

Communications Studies (COMS) 371 - Lecture 03
Critical Media Studies
Fall 2012
MW 14:00-15:15

Instructor: María Victoria Guglietti
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Office Hours: Mondays 15:30 to 16:30 or by appointment

Course Description

This course emphasizes major critical approaches in the field of communication studies with the intent of introducing students to the theoretical foundations of media 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 communications and media.

Areas to be covered include: the problem of communication (Carey), the culture industry (Adorno, the Frankfurt School), semiotics (Saussure and Barthes), psychoanalysis (Freud and Lacan), cultural studies (Hall, Williams), power (Foucault, Said), identity (Fanon, Mulvey), consumption (De Certeau, Hebdige), postmodernism (Lyotard and Baudrillard) and sexual identity (Rubin).

Objectives of the Course

To offer students a first approach to the theoretical foundations of critical media research.

To encourage students to develop critical awareness before media strategies and contents.

To help students develop analytical skills necessary for communication research.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops are permitted in class as long as they are used EXCLUSIVELY for note taking. Cell phones should be turned off during class.

The use of electronic devices for extracurricular activities during class will have an impact on the participation mark.

Textbooks and Readings:

Badmington, Neil and Julia Thomas (Eds.) *The Routledge Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*. New York; Routledge, 2008.

Additional MANDATORY reserved readings found in the library:

Carey, James. "Reconceiving 'Mass' and 'Media'." In *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, edited by James Carey, 69-88. New York: Routledge, 1989.

Adorno, Theodor. "Culture Industry Reconsidered." In *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, edited by J. M. Bernstein, 98-107. London: Routledge, 1991.

Hall, Stuart. "Introduction; Who Needs 'Identity'?" In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay. London: Sage, 1996.

Hebdige, Dick. "Subculture: The Unnatural Break." In *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*, edited by Douglas Kellner and Meenakshi Gigi Durham, 207-212. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

Assignments and Evaluation

Group presentation and abstract (15%)

From Oct. 1 to Dec. 3, selected by groups, depending on reading

Students will form groups of 3 members to organize and deliver this presentation. The presentation will consist of:

1. a summary and critique of one of the mandatory reading's main points (5%),
2. the discussion of one contemporary academic paper in the field of communication studies that uses the theory (5%)
3. the group's application of the theory to a contemporary event or phenomenon (5%).

Students will form groups and choose the mandatory reading that they will focus on the first week of classes. Presentations are due the day the reading selected is scheduled to be discussed in class (see schedule below).

Additional instructions will be posted on blackboard,

Short paper: Individual theoretical analysis of a media or cultural event (20%)

This mandatory short paper is independent from the presentation. Its due date is determined by the students based on their selection of the reading they want to address. For example, if a student decides to write a paper as a response to Williams' theory of culture, which will be discussed in class on Oct. 22nd, the paper will be due the following class, in this case Oct. 24th.

Short papers should apply any theory discussed in class except for the theory that the student will engage with as part of his or her group presentation activity.

Additional instructions will be posted on blackboard,

Quizzes: Oct. 10th and Nov. 14th (30%)

These quizzes will comprise short answers and definitions.

Final Exam: TBA (30%)

The final exam will include three sections: definitions, short answers and analysis. The exam will be cumulative.

Participation (5%)

Students are expected to participate in in-class discussions, know the readings and ask questions.

Assignment guidelines will be handed in the first day of class.

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: 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.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: Yes.

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

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.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. 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

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

(Revised, effective September 2008)

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

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. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

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

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see
<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see
<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

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

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:
<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

	Tuesday Room SS-109 2:00 to 3:15 P.M	Thursday Room SS 109 2:00 to 3:15 P.M
Week 1 Sept. 10, 12	Topic: Introduction to course, textbook and projects. Assignment: group project sign in	Topic: The problem of communication Readings: Carey, Library reserves Assignment: group project sign in
Week 2 Sept. 17, 19	Topic: Culture Industry Marx Reading: Chapter 1 ¹	Topic: Culture Industry Adorno Reading: Library reserves Assignment: Short paper Marx ²
Week 3 Sept. 24, 26	Topic: Rethinking the Culture Industry Benjamin Readings: Chapter 5 Assignment: Short paper Adorno	Topic: Theoretical analysis Assignment: Short paper Benjamin
Week 4 Oct 1, 3	Topic: Semiotics de Saussure Readings: Chapter 3 Assignment: Group presentation Semiotics (de Saussure)	Topic: Semiotics Barthes Readings: Chapter 11 Assignment: Short paper de Saussure Group presentation Semiotics (Barthes)
Week 5 Oct 8, 10	Thanksgiving Holiday	Quiz 1 Assignment: Short paper Barthes
Week 6 Oct 15, 17	Topic: Psychoanalysis Lacan Readings: Chapter 6	Topic: Psychoanalysis Mulvey Readings: Chapter 16 Assignment: Short paper Lacan Group presentation Psychoanalysis (Lacan and/or Mulvey)
Week 7 Oct 22, 24	Topic: Cultural Studies Williams Readings: Chapter 8 Assignment: Short paper Mulvey	Topic: Cultural Studies Hall Readings: Chapter 18 Assignment: Short paper Williams Group presentation Cultural Studies (Williams and Hall)
Week 8 Oct 29, 31	Topic: Power Foucault Readings: Chapter 15 Assignment: Short paper Hall Group presentation Power (Foucault)	Topic: Power Said Readings: Chapter 17 Assignment: Short paper Foucault Group presentation Power (Said)

¹ All chapter references are from your textbook (Badmington & Thomas, 2008).

² You are required to hand in ONLY ONE short paper during the semester. The due date depends on the reading that you selected to address in the paper.

Week 9 Nov 5, 7	Topic: Identity Hall Readings: Library reserves Assignment: Short paper Said Group presentation Identity (Hall)	Topic: Identity Fanon Readings: Chapter 7 Assignment: Short paper Hall Group presentation Identity (Fanon)
Week 10 Nov 12, 14	Reading day	Quiz 2 Assignment: Short paper Fanon
Week 11 Nov 19, 21	Topic: Resistance de Certeau Readings: Chapter 13 Group presentation Resistance (de Certeau)	Topic: Resistance Hebdige Readings: Library reserves Assignment: Short paper de Certeau Group presentation Resistance (Hebdige)
Week 12 Nov 26, 28	Topic: Postmodernity Baudrillard Readings: Chapter 20 Assignment: Short paper Hebdige Group presentation Postmodernity (Baudrillard)	Topic: Postmodernity Lyotard Readings: Chapter 21 Assignment: Short paper Baudrillard Group presentation Postmodernity (Lyotard)
Week 13 Dec 3, 5	Topic: Gender and Sex Rubin Readings: Chapter 22 Assignment: Short paper Lyotard Group presentation Gender and Sex (Rubin)	Topic: Final Review Assignment: Short paper Rubin
Week 14+	Final exam time and location (TBD)	

Deadlines

Assignment	Due date	Weight
Short paper	Selected by student, depending on reading	20%
Group presentation	From Oct. 1 to Dec. 3, selected by groups, depending on reading	15%
Quiz 1	Oct. 10	15%
Quiz 2	Nov. 14	15%
Participation	ongoing	5%
Final	TBD	30%
TOTAL		100%