

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION
CMNS 438-4
(D100)

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Burnaby Day

(COMMUNICATION POLICY PROJECT GROUP)
THINK TANKS, PROPAGANDA AND PUBLIC POLICY

Prerequisites: two upper division CMNS courses; or instructor's permission.

Overview: For three decades, Canadian public policy discourse has been increasingly influenced by think tanks, particularly those with a libertarian or neoliberal ideology. Older style research institutes undertook balanced research on public issues. These newer, business-sponsored think tanks are set up to explicitly promote an agenda of smaller government, deregulation, privatization and tax cuts, an agenda desired by business and the wealthy.

In this applied research course, we will critically examine the business-sponsored think-tank system as it operates in Canada. Examples are the Fraser Institute, Atlantic Institute for Market Studies. After a survey of relevant literatures, students will select a specific think tank and a specific issue and apply the concepts from the literature to an analysis of the think tank's promotion of the issue. Students may also select a progressive think tank to research.

Possible issues for research and analysis: privatizing medicare, denying global warming, attacking unions, promoting deeper Canada-U.S. integration, denying the reality of poverty, disparaging public auto insurance, undermining public education, promoting tax cuts, attacking drug regulation, attacking immigration policies. Other issues are available.

Format: The course will be undertaken through a weekly seminar and WebCT.

Course Texts and Readings: Readings will be available from instructor.

Grading Distribution: (to be confirmed at the first class)

Presentation of Course Reading (weeks 2 – 5)	15%
Participation in Class and WebCT	10%
Research for Report (week 9)	25%
Final Report (15 – 20 pp., week 13)	40%
Presentation of Report (weeks 12 – 13)	10%

The School expects that the grades awarded in this course will bear some reasonable relation to established university-wide practices with respect to both levels and distribution of grades. In addition, the School will follow Policy T10.02 with respect to "Intellectual Honesty," and "Academic Discipline" (see the current Calendar, General Regulations Section).

(over)

Weekly Course Outline

Unit 1: Course Introduction (week 1)

Unit 2: Public Policy Process (week 2)

Unit 3: Corporate and Government Propaganda (week 3)

Unit 4: Neoliberal and Libertarian Ideologies (week 4)

Unit 5: The Canadian Corporate Think-Tank System (week 5)

Unit 6: Issues Promoted by Think Tanks (weeks 6 – 7)

Unit 7: Research and Writing Skills (week 7)

Unit 8: Researching the Issue (weeks 7 - 9)

Unit 9: Writing the Draft Report (weeks 9 - 11)

Unit 10: Writing the Final Report (week 11 – 13)