ENVST 450 THE DENIALIST PLAYBOOK

TERM/HOURS  Fall 2019/M 5-7:30pm
LOCATION    TISC_LC13
PROFESSOR   Jennifer Jacquet, jacquet@nyu.edu
OFFICE HOURS M 12:30-2pm: http://goo.gl/QMPxO
              also feel free to email me and we’ll set something up
OFFICE LOCATION 285 Mercer Street, Tenth floor, #1003

OVERVIEW: Science, as a way of knowing, has changed the world in countless ways and just one of those ways includes being able to demonstrate a causal effect — for instance, that repeatedly breathing asbestos leads to scar tissue in the lungs and eventually leads to suffocation, that the burning of fossil fuels leads to gases trapped in the atmosphere and changes the earth’s climate, and that regular exposure to an herbicide causes sex changing in frogs and impacts reproduction in humans, too. Scientific denial undermines the ability of institutions to act on scientific discoveries and protect the environment and human health. This class is less about the phenomenon of scientific denial and more about the wholesale strategy that must be deployed to pull off widespread denial. I include many cases from US-based companies and note some aspects of the broad strategy have been refined in the USA (think tanks and public relations, for instance), but I emphasize that corporate scientific denial is a global strategy, and its impacts have been felt worldwide. We will explore methods for detecting denial -- including conflicts of interest, framing effects, and misinformation -- as well as for deterring denial altogether. Note: we will have several guest lectures throughout the semester. During guest lectures, laptops should be CLOSED.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
See the book chapters and articles listed on the daily calendar. Additional readings will be announced so that I can tailor the course to your interests, needs, research questions, and methods.

Mandatory plagiarism statement: Plagiarism results in failure in the class and referral to an academic dean. Plagiarism includes: copying sentences or fragments from any source without quotes or references; not citing every source used in your papers; citing internet information without proper citation; presenting someone else’s work as your own; or copying verbatim from any source. You are subject to CAS’s guidelines on plagiarism: http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity

For students needing accommodations:
Students requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities as early as possible in the semester for assistance.
NYU’s Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities.
726 Broadway, 2nd Floor New York, NY 10003-6675
Telephone: 212-998-4980
Web site: http://www.nyu.edu/csd
Email: mosescsd@nyu.edu

GRADE BREAKDOWN:
Participation 10%
Assignments 3 each worth 15%
Final Presentation 15%
Final Paper/Proposal 30%

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THE SCHEDULE:

CLASS 1: SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE, RESEARCH, AND A TYPOLOGY OF DENIAL

CLASS 2 (SEP 16): TOP-DOWN vs. BOTTOM-UP FORCES

READINGS:

WATCH:
Adam Curtis “Happiness Machines” (The Century of the Self Part 1)

CLASS 3 (SEP 23): THE INFRASTRUCTURE

READINGS:
Delahunty, S. Fossil fuel-related trade bodies outspend renewable interests on PR and advertising. *PR Week* July 29, 2019

CLASS 4 (SEP 30) CURATED WALK -- meet outside 740 Park Avenue @ 5:15pm   *ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE

READINGS:
CLASS 5 (OCT 7) THE MEDIA

READINGS:

FALL BREAK (OCT 14) NO CLASS

CLASS 6 (OCT 21) DENY THE PHENOMENON, SHIFT RESPONSIBILITY

READINGS:
Heglar, M. “I work in the environmental movement, I don’t care if you recycle” Vox June 4, 2019.
Hilborn Lab “Myths” https://rayhblog.wordpress.com/myths/

CLASS 7 (OCT 28) REFUTE THE SCIENCE

READINGS:

WATCH:
Willie Soon, "The Sun Also Warms" at the Friends of Science 16th Annual Major Event, April 10, 2019

CLASS 8 (NOV 4) DISPARAGE THE MESSENGER

READINGS:

WATCH:
PBS American Experience: Rachel Carson

CLASS 9 (NOV 11) EVENT

*ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE
CLASS 10 (NOV 18) CONFLICTS OF INTEREST, BIAS, DECLARATIONS, RULES

*ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE

READINGS:
Nestle, M. “Unsavory Truth: How I deal with conflicts of interest” September 17, 2018.
Hocevar, J. “Ray Hilborn: Overfishing denier” Greenpeace May 12, 2016
https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/research/overfishing-denier/

CLASS 11 (NOV 25) EMERGING, QUESTIONING AND AIDING DENIAL (GUEST MATTHEW HAYEK)

Hayek, in prep. Clearing the air: correcting industrial animal agriculture’s emissions estimates using atmospheric measurements

CLASS 12 (DEC 2) EXPOSING DENIAL

*FINAL PRESENTATIONS

READINGS:

CLASS 13 (DEC 9) AVOIDING DENIAL

*FINAL PRESENTATIONS

READINGS:

**FINAL PAPER/PROPOSAL DUE DECEMBER 16, 2019 BY MIDNIGHT**