BLACK HILLS STATE UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM
Proposal to Offer a Colloquia Course

1. Names of Faculty Proposing Course (team-taught courses preferred):
   Andrey Reznikov

2. Disciplines and Colleges Represented:
   English, Sociolinguistics
   College of Arts and Sciences

3. Name of Proposed Colloquia Course:
   Political Doublespeak: from Washington to Moscow

4. Preferred Schedule (Fall 2008 or Spring 2009):
   Fall 2008

5. A Rationale for the Course:

   The knowledge that the students learn first-hand, on their own, is much more valuable and lasting than something they are just told in the classroom. And this is exactly the goal of this course, as it offers students a chance to analyze political propaganda and the techniques political leaders use to sell their agenda to the general public. The emphasis of the course is on allowing the students to discover these “language games” on their own, with the help and guidance of the instructor. Thus, the students will achieve a completely new understanding of modern political realities and will be much better equipped to get through the political doublespeak of today’s leaders.

   One of the surprises of the course for the students will be the similarity of doublespeak used in Washington and in Moscow, irrespective of the political regime, country, and language. Students will be even more surprised to learn that all these “language games” were predicted in minute details by George Orwell in his Newspeak model (1984).

   The more general outcome of the course will be that students will become much more knowledgeable and careful about propaganda and much more able to see through it and get through the doublespeak to the real purpose of this or that politician. The more college graduates will be equipped with such knowledge the more conscientious citizens they will be.
6. **Proposed List of Readings:** (definitely subject to change by the fall of 2007)


7. **A Description:**

   The structure of the course is very simple: after quick introduction dedicated to the basic propaganda techniques (analyzed in detail in the 30s and 40s of the 20th century by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis) and Doublespeak Awards given annually by the National Council of Teachers of English, to allow the students to trace and analyze similar tendencies themselves.

   The classic situation, and the one where doublespeak is used to the full, is, of course, the time of war and the time of elections. Thus, the students will be analyzing everyday publications in US press and on TV news programs related to the war in Iraq, and the Russian publications (with my help) on the war in Chechnya, as well as materials devoted to presidential elections both in the United States and in the Russian Federation (this is why fall of 2008 is the best time for this course, as both countries have presidential elections in 2008).

   Tentative outline will look something like this:

   **Week 1:** Doublespeak: origin, features, types. (W. Lutz). Propaganda techniques (Institute for Propaganda Analysis).

   **Week 2:** Newspeak and doublespeak. “The Principles of Newspeak.” *(1984)*

   **Week 3:** “Politics and the English language.” “Looking Back on the Spanish War.”
   (George Orwell)

   **Week 4:** Dictionaries of Doublespeak. (W; Lutz and P. Wasserman). Web dictionaries.

   **Week 5:** NCTE Committee on Public Doublespeak. Doublespeak Award. Recent winners.

   **Week 6:** War doublespeak *(liberation of Iraq, Mission accomplished, extraordinary rendition (Washington), counter-terrorist operation, normalization of the situation, measures to control passport regime (Moscow)).*
Thus, the first 6-7 weeks will be introducing to the students the basic concepts and classic works on doublespeak. Around midterm, the real work starts: the students will be assigned analysis of the published collections of doublespeak terms and evaluating them, as well as (and more importantly) looking for doublespeak in political materials of the day. Since this will be the time of elections there will be more materials than we will be able to discuss. When I taught this class in the fall of 2006, it was the time of US Congress and local elections, and just SD elections provided abundant materials for discussion (candidates’ web-sites, propaganda materials, debates, etc.). For example, the local issues that were voted on during November elections of 2006 (like abortion) and the corresponding campaign provided perfect material for this class.

It is important to underline that the goal of such a course is not to make fun of any political figure or party or regime: doublespeak is a leading feature of any political language, irrespective of the ruling party, or a concrete person in power, or political regime; thus, the so-classed free countries are no more free from doublespeak than the most totalitarian regimes, and realizing this is also one of the important goals for this class: it is a revelation to the students that doublespeak exists, and that is a universal phenomenon. Allow me to repeat that after taking this course the students will become much more knowledgeable and careful about propaganda and much more able to see through it and get through the doublespeak to the real purpose of this or that political text. I believe this is an important skill for honors students, and in fact, for any college graduate.

8. Additional Resources Needed (including prices):

Depending on how much time we have, I can use a lot of good movies illustrating propaganda techniques and their effect on society: “Wag the Dog,” “Truman Show,” “Man of the Year,” “Dave” to name just a few. If the course coincides in time with 2008 presidential elections (and that would be perfect time for the course), a great field experience will be analyzing election materials of the candidates, TV debates, etc. This will not involve any additional expenses, as all these materials are accessible via Internet. If there are meetings with voters in our area, these will be fairly easy to attend. In fact, attending any public meeting provides a lot of material for analysis, because doublespeak is an integral part of any public speaking.