

Class Title: Memes of Dissent

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Essential Questions

What are the benefits of having a political language that only those who “get” the meme can understand?

What are the disadvantages?

What are the ways memes are absorbed by marketing?

What are the ways memes try to resist being absorbed by marketing?

Target Audience / Prerequisite & Pre-Assessment

Teenagers 12-18 years old

Outcomes & Goals

In this workshop we will be talking about the political history of memes in China and the United States. Students will walk away with a deeper understanding of how memes both extend and limit political discourse.

Pacing / Duration

2 hours

Break down of the class schedule:

40 min presentation on memes

20 discussion on discussion questions

15 minutes meme making from template

- Locate key issue

- Locate key feeling of template

- Fill out template with your feeling of your key issue

15 minutes meme making without template

- Locate key issue

- Locate key emotion linked to issue

- Find or create image

- Create meme

30 minutes sharing memes that you made with the class

Exercises To Do Before Class

Bring in some of your favorite memes

Vocabulary:

Meme: an element of a culture or system of behavior that may be considered to be passed from one individual to another by nongenetic means, especially imitation.

Medium: a non-transparent method of communication

Culture: the customs of a nation, a people, or other social group

Subculture: a cultural group within a larger culture, often having beliefs or interests at variance with those of the larger culture.

Exercise Descriptions

This is a class where we go through the history of memes and meme culture with a social justice lens. We would take a look at memes outside of and within the USA to talk about how they may dissent to and inform our political climate, spread sentiments, and create solidarity. Some memes that we would focus on are pepe, leftbook, 草泥马, and surreal memes, asking ourselves questions such as "What are the layers of information someone would already have to know to understand this meme?", "What makes a meme a meme?", and "What does it mean when memes become more standard and corporate?" At the end of the workshop, students will create their own memes about a self chosen issue.

Student Reflections, Takeaways & Next Steps

<https://christinaxu.org/>

@decolonial.meme.queens

Metafiction by Patricia Waugh

Society of the Spectacle by Guy Debord

No Logo by Naomi Klein

Multiple Project Exit Points: an idea of high-medium-low projects so students are locked into one end product.

First Steps - Create your own version of a meme that already exists

Next Steps - Create your own original meme

Big Steps - Study the memes that you see everyday with a critical lens. Think about what they're trying to tell you, into what groups they try to pull you into, and what type of information they give out

Presentation: You can share your memes on any social media sharing platform

Reflection: How are the memes you see everyday influencing you and your ideology?

Implementation Guidance & Teaching Reflection

Rather than presenting memes as an inherently politically active language, present it as just a language that can be appropriated by capitalism. Emphasize that memes are a currency of emotion. Provide examples of meme culture outside of the West to create diverse examples of how subculture intersects with parent cultures.

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