

Teaching 9/11 to Conspiracy Theorists

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Global Research, January 22, 2016

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [Terrorism](#)

Professor James Tracy was fired by his university for his writings on the Sandy Hook School massacre, in which he questions the validity of the “official” version of events. Whatever one’s views regarding Professor Tracy’s analysis, this action by Florida Atlantic University constitutes a blatant violation of academic freedom. (GR Editor, M. Ch.)

This article was originally written in November 2015. Many have accused this author of teaching “conspiracy theories” to college students. Contrary to critics’ assertions, however, events such as the Sandy Hook School massacre or Boston Marathon bombing were never addressed in any courses taught at his former university.

Only in the last college class he taught over a twenty year career in academe (13 of which were spent at Florida Atlantic University) did he have a chance to carefully examine and discuss September 11, 2001, or, more specifically, the US government’s official 9/11 conspiracy theory.-JFT

An enduring psychological effect of “the propaganda of the event” is a foremost element of all modern forms of war. Advances in hidden governance and concentrated media ownership have made the “war on terror” possible via increasingly fine-tuned trauma based mind control—in other words the enforcement of belief through overwhelming events subsequently placed in meaningful narrative context absent any contradictory information.

Such a phenomenon is readily apparent among the younger generations, particularly as they have come to rely on US government-sponsored conspiracy theories in order to make sense of momentous political events bearing upon their lives. Despite their irrational nature and profound shortcomings, such conspiracy theories are unquestioningly accepted as valid by an overwhelming majority of journalists and academics, who then repeat them as fact to their respective constituents.

This author recently taught an undergraduate media studies class where he chose to specifically address news coverage of September 11, 2001 and the broader history of false flag terrorism. This was the first time one specific historical incident was focused on throughout the term, and the overall approach involved cultivating students’ understandings and recollections of those events as the foundation of a working model that might demonstrate how such significant events and their re-presentation by corporate media and educational institutions actively hinder honest attempts to make sense of that tragic day, and thereby our present political location and historical moment.

Despite the academy’s progressive veneer, with few exceptions 9/11 and similar deep events are actively eschewed even by self-professed “radical” scholars, otherwise quick to take up questions of social and political power, particularly as they pertain to race, class, or

gender. Taking their cue from public intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky,[1] they conclude that such questions interfere with analyses of ongoing “oppression,” not to mention potentially jeopardizing personal economic opportunities (i.e. accumulation of “cultural capital”) inevitably bound up in professional reputation. Unfortunately, this author’s experience suggests how such assumptions only tend to prolong and exacerbate the psychological trauma and detachment from historical reality many students still harbor as a direct result of 9/11.

On the first day of class students were given a brief informal survey to complete where they were asked about their experiences and understandings of September 11. Since most class participants were in their early-to-mid twenties, they were in early grade school years in 2001.

Upon vicariously witnessing the carefully coordinated “attacks” and their repercussions as children, the students recalled feeling shocked, confused, afraid, frustrated, and in some cases even angry that something like this could happen to their country, and in broad daylight no less. Some even knew of friends or relatives lost in the World Trade Center. The traumatic effects of those events were accentuated by observing the responses of their teachers and parents, who were likewise visibly shaken, in some cases reduced to tears.

Students were also asked what media venues they consulted for information and how they were educated on the 9/11 events. Almost without exception their main sources included K-12 instruction, what might be gleaned in a few years of “higher education” (most are college juniors or seniors), and conventional news outlets—particularly network news and cable news channels, made-for-television documentaries, and to a far lesser degree traditional print media.

A final question asked, “To the best of your knowledge, what exactly took place on September 11, 2001?” Students almost invariably repeated the same conspiracy theory concerning 9/11 that has been touted by federal government officials and corporate news media alike since that fateful day: Our country was attacked by Muslim extremists who hijacked planes and flew them in to New York’s World Trade Center Towers and the Pentagon in Washington DC. In one rare exception, a student who took a previous class with the author expressed skepticism, noting possible intrigue in the terrorist acts.

The class proceeded to read and discuss Barrie Zwicker’s *Towers of Deception: The Media Coverup of 9/11*, and view several documentaries, including Massimo Mazzucco’s *September 11: The New Pearl Harbor*. As the term proceeded an almost uniform sense of cognitive dissonance, disbelief and denial among students turned to uncertainty, and eventually an acknowledgement that they had been compelled to accept as fact a carefully-crafted myth, one paving the way for the “war on terror” that has largely defined their lives and those of their loved ones. The myth has required massive government propaganda abetted by a “free press,” which to this day refuses to interrogate and bring to light the greatest mass murder of US citizens in the nation’s history.

As part of the final exam students were given an option of using the surveys filled out at the start of class to contrast the previous lack of knowledge about the specifics of 9/11 and willingness to accept implausible government explanations of the event with the established facts and critical insights gleaned throughout the term. They were further challenged to

analyze what their previous assumptions suggest about the overall failure of educational and informational institutions in general. How could it be, for example, that young people sit before televisions and inhabit classrooms for tens of thousands of hours by the time they reach young adulthood, yet still harbor irrational and likely harmful state-sanctioned conspiracy theories about the defining event of our time?

Moreover, what of their prospective profession as journalists? For example, after their instrumental roles in covering up September 11 major agenda-setting venues of US news, such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, have gone on to hustle the American people with even more murderous government-backed deceptions, including “weapons of mass destruction,” the Iraq War, and more recently the decimation of Libya and Syria’s “civil war” by the Western-backed “Islamic State” mercenaries.

Yet the failure to more carefully address September 11 lies at the root of how techniques of mass psychology are now routinely used against what political strategist Karl Rove famously termed the “reality-based community.” As Kevin Barrett observes,

“Due to the collective emotional reaction to 9/11, and the outrageous and hard-to-believe social engineering project behind it, people who accept the official 9/11 myth are living in a very different world from the (real) world inhabited by those who know the awful truth; whereas those who recognize that Saddam’s WMD never existed, however outraged they may be, still inhabit pretty much the same consensus reality as those who haven’t figured that out.”[2]

Indeed, in the only nation on earth that provides for freedom of speech in its constitution and purports to make the world safe for similar forms of liberal governance, a potent mode of thought control permeates everyday thought and discourse. The orientation begins in childhood and is shaped and reified by almost every major mass media institution. It manifests through a propaganda of silence and acquiescence that disguises itself as “journalism” and “scholarship,” and an almost reflexive acceptance of uninterrogated narratives in the hallowed halls of the modern university.

Institutions of higher education are the foremost underlying link in the ideational bulwark upholding the national security state. The hegemony of empire works a persistent and subtle mechanics of intellectual censorship under the professional guise of seeming impartiality and credentialed remove. Concrete questions of socio-political and economic power may be dismissed out-of-hand. Along these lines a critical mass of academics exists in a parallel universe characterized by an Orwellian double think enforced through a very real fear of professional isolation and, yes, economic privation. In this way one’s silence may be rationalized as practical.

Yet in the end such cowardice is a disservice to students, colleagues and self. It marks a point at which geopolitical design permeates the very life of the mind, and is suggested in the moral and intellectual decay of America’s increasingly Mandarin-like academic class. Under ideal circumstances a reluctance to confront and examine harsh yet verifiable historical and contemporary realities would be antithetical to the higher learning. In the modern state so heavily dependent upon surveillance, secrecy, and endless war for its continued existence, such intellectual strictures bound up in myth have become thoroughly indispensable.

Notes

[1] Noam Chomsky, *9/11: Was There an Alternative?* New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001.

[2] Kevin Barrett, "Introduction: Another French False Flag! Why Shouldn't We Jump to Conclusions?" in Barrett (editor) *Another French False Flag: Bloody Tracks From Paris to San Bernardino*, Lone Rock, WI: Sifting and Winnowing Books, 2016.

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James F. Tracy was a tenured Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies at Florida Atlantic University from 2002 to 2016. He was fired by FAU ostensibly for violating the university's policies imposed on the free speech rights of faculty. Tracy has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the university, with trial set to begin November 27, 2017. Tracy received his PhD from University of Iowa. His work on media history, politics and culture has appeared in a wide variety of academic journals, edited volumes, and alternative news and opinion outlets. Additional information is available at [MemoryHoleBlog.com](#), [TracyLegalDefense.org](#), and [jamesftracy.wordpress.com](#).

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