B2: Seminar, Orwell (Day 1)—9/19/14

Harper: I like this a lot…

Geyer: “Achilles’ heel…” Why would you be against that? They pack a punch… so many applications of that…

* Harper: Counterargument: People use them without thought… he wants language to be more clear. Explained George W. Bush, the Crusades. Some can have the opposite effects.
* Fendinger: A common metaphor would add clarity to writing?
* Olinger: Miss meaning…
* Harper: You want to get your audience to think… but if you put “the weakness of a mother whose child has just died”
* Geyer: That goes back to quiz question—“prefabricated hen house” Let the ideas choose the message, not the words.
* Harper: Paraphrased the text…

Geyer: Primary claim? We need to think more?

* Harper: That was a large part of it… lack of thinking from mental vices… opening paragraph… it was exactly the kind of stuff that I hate.
* Eble: So… his style?
* Harper: He wrote as he complained about…
* Geyer: Pretentious words can be exact. Compton: Defenestrate, throwing someone out of a window.
* Olinger: The general public might not know what it means…
* Geyer: He was talking about prose. Poetry benefits so much from the “not-un” construction (litotes). He’s only talking about prose.
* James Harper: Page four… cited “The fascist octopus has sung his swan-song…” Do you know what he’s talking about?
* Nick Wright: Politicians want to leave that up to the audience. Leaving a part obscure allows an audience to find ways to describe things…
* Geyer: How people describe art: People leave it open for interpretation, or the way it makes you feel isn’t exact.
* Harper: “In our age, there is no such thing such as keeping out of politics” Being ambiguous is fine, but when the entire thing is ambiguous, that’s fine…
* Sanders: Using a red herring… preconceived ideas…
* Liam Taylor: Long words are “douche”
* Eble: Challenged
* Liam: People throw around big words
* Eble / Nate: Cuttlefish simile
* Harper:
* Geyer: Bigger words = ethos…
* Sanders: Snow = euphoric…

Eble: so… the claims

* Menke: Claim of Value: Language is in a bad way
* Fendinger: Fact: Language represents the situation of the world, policy = we need to change the way we talk, which would change our thoughts, then change our actions, then change the situation…
* Harper read from paragraph three.
* Eble: Restated… then went to politics…
* Eippert: “In our time, it is …” read from the text. Dropping big phrases in order to hide what is really true; it detracts attention from the writing.
* Olinger: “Political debates always consist of euphemism, question-begging, and cloudy vagueness…” You don’t want to get caught up with writing in the huge, flowery language. Official documents, JFK’s speech… I was struggling to find the meaning.
* Harper: I think that… Orwell says (put down pen). Politics today are being used… writing is being used by politics. Anything that comes from a politician will be used to advance that politician’s ideas, not for the good of the people. In reality, the true purpose is helping themselves. Politics is a barrier.
* Geyer: *1984* is all about that… oversimplification.
* Harper: Newspeak…
* Wright: Jumping from the language we have now to Newspeak is a pretty huge leap. The problem with language= it was becoming too pompous. He wanted it to be shorter. A part = no clichés. He also wants people to be concise.
* Geyer: His final claim = we have to be more clear. Spoke about doubleplusungood.
* Harper: The passage from Ecclesiastes…
* Wright: Saying to use a shorter word at all times, we cut out emotion…
* Menke: One main point = he wants us to think. Using shorter words… he’s equivocating / talking out of both sides of his mouth.
* Geyer: Break any of these rules before you say anything you don’t need.
* Spuzzillo: Solely focused on clarity… but he doesn’t go into what is most convincing…
* Weber: Going along with that… teachers require the embellishment of language. Connects to grades…
* Menke: Page length requirements…
* Geyer: Breaks up monotony. Include more content.
* Eippert: A lot of kids just go with the bigger words.
* Weber: Most guys take the easy way out.
* Harper: On the last paragraph, he opens with (read from it)
* Eble: Where does he try to qualify his claim?
* Fendinger: He uses an overgeneralization…
* Harper: Discussed the purpose of Newspeak (you can’t think of sedition, so you can’t be seditious)

Eble: Spoke about qualifying, then asked where else to look

* Callahan: Spoke about the Western professor
* Wright: There are some justified hurdles… sanctioned war… if you want to officially shut down a larger evil.
* Eble: Department of Defense versus Department of War…
* Menke: Dropping the atomic bomb…
* Eble: What about Manifest Destiny?
* Geyer: Part of being a good politician… gaining support… if you use exact language that will gross out your audience, make your audience not like you.
* Sanders: Pathos versus logos… a good mix…
* Diesslin: As a politician, you can’t say that we’re going to kill Indians.
* Eble: So effective politics…
* Eippert: This whole discussion / conversation… presidential debates… nebulous language.
* Geyer: Think about how much support a pro-choice movement would get if it was called the baby-killer movement. Hard to gain support
* Poch: Orwell is saying that they’re achieving goals through deception…
* Sanders: Root of the problem = polarization of parties.
* Eble: So… politicians lie…
* Spuzzillo: Language reflects our culture… we choose to use vague, incoherent language.
* Harper: Is the problem that we’ve made every side vague? “The other side does it…”
* Geyer: One side is, one side isn’t…

On what basic principles does a democracy operate?

* Liam: Freedom of speech
* Harper: Manipulation of masses
* Menke: Freedoms, individually…
* Olinger: People elect candidates
* Eble: Put a bow on that last question…
* Nick Wright: We need to think more as we write…
* Geyer: collectively, we need to set higher standards for what we expect
* Callahan: We have to be an educated populace…
* Eippert: We have to look through the words…

Alex Johnson: Are we more vague now than when Orwell was writing? \* If so, why? If not, why not?

**Continuation:** 9/23/14

Absent: Sanders

Fendinger: We’re more vague now than when Orwell wrote his essay. People were just starting to realize their vagueness then…

* Geyer: Examples?
* Fendinger: JFK, Churchill = more specific than speeches now.
* JJ: These days, as compared to back then, could be the lack of singular executive officials. The dictatorial, direct person versus power being consolidated among different groups.
* Noah Worobetz: I agree with JJ, but I also think that technology has influenced the way that we view words. Discussed contexts, language.
* Nick Wright: Back to Fendinger, JFK being more direct. Hard to judge the vagueness of something… JFK speaking about “the Bay of Pigs.” We only see the best speeches. We’ve seen very few of JFK’s b-list speeches.
* Eble: Do you mean ones that are “good,” popularized?
* Geyer: Good way to judge vagueness without hindsight bias = pick someone who is more contemporary. Actions versus words… did he say anything that totally contradicted his speech?
* JJ: Chink in ethos… vagueness could also be due to omission, as result of technology.
* Geyer: Look at the response to bluntness; Richard Sterling said what he wanted, and everyone “went off” on him. Roger Goodell saying what he wants wouldn’t get a great response. Being vague has kept him afloat.
* Connor Peed: People are more vague nowadays because it gives them less pressure.
* Olinger: Amount of vagueness can get you more votes…
* Worobetz: We also get instant feedback from punditry is huge.
* JJ: Line about immigration from some of the proposals made in 2006. Spoke about equivocation of topics in government documents.
* People asked for clarity.
* JJ: Vagueness can change according to how a society, leadership …
* Fendinger: That sounds more specific…
* Geyer: Bill of Rights, Constitution… JJ was getting at how whoever writes these documents have to be deliberately vague.
* Nate Fowler: Government class, changing their mind on different interpretations. Spoke about gun laws; the Framers wrote the Constitution with vagueness for flexibility in government.
* Herriott: Technology—wider audience, more direct feedback.
* Eble: To what extent have people’s consumption of political ideas changed?
* Diesslin: “Sound byte media,” busy life.
* Geyer: Media, choosing scandals… have to be careful about choosing words.
* Callahan: Ideas taken out of context… Romney’s 47% comment.
* Eble: Obama, “You didn’t build that…”

JJ: Could it be more than just language?

* Noah Worobetz: Ethics determine laws. Words you choose will influence how people perceive you.
* Fendinger: We’re just used to politicians being vague…
* Diesslin: Social media, more difficult to be direct. People are more afraid to post ideas directly. Internet leads to fewer filters of ideas.
* Geyer: Today’s society being obsessed with political correctness…
* Worobetz: Goes back to…
* Geyer: No, that’s political correctness. (murmuring)…
* Worobetz: Example…
* Geyer: Went into expletives… gay,
  + Wright: Server / waitress…
* JJ: Bluntness, feedback…
* Alex Johnson: Mob mentality on the web.
* Menke: Group polarization on the web. “I hate this teacher…”
* Olinger: The more that people discuss ideas on the internet, the worse it gets. Opinions become
* Geyer: Internet… everyone has an opportunity to share opinions, instead it’s only used to attack others.
* Eble: Talked a lot…
* Schutter: You’re not “yourself” on the internet. Thus, you can say what you want.
* Liam: People saying what they want…
* JJ: Another question… transparency… could we be frustrated with the lack of bluntness?
* Eippert: Maybe not constrained… you are driven to make comments…
* JJ questioned him…
* Schutter: You’re greater… dominance…?
* JJ: Questioned that…
* Worobetz: Individuation… becoming invisible when we want.
* Herriott: On the internet, you feel a bubble of anonymity… you could make a fake account, say what you want.
* Alex Johnson: That’s starting to go away… people are suffering the consequences for saying what they want.
* Liam: People catch sex offenders on Facebook.
* Geyer: Social media websites are different; social media is your identity…
* Eble: Facebook is you…
* Eippert: Strongly-linked to Facebook…
* Worobetz: Video games, X-box… even worse than Facebook.
* Nick Wright: We only see extremes…

Eble: Freud… internet as a gateway to the ID does this hurt or harm civil discourse?

* Spuzzillo: have you ever seen anyone change someone else’s mind on a comment board?
* Worobetz: You’re just trying to get your opinion to win…
* JJ: Political / civil dialogue, receiver of messages… we’ve gotten better at taking on these kinds of words… we aren’t as offended as we should be…
* Olinger: That’s Call of Duty…
* Eble talked.