a relatively contemporary concern having become a serious academic study in the late twentieth century. Concerns with images and image management grew with the rise of communication technologies. From still photography and motion pictures in the late nineteenth century to the seemingly endless array of communication technologies that today bombard us with images, the concept of image has changed radically over the last century.

It is impossible to engage in today's culture without constantly interacting with images and imagery. Our lives depend on the unending variety of images that surround us. And, as some of the authors we will read this semester tell us, at some point, the image becomes our reality. As the image takes on greater reality, it shapes our society and beliefs.

This course examines images and image management as tools for the creation and dissemination of information, for creating social change, and for modifying the behavior of others. While many studies in the field focus almost solely on image management in politics, we will examine the role of image in most of its manifestations in our culture, politics, business, advertising, entertainment, fashion, and sports.

In order to examine this important subject, we will read and discuss the most important works written on the subject over the last half century. This course is heavily weighted toward reading and discussing important texts. Fortunately, you will find the reading list to include the best and most entertaining books you are likely to read in your entire academic career (that is no idle boast). We will read portions of books by philosophers and theorists such as Jean Baudillard and Roland Barthes. We will also read fascinating classics by Paul Boorstin and Walter Lippmann and a couple classics that are wildly entertaining by Paul Fussell and Clive James. Frankly, there's not a boring book in the lot.

While I realize our reading list is pretty extensive, it will form the bulk of the work you have to do this summer. Reading, understanding, and discussing this material will be your primary task. Your only other assignments will be an in-class presentation tied to a paper and a take home final exam. I don't want to put anyone in the hospital here. It is far more important for me that you show an interest in and understanding of this subject than that you write several long research papers just for the exercise to your fingers and computer keyboard. So, get enthusiastic and let's enjoy the trip together.

Required Reading:

I apologize from the start for the money you're going to have to shell out for this set of books (seriously, try Amazon for most of them, you'll save a bundle). Though, honestly, you will probably choose to keep most, they are that good. Here's what you will need.

Barthes, Roland. Camera Lucida. New York: Hill and Wang 1980.

Baudrillard, Jean. Simulations. USA: Semiotext [e] 1983.

Boorstin, Daniel J. The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America. New York: Random House Publishers 1987.

Fussell, Paul. Class: A Guide Through the American Status System. New York: Touchstone 1983.

James, Clive. Fame. New York: Random House 1993.

Lippmann, Walter. Public Opinion. New York: Free Press Paperbacks 1922/1997.

Recommended Reading:

Barthes, Roland. Mythologies. New York: Hill and Wang 1982.

Some Brief Notes on our Readings: As noted, Barthes and Baudrillard offer a more philosophical approach to the subject based in language and popular culture. You will only read portions of Baudrillard and Barthes' book is very brief. Fussell's work is one of the funniest and most insightful books you will ever read. James wrote a popular history of "fame" in the twentieth century. While popular and very readable, it also offers tremendous insights into our subject. Finally, Lippmann offers the classic study of image in news reporting and politics and Boorstin wrote the classic study of image in all segments of culture. These are works to enjoy, not just suffer through like many course texts.

Assignments: You will be required to present a summation and application of key concepts in class to a particular field of interest, the field or business in which you work or hope to work. We will take a class period near the end of the semester to present these papers and discussions. After having examined the importance of image throughout culture, our discussion should be greatly enriched by your use of these ideas to examine a particular field. You will also be required to write a paper that offers a more specific analysis of some element of image management in your chosen field. Your final exam, as stated above, will be a take home exam. We will spend the final exam period discussing your exam answers.

Since the readings are so important and worthwhile and take up so much of your work during the semester, you will need to prepare a page of talking points for each session. These papers should be no more than one page, should be typed, and should present questions about the text, quotes from the text, important ideas you think should be discussed, or any other pertinent points you think worthy of discussion (don't try to write an essay, simply list some ideas, points, quotes, or questions). I will also write up some discussion points and, since I'm the professor and get to do things like this, we will spend the first half of class discussing the things I think are important. Much of the second half of each class will be spent talking through your discussion points. Everyone's active engagement in the discussion should make this an exceptionally enlightening and beneficial process.

Disabilities Services: "Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776."

Academic Integrity: The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's Academic Integrity code as detailed in the Scampus guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violations or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor.

Reading and Assignment Due Dates and Discussion Topics

As always, this is tentative and subject to change as the semester progresses.

5/18 Course Introduction

We will discuss the course, its goals, topics, assignments, future discussion topics, and readings. I will also give a brief overview of how the discussion of "image" evolved in communication and rhetorical theory. This material may or may not be familiar to many of you. However, I realize a number of students in the Communication Management program did not get their undergraduate degrees in communication studies. So, we will take some time to make certain everyone has the same definitions for terms (or, at least, a relatively close agreement).

5/23 The Evolution of Celebrity, Image, and Pseudo-Events

Both James and Boorstin trace the development of image and celebrity from the explosion of media and the correlated explosion in the need for material to fit those media. News became news because it was printed in newspapers, not because it was particularly newsworthy. Celebrities became celebrities because they were well-known. Or, as Boorstin puts it, they were known for their well-knownness. This circular irony creates a culture in which the image of fame is fame itself, in which the image, the form, can become the reality. *Required Readings: Boorstin* Introduction-Ch.1, pp. 3-77, James, Introduction, pp. 7-24.

5/25 Film, War, and the Evolution of Image

Walter Lippmann wrote the first classic study of public opinion and the role of image, stereotypes, and perception in creating that opinion. One cannot overestimate the importance of film and the propaganda of World War I in creating the environment that led to the first social critical studies of image and how image creates a "reality" that can shape beliefs, actions, and perceptions. Because of its importance, we will start this class period by watching several illustrations of World War I propaganda, films all produced in the silent era. We will then discuss Lippmann's response and the understanding he developed of ideas, stereotypes, and how those shape our understanding of the world. *Required Reading: Lippmann* Chs. 1-10, pp. 2-100.

5/30 Early Notions of Image and its Use

Lippmann offered a now dated set of ideas concerning how image could be shaped to impact and, from his point of view, better the social order. These ideas continue to interest because they allow us to see an early critical understanding of how image/stereotypes/personal interests can be used to modify the public will. James examines the same era from a more sardonic and post-modern perspective, no longer concerned with positively impacting the public will so much as understanding what forces created this self-sustaining, image-driven phenomenon, fame. Comparing their approaches to the era should allow us to see the factors at work in the evolution of fame and image as contemporary concerns. *Required Readings: Lippmann, Chs. 11-15, pp. 101-158, James Chs. 1, 2 pp. 26-74.*

6/1 Pseudo-Events, Pseudo-People, Pseudo-Lives, Image and Expectations

As we return to Boorstin, we can see that much of his work, like elements in Lippmann, centers on examining the ways in which images create expectations in the public mind. Thus, we move from a culture that embraced “heroes” to a culture that embraces “celebrity,” from a culture that idealized travel as adventure and hardship to a culture that creates expected images of locations and demands that those images be realized no matter how they may falsify the local environment (a point Baudrillard will later expand upon). In other words, we create expectations in the images we apply to people, places, and things and then expect those images to hold true of the actual people, places, and things. This expectation becomes a demand of celebrities, locations, and other “ideals.” *Required Readings: Boorstin, chs. 2-3, pp. 45-117.*

6/6 Image and Mass Media: Print Media and Film

Both Boorstin and James link the rise of film as a medium to the rise of image as a force in creating celebrity and fame. We will return to the medium of film for a perceptive analysis of image and fraud later in the semester. For now, we want to examine how images, through a most fundamental illusion---the projected image, create realities that ground the impressions of so much of our culture. Boorstin links this rise to the graphics revolution and the easy access to images of “art” (literature, painting, etc.) and the loss of elitism in art appreciation. Loss of elitism creates pop art which creates pop culture which creates pop image, celebrity, fame as an end in itself. *Required Readings: Boorstin, ch. 4, pp. 118-180, James, ch. 3-4, pp. 74-101.*

6/8 Image, Status, and the Marketplace

We finish our discussion of Boorstin with an examination of the role of image in creating class, status, and our sense of prestige. We will expand this discussion as we work through Fussell’s brilliant analysis of American culture, image and class. Boorstin is especially concerned with how advertising and advertisers can exploit the expectations image carries among consumers. *Required Reading: Boorstin, chs. 5-6, pp. 181-262, James ch. 5, 102-132.*

6/13 Image, Class, and Social Expectation

Paul Fussell's study of class and status in America is both a classic social analysis and one of the funniest books you are likely to read. He offers a brilliant analysis of the various classes that ground American culture, the images each seeks to project and the buying habits this engenders. As we examine more closely the role of advertising, mass media, and marketers in creating and massaging image and image management in America, Fussell gives us many fascinating (and witty) insights into how the various images appeal and create their own audience. As we discuss the various classes Fussell identifies, we will see how our expectations fit into the roles class image creates for us. *Required Reading: Fussell*, chs. 1-4, pp. 1-106.

6/15 Image, Class, and Social Evolution

Fussell explores the ways in which image evolves and, through evolving, pushes along social evolution (or devolution, if you follow his logic). Images that appeal to the mass must ultimately appeal to the lowest common mass which leads to what Fussell describes as "prole drift" the inevitable success of proles in reshaping the social order to fit their expectations. Is this inevitable? Is Fussell simply being a satirist? Is Fussell an alarmist? Interesting questions grow from his entertaining and perceptive analysis of image consciousness in American culture. *Required Readings: Fussell*, chs. 5-9, pp. 107-223, James ch. 6 pp. 163-193.

6/20 Image Analysis

During this class period, you will present your analysis of image and image management in a specific corporate or political setting. The goal of this assignment is to get you to draw on class concepts to examine your corporation or industry, creating a critical analysis of the role and use of image and image management. You and a partner will develop a twenty minute discussion with illustrations of image management in your chosen industry. You will be expected to apply concepts especially from Boorstin, James, Baudrillard (who we will at least preview the preceding week), and Fussell (and/or Lippmann if you are focusing on a news or political organization). You will also be expected to write a separate paper that offers a somewhat more detailed discussion. You will receive a more detailed explanation of the assignment in a separate hand out. *Required Reading: Baudrillard*, pp. 1-73, James ch. 7-8 pp. 194-252.

6/22 Image, the Image, Fraud, Art, and Technology

We're saving the best for last. In the early 1970s, Orson Welles produced a brilliant essay on film that examined the distinction between mediated image and reality, fraud and "truth." We will watch this filmed essay during the first half of class (bring popcorn). We will discuss the implications of these ideas and of ideas presented in Roland Barthes' brief reflection on technology and image creation, *Camera Lucida*. At the end of the semester, we come full circle, discussing one of the key theorists who set

us on our way the first night. Barthes, who developed one of the key semiotic approaches to understanding images in the twentieth century, rethought his ideas at the end of his life as he tried to distinguish between the mother he knew and loved and the image of his mother created by the pseudo-realist technology of photography. In doing this, he rethinks much of what we have discussed throughout the semester and leaves us with new avenues to consider in studying the interrelationship between image, technology, media, and culture. A fitting summation to our semester. *Required Reading: Barthes*, pp. 1-119.

6/27 Final Examination and Discussion

Your final exam will have a written and a spoken element. The primary exam will be take home. You will be given four questions from which you will choose three to answer. These questions will apply class concepts to real world image management. During our final exam period, you will be asked to discuss at least one of your answers as we conclude our summer course with a final discussion of image and its uses.

I look forward to a great discussion. I have noted several times in this syllabus that the books you will be reading are classics and enjoyable reads (for the most part). Not only are they classics in the field, each directly speaks to elements of images and image management today. Dive right into the subject and enjoy the discussion. We all should gain something from an involved discussion of these fascinating topics.

Boring Theory Stuff

I realize that many of you have never studied theories of persuasion, rhetoric, or images. No problem. This evening, we're going to briefly cover some of the key theories of human persuasion that have directly impacted our study of images and image management. While this may well be the least engaging part of our discussion, it remains very important. Several theories pop up again and again and ground much of what we discuss. Beginning with this page, I've pasted in some key points that give us a broad outline of how rhetoricians, semanticists, and social critics have gone about examining the impact of image on human persuasion. We'll get to the good stuff in our next class. For now, let's review a few key ideas.

I. A. Richards-Richards was a linguist who asserted that the study of language was not the study of the permanent meanings of words, that, in fact, words don't have true or "proper" meanings. Words simply have the meanings they develop over time as we use them. He drew the following conclusions from this point.

1. "Rhetoric comes down to comparisons between the meanings of words."
2. All meanings, outside of the scientific context, are ambiguous.
3. Meanings change over time and the rhetorical scholar's job is tracing those changes.
4. The notion that words have "proper meanings" is a superstition.
5. **The Big Point**-One may discover a "reliable indication of culture in a deeper sense" by analyzing the "proper meanings" a culture superstitiously gives to words.
6. Thus, language completes the thinking process by informing us about stimuli in ways sensations cannot.

So, Richards asserted that the “proper” meanings we apply to terms carry our values and beliefs. This becomes very important when we expand the notion of “proper” meanings to the meanings of all symbols (including image) that we use in the process of communication. Roland Barthes took this next step.

Roland Barthes and Mythologies-Barthes applied these notions to all of society, including the images we create in film, television, stage, newspapers, magazines, and all other media. He wrote of all symbolic representation as “signification.” He distinguished between two types of signification.

Primary Signification-the direct symbolic representation of things.

Secondary Signification-signification as a cultural process. Signification in a culture carries that culture’s values within the sign-making process. Thus, once we engage in primary signification, we immediately drop into a secondary signification that carries cultural values and norms.

Kenneth Burke and Identification-Among many, many ideas, Burke asserted that the symbolic process does not simply “persuade” in the classical sense of the word. In fact, when we try to get others to apply the same symbols we do to things, we try to get them to identify with us, to see the world the same way we do. The following may sound, uh, unique, but, go with me for a minute.

Naming- names encompass beliefs and perceptions. We set our position toward things by how we name them.

Consubstantiality- when we identify with others through consistent naming patterns, we share a locus of motives concerning those things we name in the same way. We are then one with each other in our motives concerning the things we name in the same way.

Thus . . . **Identification-**“persuasion” is an inadequate term to express what rhetoricians seek. Rhetoricians attempt to get audiences to identify with their point of view.

Richard Weaver and Culture-Finally, Richard Weaver took Burke’s ideas and drew some specific conclusions about culture from them. First and foremost, he asserted that, because we create community through creating identification between ourselves and others and, since we do this through naming things in consistent ways, our language/symbols/rhetoric creates our culture. You create the culture you want from the symbols you use and the meaning you give them. This is fundamental to our study because, as we study image, we will find that it acts as part of the glue that holds our culture together, that creates and reinforces norms and values, and that becomes, in a very

real sense, our “reality.” As most of the authors we read will assert, that “reality” is really a projection of ourselves and our values.

Of course, the thing that has really bugged social critics is the fact that “image” is a patently false construct. It is not a reality. It is a fiction, a myth, a magic trick. It deceives the eye into thinking something is there. But, the image is not the “thing” it signifies. It is the values, beliefs, hopes, dreams, ideals that it signifies. It does not directly correlate to the specific item it supposedly represents. Barthes was very important in helping us see this. As we look to the various studies we will read this semester, we will find that the same holds true throughout. Like motion pictures, with image, we will be examining something that is at the same time our “reality” and an open deception. Fascinating.

As we will note in the next few class periods, image became an important concept as the media that could create image began to develop, specifically, the photograph and, most importantly, the motion picture. The use of film as a propaganda tool in World War I was shattering for America and social critics in America. We had no idea how potent this weapon could be and, like the atomic bomb in World War II, it permanently changed the way war was created and fought. The impact of this use of film on critics such as Lippmann can hardly be overestimated. So, we will view a documentary on World War I film propaganda to see just how this all got started. Recognizing that we’d been “imaged” into World War I created much of the social disillusion that defined the “Roaring Twenties” and the works of Hemingway, Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and others. This will be one of the starting points for our discussion.