

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communications Studies COMS 371 L02

Critical Media Studies

Winter 2015

Mon., Jan. 12 – Wed., April 15 (excluding Feb. 15 – 22)

Thursday, 15:30-18:15

Instructor: Samantha C. Thrift
Office: SS 210
Office Phone: 403-220-5320
E-Mail: samantha.thrift@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 14:00-16:00

Course Description

This course emphasizes major critical approaches in Communication Studies with the intent of introducing students to the theoretical foundations of media and mass communication related research. The course explores the contexts in which these theories arose, identifies their major strengths and weaknesses, and provides an appreciation of how critical theory engages the social world through research on communication and media. Areas to be covered include: the culture industry, political economy of the media, cultural studies, fandom, and feminist and intersectional approaches to analyzing media.

Additional Information

Prerequisite: COMS 201

Objectives of this Course

The goal of this course is to familiarize students with the major critical theories relevant to media studies. By the end of the course, you should:

- Be able to recognize and contrast the major authors, concepts, and ideas within the critical traditions;
- Be able to apply them to analyze media content and practices;
- Develop a critical awareness of media content and practices.

Textbooks and Readings

Dines, Gail and Humez, Jean M. (eds.). *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Critical Reader*, 4th edition. London: SAGE, 2015.

Any additional readings will be made available via the COMS 371-02 D2L course website.

Internet and electronic communication device information

The in-class use of computers for activities other than note taking purposes will not be tolerated. Therefore, cell phones and other electronic communication devices must be turned off upon entering the classroom and may not be used in the classroom or during class time. If you engage in non-course related online activity during class, the professor will confiscate the device for the duration of that class.

No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

Email

When corresponding with the instructor via email, students should include the course number (COMS 371) and a clear statement of purpose in the subject line. If you do not include the course number in your email's subject line, your email may get lost in your instructor's overflowing inbox and go unread! Please maintain a respectful tone in your correspondence with course instructors.

Email correspondence is most useful for short specific inquiries. If you have detailed questions on the course material or assignments please visit me during office hours.

I will return emails during the week, usually on a first-come, first-served basis. Emails sent in the evening or on weekends will not be read or replied to until the next working day. NOTE: I do not accept email submissions of work.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment	Weight	Due Date
Synthesis Essay	10%	February 5
Culture Jam (Group)	25%	Schedule TBA
Essay Proposal	15%	March 5
Essay Draft Workshop	15%	March 26
Final Essay	35%	April 9

Synthesis Essay (10%) Due: February 5

The purpose of a synthesis essay is to make insightful connections between two or more sources, with the goal of ultimately presenting and supporting a claim about a topic (i.e., compare-and-contrast). For this assignment, you will write a short (4 page) essay that compares and contrasts the perspectives of two articles we've read for class. You will select two authors' works from course readings assigned from the beginning of term up to and including February 5th. Additional details will be provided in class.

Culture Jam – Group Project (25%)

In groups, you will choose a media text (such as an advertisement, political campaign, television ad, website) and re-create it to alter the meaning. Your finished product, along with an analysis of both the original product and your re-created product, will be presented in class. Detailed assignment guidelines will be posted to the course website and discussed in class. Groups will present throughout the semester. Schedule to be announced.

Essay Proposal (15%) Due: March 5

Students will prepare a brief three-page description of the final critical analysis paper, including a one-page bibliography containing at least five academic sources (including two course readings). Your proposal will identify your interest in your chosen topic and the reason for your chosen theory.

Once your topic has been approved, you are committed to it until the end (though you may alter your argument or conceptual approach).

Essay Draft and Peer Review (15%) Due: March 26

In-class time will be provided for sharing and discussing a draft version of your final paper in peer groups. Students need to prepare a complete (introduction, body, conclusion) draft of their final essay and bring it to class.

The goal of this exercise is to encourage you to work on your project throughout the term; to critically reflect on how the assigned readings and class discussions relate to, and can be incorporated into your individual projects; and to learn how to assess other work with diligence and care. This will develop your understanding of the assessment criteria that will be used by the instructor to evaluate your final submission.

Final Essay (35%) Due: April 9

Students will analyze a contemporary media artifact drawing on the theoretical frameworks and analytical approaches discussed in course readings and in class. For instance: a

political economy analysis of iPhone use in tween markets; the commodification of “dating culture” via a case study of Tinder; an intersectional analysis cultural appropriation through study of Miley Cyrus.

Essays will be 8-10 pages in length, double-spaced, and include a complete bibliography. Additional details to be provided in class.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

PLEASE NOTE: All assignments and exams weighted more than 20% must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Submission of Assignments: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Late work will not be accepted one week past the original deadline without appropriate documentation (i.e., doctor's note). Late work will not receive written feedback.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than 14 days after the start of the course.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading System & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Work in this course will be graded using letter grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film:

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department grade scale equivalents	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good—clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	0%

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/node/208> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/research/research-ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (PIC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 picarts@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Services Mobile App 	http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
<p>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	<p>http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html</p> <p>http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</p>
<p>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	<p>403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</p> <p>403-266-HELP (4357)</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</p> <p>If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.</p>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

The Schedule of Readings will be posted to D2L before the first class.