

**COMMUNICATIONS STUDIES COMS 371 L01  
CRITICAL MEDIA STUDIES**

**WINTER 2011, MONDAYS, 2:00 – 4:50**

**Instructor:** Dr. Rebecca Sullivan  
**Office:** SS1110  
**Office Phone:** 403-220-3397  
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**Web Page:** [See Blackboard](#)  
**Office Hours:** 10AM – 12PM

**Additional Information**

Some of the materials and topics presented in class may include explicit sexual or violent content. If these materials make you uncomfortable, you are encouraged to speak with the professor. You will not be exempt from any assigned work but we will work together to accommodate your concerns. This class respects difference and diversity while welcoming thoughtful, critical discussions about mass mediated representations and discourses.

Responsibility for attending and fulfilling the requirements for all aspects of this course resides with the student. The professor will not give out lecture notes, repeat information, nor provide replacement copies of material that was provided during regular class hours.

A Blackboard portal has been set up for this course that allows for group correspondence, course announcements, assignment submission, and other forms of communication. Students are expected to check Blackboard before the class for any last minute changes or cancellations.

**Course Description**

This course emphasizes major critical approaches in Communications 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.

**Objectives of the Course**

Through readings, lectures, discussions and additional course materials, students will develop (a) a solid foundation in the major schools of media studies; (b) the ability to

critically assess different theories and their underlying assumptions; (c) analytical skills for the application of theory to issues of personal interest.

### **Internet and Electronic Communication Device Information**

Obstructive or disruptive use of communication devices is not allowed. Students must mute all communication devices. Use of recording technologies in class is prohibited.

### **Textbooks and Readings:**

Course readings are available in PDF format through Blackboard. There may be some delay in posting all readings, and past readings may be removed to make room for new ones, but they will be available at least two weeks before and two weeks after the lecture for which they are assigned. Students are expected to keep copies of the readings for the entire term. If you require hard copies, you may print them off at your expense. The professor will not redistribute or re-post readings that have been taken off Blackboard.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

Weekly	Reading Quizzes	10%
Feb 14 / Apr 4	TVNM Analysis	20%
Feb 28	Midterm Exam	30%
Apr 15 / Apr 25	Take Home Exam	40%

### **Reading Quizzes**

Each week that there is a scheduled lecture, there will be a short quiz relating to the readings for that week. The quiz will take place at the beginning of the class. There are no make-up exams if you miss the class or are late for any reason. There are 10 quizzes in total, each worth 1%. The quiz will consist of 3 questions on the content of the assigned readings. Each question will be worth 1 point and the quiz will be marked out of 2. You cannot receive more than 100% for the quiz so even if you answer every question correct for a mark of 3/2, the grade will be 100%. The quiz will be graded in class.

### **Television and New Media Studies Analysis**

Issue 10(1), 2009 of the journal *Television and New Media Studies* features fifty-seven short articles by internationally recognized media studies scholars on the subject “my media studies.” Your task is to select one of those articles and write a background analysis.

This includes: a brief intellectual biography of the author, their major works in the field, their recognized areas of expertise, the intellectual context in which their work takes place, influential scholars and schools of research related to their work, and any critiques you may have of their approach to the field of media studies.

Your essay must be organized according to scholarly standards, with an original thesis, progressive analysis and a critically reflexive conclusion. The goal is to understand how and where scholarly ideas develop as a kind of “enlarged conversation,” building on previous work and raising issues about future directions.

The analysis should be between 1500-1800 words (@ 5-7 pages), follow a scholarly format, and include a minimum of five peer-refereed references, with no more than two from the course readings. You are not allowed to contact the scholar and request an interview, but must derive your analysis based on your independent assessment of their work in the context of the historiography and current conditions of media studies research. Failure to meet minimum requirements in research may result in a grade of D or lower.

See Course Documents in Blackboard for a grading rubric and notes on research skills. Submit through the Blackboard Digital Dropbox. It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

The assignment is due no later than Feb 14 at 12PM (noon) for grading with comments, and Apr 4 at 12PM (noon) for grading without comments. Assignments received after the last deadline will receive a grade of F (zero).

### **Midterm Exam**

There will be an in-class examination on all material from the class up to that date. The exam will be a mix of short answer and essay questions. More details will be provided closer to the date.

### **Take Home Exam**

A take-home exam with one essay question, or a choice of two, will be distributed and discussed at the last lecture. The exam will be based on all the material from the course. Students will be expected to undertake independent research on their own and write a sound, scholarly response in essay format. Your final submission should be between 2500 – 3000 words (@ 8-10 pages). You must have a minimum of eight scholarly, peer-refereed references, with no more than three and at least two from course readings. Failure to meet minimum requirements in research may result in a grade of D or lower.

See Course Documents in Blackboard for a grading rubric and notes on research skills. Submit through the Blackboard Digital Dropbox. It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

The exam is due no later than April 15 at 12PM (noon) for grading with comments, and Apr 25 at 12PM (noon) for grading without comments. Assignments received after the last deadline will receive a grade of F (zero).

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. All assignments must be submitted electronically through Digital Dropbox in Blackboard.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO**

**Policy for Late Assignments**

Assignments received after the last deadlines will not be accepted and you will receive a grade of F (zero) for that assignment. If you receive more than two F in the course, the professor reserves the right to give you a final grade of F.

**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: [www.efwr.ucalgary.ca](http://www.efwr.ucalgary.ca)

**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 (MacEwan Student Centre 4<sup>th</sup> floor, [efwr.ucalgary.ca](http://efwr.ucalgary.ca)) 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>