HI3001 – 1984: Past, Present, Prophecy

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During the second half of the twentieth century George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* became a staple (if not a cliché) of political, cultural and sociological comment. Heavily promoted by state actors after the Second World War for propaganda purposes, it took on a counter cultural life of its own during the late 1960s and 1970s. Interest in the book was reinvigorated in the 1980s thanks to the arrival of new computer, media and military technologies. In 2017 sales of the novel reached a new peak. Orwell’s novel only seems to have gained in momentum and relevance; its depictions of “Big Brother,” of telescreens, and of the “forever war” have been uncannily prescient. This course examines in detail the long cultural tail of Orwell’s canonical text from a multidisciplinary perspective.

The course work includes an extended, intensive study of a literary text in conversation with the methods, concepts, and practices of contemporary history. Due to its interdisciplinary nature, this course features deliberation on and assessment of different disciplinary methods, and the assignments challenge you to express your knowledge in new modes and to different audiences.

**Required Texts:**
George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Penguin Modern Classics (014118776X)

**Course Assignments and Assessment:**
- Preparation and Participation: 10%
- Essay 1: 20%
- Essay 2: 25%
- Group Presentation: 25%
- Reflection Exercise: 20%

**Prospective Itinerary**

**Week 1 – This is the Day (or This the Year) in History**
January 15 – from Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

**Week 2 – Big Brother Is Watching You (You Are Watching You)**
January 22 – Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Part 1); Foucault, “Panopticism;” from Clarke, *Hope & Glory*

**Week 3 – The Cold War (and the Forever War)**
Week 4 – Slavery Is Freedom and Pain Is Pleasure
February 5 – Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Part 2); Postman, from *Amusing Ourselves to Death*

Week 5 – Doublethink: All Art Is Propaganda

Week 6 – Writing in Room 101
February 19 – Crick, “Eric Arthur Blair”; Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Part 3); Orwell, “Politics and the English Language”
Essay 1 draft due

Week 7 – Listening to a Novel, Hearing the World
February 26 – Mansell, from *National Acoustics*; Sterne, “Hearing”; Rice “Listening”
Essay 1 due

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Week 8 – Soundings of a Century
March 11 – Oliveros, “Some Sound Observations”; Rajaratnam, from *A Nation in the Making*; Schafer, from *The Soundscape*

Week 9 – The History of a Single Year: 1979
March 18 – Caryl, from *Strange Rebels: 1979 and the Birth of the 21st Century* & others

Week 10 – Cultures of 1984
March 25 – Group Presentations

Week 11 – Nineteen Eighty-Four’s Literary Legacies
April 1 – Atwood, “Orwell and Me” and selections from *The Handmaid’s Tale*; Murakami, selections from *IQ84*

Week 12 – Orwell in the World: Influence and Dispersion
Essay 2 Due

Week 13 – Writing Prophecies
April 15 – In-Class Review

May 1 – Reflection Exercise Due