

# **The Arts of Resistance: Underground Media and Political Subversion from the English Revolution to the Age of Wikileaks**

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Professor Alastair Bellany, SAS - History

M 11:30A-2:30P

Honors College Rm S124

College Ave Campus

This seminar explores the use of illicit underground media as a vehicle of political resistance and subversion from the early modern age to the contemporary world. Using a mixture of secondary and primary readings, students will explore the histories of a wide variety of subversive political actors, ranging from seventeenth-century libelers to twenty-first century “cypherpunks”, from French philosophical pornographers to Czech psychedelic musicians. Analyzing both the medium and the message of political dissidence, students will explore the arts of resistance in monarchical, totalitarian, and democratic states; they will analyze the historically shifting forms and operations of power and the means of subverting it; and they will examine the role of underground media in the creation of revolutionary crises and movements. The course is structured around four case studies: the creation and circulation of underground “libels” (songs, poems, tracts) in pre-revolutionary England (c.1620-1642); the printing and reading of forbidden “philosophical books” in pre-revolutionary France (c.1720-1790); the samizdat and dissident art culture of 1970s’ communist Czechoslovakia; and, finally, the digital undergrounds of the contemporary era, including the controversies around Wikileaks, Anonymous and the Edward Snowden case.

Students will be required to actively participate in weekly seminar discussions of the assigned readings, to make a series of in-class presentations, and to work on a short research project, in traditional or digital format, on themes related to the seminar.

ALASTAIR BELLANY has taught in the Department of History at Rutgers for nearly two decades. A scholar of early modern British history, he has published extensively on the political and media cultures of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century. His most recent book, *The Murder of King James I*, co-written with Thomas Cogswell, appeared from Yale University Press in the fall of 2015. He is currently working on two projects: a textbook history of the British Isles from the beginnings until the 18<sup>th</sup> century; and a book on the cultural history of an execution ballad from the late 17<sup>th</sup> to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.