

Communications Studies COMS 371 L20
Critical Media Studies
Spring 2013
Mondays and Wednesdays 12:00-14:45

Instructor: María Victoria Guglietti
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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 14: 45 to 15:45 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.

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 (20%)

Students will form groups of 4 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%).
4. abstract (5%)

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

Additional instructions will be posted on blackboard,

Reading Responses (20%)

Students will submit 4 reading responses throughout the term (the total of reading responses available to choose from is 16). Reading responses will be posted on blackboard the first day of the term. Each reading response is based on a mandatory reading. To complete the response students are required to read the reading and briefly answer the question linked to the reading and assigned by the instructor (approx. 250 words). Reading responses are due the day the reading will be discussed in class. Responses MUST be handed in at the beginning of the class. No late responses will be

accepted as the pedagogical objective of the response is to test the student's comprehension of the reading prior to the lecture and in-class discussion.

Quizzes: June 3rd (20%) and June 19th (15%)

Quiz 1 will cover lectures 1 to 4. Quiz 2 will cover lectures 6 to 9. Quizzes will comprise both long and short answers and will last 90'. Check the schedule of lectures and readings below for more information.

Final analysis: June 26th (25%)

This final analysis will require the evaluation of a cultural artifact or phenomenon through the systematic application of the theories studied in class. Unlike a typical discussion paper, students will articulate their analysis as a series of answers to a list of questions provided by the instructor.

Assignment guidelines will be posted on blackboard on the first week of class. Students will have the six weeks of classes to complete the assignment.

Students do not need to complete all assignments to receive a passing grade in the course.

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: No

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:

	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.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

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

	Monday Room SA-124A 12:00 to 14:45 P.M	Wednesday Room SA 124A 12:00 to 14:45 P.M
Week 1 May 15		Topic: Introduction to course, textbook and projects. The problem of communication Readings: Carey (library reserves) Assignment: group project sign in
Week 2 May. 20, 22	Holiday- No classes	Topic: Culture Industry (Marx, Adorno & Benjamin) Reading: Adorno (library reserves); Chapter 1 & 5 ¹ Assignment: RR1-RR2 ²
Week 3 May. 27, 29	Topic: Semiotics (de Saussure, Barthes) Readings: Chapter 3 & 11 Assignment: Group presentation Semiotics (Barthes); RR3- RR4	Topic: Psychoanalysis (Lacan & Mulvey); Exam review (How to do a theoretical analysis) Readings: Chapter 6 & 16 RR5-RR6
Week 4 June 3, 5	Quiz 1 (12:00 to 13:30) Break (15') 13:45- 14:45 Assignment: Group presentation Psychoanalysis (Mulvey)	Topic: Cultural Studies (Williams, Hall) Readings: Chapter 8 & 18 Assignment: Group presentation Cultural Studies (Williams OR Hall) RR7-8
Week 5 June 10, 12	Topic: Power (Foucault; Said) Readings: Chapter 15 & 17 Assignment: Group presentation Power (Foucault) Group presentation Power (Said) RR9-10	Topic: Identity (Hall; Fanon) Readings: Hall (Library reserves); Chapter 7 Assignment: Group presentation Identity (Hall OR Fanon) RR11-12
Week 6 June 17, 19	Topic: Resistance (de Certeau, Hebdige) Readings: Chapter 13; Hebdige (Library reserves) Assignment: Group presentation Resistance (Hebdige) RR13-14	Quiz 2 (12:00 to 13:30) Break 15' 13:45- 14:45 Assignment: Group presentation Postmodernity (Baudrillard)
Week 7 June 24, 26	Topic: Postmodernity (Baudrillard; Lyotard) Readings: Chapter 20 & 21 Assignment: Group presentation Postmodernity (Lyotard) RR 15-16	Assignment: Final analysis due (12:00 PM)

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

² RR stands for “reading response.”