CFP, "Words that Kill", American University of Paris, May 28-30th, 2018

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WORDS THAT KILL, May 28-30th, 2018

The American University of Paris, The George and Irina Schaeffer Center for the Study of Genocide, Human Rights and Conflict Prevention

The aim of the international conference Words that Kill organized by the George and Irina Schaeffer Center for the Study of Genocide, Human Rights and Conflict Prevention is to reexamine the questions of hate speech and freedom, the production and circulation of lies, and violence-inducing identity discourses. Through interdisciplinary investigation and critique, we aspire to foster intellectual and policy responses to injustice, exclusion, and violence.

There is a continuum linking symbolic violence (in images, signs, stories) and physical violence. Social violence is bred by the construction of otherness, the mobilization of myth (purity of origins), the use of libel, falsehoods and mistruths--performative acts that foment hate and generate the conditions of possibility of mass violence. They are common elements of strategic propaganda to scapegoat, contaminate, exclude, and dehumanize targeted groups, preconditions for discrimination, repression, mass violence or genocide. Mass violence requires narratives authorizing killing, words that not only distance perpetrators from their involvement but also rationalize and naturalize injustices, normalize crimes and, in the aftermath, erase them from social memory.

In our current troubled historical moment, where toxic discourses are being mobilized for political ends, there is growing concern and debate over the perilous effects of post-truth regimes, false news and lying in politics. The phenomenon is not new: As Hannah Arendt notes in Lying in Politics, penned after the publication of the Pentagon Papers, "Secrecy...and deception, the deliberate falsehood and the outright lie used as a legitimate means to achieve politics ends, have been with us since the beginning of recorded history.” But it has become increasingly acute, affecting and poisoning political discourse and daily social intercourse.

We welcome innovative scholarly contributions that examine the multiple dimensions of the problem of hate, the production of otherness, violence and images, language, media and narratives. Potential topics include:

Truth, Lies and the Manufacturing of Otherness

- The epistemological problem: distinguishing truth and lies, facts from falsehood.
- Uses and misuses of history: mythmaking and mass violence.
Discourses of hate and hate speech.

Cross-national approaches to free speech and hate speech.

The manipulation of “fact” in hate speech.

Manufacturing otherness in narratives, images and language.

False science and scientism as justification for violence.

**Mediating Hate**

The production, circulation and reception of dehumanizing representations and falsehoods.

Media (new and old), lies, violence and hate.

The power of images.

Virality.

Strategies to counter or control lies and hate speech.

Performance and truth.

**Inciting and Denying**

Propaganda as incitement to mass violence.

Conspiracy theories and rumor as incitement to violence.

Genocide denial and revisionism: production and reception.

Commemoration practices: truth and fiction.

Confirmed Keynote Speakers:

Sarah Banet-Weiser (University of Southern California)

Susan Benesch (Harvard University)

Gérald Bronner (Paris Diderot)

Marc Crépon (CNRS-École Normale Supérieure)
Jayson Harsin (American University of Paris)

Jason Stanley (Yale University)

Organizing committee: Waddick Doyle (AUP), Oliver Feltham (AUP), Philip Golub (AUP), Cary Hollinshead-Strick (AUP), Jayson Harsin (AUP), Constance Pâris de Bollardière (AUP), Susan Perry (AUP), Claudia Roda (AUP), Brian Schiff (AUP) and Miranda Spieler (AUP).

Papers can be given in English or French. Fellowships will be awarded on the basis of financial need and quality of the scholarly contribution.

Proposals for presentations must include an abstract (no more than 500 words) and a short biography (no more than 250 words).

Important Dates:

October 15th 2017: Proposals are due.

December 15th 2017: Letters of acceptance are returned.

January 15th 2018: Registration for the conference opens.

For questions about the conference, please contact us at schaeffercenter@aup.edu