

PUBLIC OPINION AND PROPAGANDA
POL 220 - Fall 2008
Kutztown University of Pennsylvania

TAKE-HOME ESSAY

This assignment is designed to allow you to demonstrate your deep and detailed mastery of the readings and class discussions, and your ability to apply concepts to the events in the current political environment. Your essays must be typewritten, double-spaced, and no more than five pages. To score well, your essays should probably not be less than five pages either. Use direct quotes from the book (including page references) where appropriate. Be as detailed as possible in your analysis, but also strive to be concise. Your arguments are strongest when you identify and respond to opposing views.

Assess the validity of Edelman's arguments about social change, authority and public opinion. Use at least two examples from the current political environment covered in the *New York Times* to illustrate your points. The best essays will develop a unifying conceptual framework to tie its points together. Your essays should touch on themes from each the three assigned chapters in Edelman, and address questions such as the following:

- Why is talk about change so common and change that improves the conditions for most people so rare?
- What are some of the intellectual obstacles to meaningful social change?
- What are some of the institutional obstacles to meaningful social change?
- How do power, privilege and social roles serve to prevent meaningful social change?
- How does politics reflect and reinforce inequality?
- Why kind of impact do the changes that do occur have on fundamental inequalities?
- How does political socialization structure our relations with and understanding of authority?
- How does social class structure our relations with and understanding of authority?
- In what ways are authority relationships dysfunctional?
- In what ways is public opinion a social construction and not an observable entity?
- What are some of the ways different perspectives shape public opinion?
- What are some of the ways resentments shape public opinion?
- What are some of the ways discontent over the plight of the poor becomes tolerable?
- How does the desire of individuals for self-esteem shape public opinion and reinforce inequality?
- How to attitudes toward the state and leadership shape public opinion?
- What are some of the ways misidentification serves to shape public opinion and reinforce inequality?