ENGLISH 309G: THE DISCOURSE OF DISSENT
A study of the social, historical, and rhetorical dimensions of collective action.

Winter 2010; Monday 6-8:50
Prof. A. McMurry
Office hours: HH 265 T-Th 12-12:50 and by appt.
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Texts:
Rhetoric for Radicals, Jason Del Gandio [RR]
Cultural Resistance Reader, Stephen Duncombe, ed. [CCR]

Assignments:
- 25% Optional mid-term
- 40% Group project: DIY Resistance (includes key documents such as manifestos, speeches, posters, graffiti, artwork, slogans, songs, chants, news releases) + one “event” (video, audio, guerilla theatre, demonstration, or other action) + in-class presentation
- Final exam: 25% (50%)
- Weekly response postings: 10%

Tentative Schedule:
Jan. 4: Introduction: Rhetoric as (Symbolic) Action
Jan. 11: Social Systems & Social Movements. RR 1; CCR Hill
Jan. 18: The Politics of Culture. CCR Williams, Marx & Engels, Arnold, Gramsci, Benjamin
Jan. 25: The 60’s: case studies in dissent. Berkeley in the Sixties; introduction to the group project
Feb. 8: Tactics. RR 4 & 5; CRR Reynolds, 118; Kelley, 149; Riot Grrrl, 178
Feb. 15: Reading week—no class meeting
Feb. 22: The Church of Stop Shopping. CRR Grote; midterm
Mar. 1: Guest speaker: Jeremy Kowalski; readings TBA
Mar. 8: Teach-in; CCR Epstein; Crimethinc (ACE)
Mar. 15: Dissent and Everyday Life. CRR Frank, Fiske
Mar. 22: Globalism: Resistance is Futile? CRR Jordan, Dominguez
Mar. 29: Presentations
Apr. 5: Presentations

Note: the final week-to-week schedule will be kept on our ACE website
Assignments Descriptions:

Midterm
This test is optional.

Exam
This test ain’t optional

Weekly Response Postings
Ten easy marks for responding coherently to one of the readings from each of the ten classes with assigned readings. (ACE-based; 300-400)

DIY Resistance
Overview: Not everyone likes group projects, but in studying “dissent,” “social movements,” and “cultural resistance” it makes a certain amount of sense to engage in a collective endeavor yourself. You’ll have a chance to reflect on our key terms and concepts as they apply to your own concerns as students and citizens. The project is to write, design, and enact some of the key texts associated with a social movement, “cause,” or cultural intervention.

Groups: You may form up your own groups of five. I need to know your group’s membership by January 25th, which is the evening we’ll discuss the project in detail. Those of you who haven’t formed a group by then will be placed in one.

Documents: Think of these as a kind of “press kit” to help build awareness of your movement/cause/intervention.

- A manifesto (a statement of principles with a “call to arms”)
- A logo or symbol of your movement
- A poster or print ad (which will probably incorporate your logo)
- A speech or a press release geared for a particular occasion, event, or audience
- Other associated materials such as a song, a tv spot script, artwork, graffiti (you don’t need to include one example of each, but if you don’t, I expect that one or two of these items will be very well developed)
- Any other materials you believe are appropriate

Event: In addition to above texts, you will develop an “event.” What is an event? Well, it’s up to you to constitute the event, but here are some possibilities:

- A performance piece (see the Reverend Billy website for examples)
- A film
- Guerilla theatre
- A teach-in

Although you might be tempted to model some act of civil disobedience, I want your simulated event to lie within the bounds of the law and within the bounds of non-coercive persuasion. In other words, I don’t want you to create a mock event that in the real world would get you immediately arrested or that does not allow those who are to be persuaded the right to reject you.
Topics: When it comes to creating a movement or feat of resistance, obviously everything emerges from your choice of issue. But how can you create a movement *ex nihilo*, and how can you focus your energies on something that I’m forcing you to conjure? Good questions! Social movements and cultural resistance spring from passionate beliefs, not from grade considerations. I can’t tell you what to get excited about, angry about, concerned enough about to carry you through the various parts of this project. It might be something of global proportions; it might be something local, something very close to home. In the end, the choice of topic is crucial, and I will give you three pieces of advice: keep it real (i.e., don’t try to be funny or ironic), make it topical (this is 2010, not 1968), and make it original (i.e., no “Save the Whales” or “Ban Nuclear Testing”). And—a fourth piece of advice—be as specific and pointed as you can: a movement succeeds, as with so much else these days, through niche marketing.

Presentation: Each group will present their “event,” in class, before a live audience.

Important Dates:

January 25th: Please give me a list of your group members

February 1: A short description of your project focus is due.

March 29 and April 5: Presentations

April 9: Projects due

The Fine Print:
Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 - Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, http://www.uwaterloo.ca/inose/Polices/policy71.htm

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, http://www.uwaterloo.ca/inose/Polices/policy70.htm Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, http://www.uwaterloo.ca/inose/Polices/policy72.htm Academic Integrity website (Arts); http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/grad/academic_responsibility.html Academic Integrity Office (UW); http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/ Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: Note for students with disabilities: The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.