

Department of
Communication and Culture
Communications Studies COMS 371 – Lecture 02
CRITICAL MEDIA STUDIES
Winter 2012
Tu 14:00-16:50 ST-127

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Office hours: Wed 12:00-14:00 or by appointment

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Some assignments in this course may require research involving human subjects. Students should be aware of information contained in the note on “Ethics” below. Some course content may contain material that is sexually explicit, violent or otherwise offensive. If you have concerns about this please make them known to the instructor in advance. Lecture notes will not be available for electronic distribution: it is the student’s responsibility to make notes on lecture material during the lecture. Use of recording technologies in class is prohibited.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

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. Areas to be covered include: the problem of communication (Durham, Mattelart, etc.), the culture industry (Adorno, the Frankfurt School), the Canadian school (McLuhan), structuralism and semiotics (Barthes), Cultural Studies (Hall, Williams), postmodernism (Lyotard, Harvey, etc.).

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE:

The course has the following objectives:

- 1) to introduce students to critical and qualitative traditions of communications research;
- 2) to provide an integrated sense of the development of theory and method in critical and qualitative research;

- 3) to develop competence in reading research in critical and cultural studies traditions of communications research;
- 4) to increase fluency in working with the key concepts from these traditions and;
- 5) to have direct experience of thinking within the frameworks offered by certain theories and methods.

TEXTBOOKS AND READINGS:

Required reading for the course includes the following textbook that will be available in The Bookstore. Other related materials indicated for particular classes will be on reserve in the library (available in the TFDL Library Reserve services). Some of this material is required, while other readings are recommended (if you need more background, or wish to pursue a topic in more detail).

Gedalof, Allan J. et. al. eds. (2005). *Cultural Subjects: A Popular Culture Reader*. Thomson Nelson.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION:

Grading is based on assignments designed to encourage both an understanding of the development of critical and qualitative research traditions in communications, and the application of particular methods to contemporary social practices. The analysis (textual, material, performative) assignments provide critical, textual and interpretive skills, familiarity with different forms of data, and an appreciation of the ethical issues involving research with human subjects. The group project is an opportunity to demonstrate fluency with theoretical terms, an appreciation of their application, and the ability to work with critical methods in the terms of everyday experience. The final exam will be an opportunity to integrate critical and qualitative theory within the research practices of Communications Studies.

The final grade will be based on completing **three** of the following **four** term assignments **and** completing the registrar scheduled final exam. It is not possible to get a passing grade in the course if one or more assignments are not completed. It is the student's responsibility to determine which three assignments to complete and to be responsible for completing them on time. It will not be possible to form or join a group project after the University's drop/add dates have passed.

Text analysis 25% (due in class, January 31): The assignment is an analysis of a commodified form of popular culture that has the potential for meaning and interpretation. It should be 5 double spaced pages in length (12pt font), with references and citations presented in APA style as appropriate.

Material Culture analysis 25% (due in class February 28): The assignment is an analysis of the material, sensory properties and social significance of a cultural object or artefact. It should be 5

double spaced pages in length (12pt font), with references and citations presented in APA style as appropriate.

Performance analysis 25% (due in class March 27): The assignment is an analysis of an aesthetically marked event, staged for an audience. It should be 5 double spaced pages in length (12pt font), with references and citations presented in APA style as appropriate.

Group project 25% (presentation date to be determined): This assignment should demonstrate integrate of key course concepts and consider different dimensions of the textual, material and performative qualities of popular culture and media. The presentation should be approximately 15 minutes in length. Each group is required to submit a written support paper of 12+ double spaced pages in length (12pt font), with references and citations presented in APA style as appropriate. The paper is due at the time of the presentation.

Final Exam 25% (*Registrar Scheduled*)

Please note: Detailed descriptions of the requirements and expectations for each assignment will be developed in class and then posted on the course's Blackboard site in advance.

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

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.

Writing Skills Statement

Faculty 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 www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/info. 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 Support Services of the

Student Success Centre. Visit the website for more details:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/writingsupport/>

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>.

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture (Revised, effective September 2008):

Letter Grade	Grading Scale	Grade Point Value (see U of C Calendar: Academic Standing)
A+	96-100	4
A	90-95.99	4
A -	85-89.99	3.7
B+	80-84.99	3.3
B	75-79.99	3
B-	70-74.99	2.7
C+	65-69.99	2.3
C	60-64.99	2
C-	55-59.99	1.7
D+	53-54.99	1.3
D	50-52.99	1
F	0-49	0

In this course, assignments will be assessed with letter grades that correspond to the University's 4-point scale. In the case of assignments that are scored numerically, you will receive a letter grade based on converting the score of that particular assignment using the grading system provided above. You may receive a grade that falls between two letter grades (for example a 3.5 is the mathematical mid-point between a B+ or 3.3 and an A- or 3.7). In such a case, the instructor reserves the right to scale the grade upwards (for example from a B+) to the next nearest letter grade (an A-).

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. For details see www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/info. 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 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:

Week 1: January 10

Introduction

- Gedalof, Part I "A General and Historical Overview of Cultural Studies"

Week 2: January 17

Cultural Studies Theory

- Gedalof, Part II "Cultural Studies Theory";
- Unit I, chapter 3 Hebdige
- De Saussure, chapter 1.1 in Counsell and Wolf
- Barthes, chapter 1.2 in Counsell and Wolf

Week 3: January 24

Subjects: self and mass culture

- Gedalof, Unit I, Chapter 1 Bennett and Royle
- Unit I, Chapter 2 Adorno and Horkheimer
- Althusser, chapter 2.1 in Counsell and Wolf

Week 4: January 31

Subjects: Identity and consumption

- Gedalof, Unit I, chapter 7 Rutherford
- Chapter 8 Klein
- Chaney, chapter 4 in Lull
- Woodward, chapters 7 and 9

Week 5: February 7**Popular Forms: representation**

- Unit II, chapter 9 Radway
- chapter 15, Auerbach
- Schwartz, chapter 14 in Finn
- hooks, chapter 4.3 in Counsell and Wolf
- Jhally, chapter 18 in Hammer and Kellner

Week 6: February 14**Popular Forms: Media**

- Unit I, chapter 4 Benjamin
- Chapter 5, McLuhan
- Ivins, Chapter 1 in Finn "Recapitulation"

Reading Break**Week 7: February 28****Cultural sites: Material**

- Unit III, chapter 18 duCille
- Unit I, chapter 6 Baudrillard
- Roth, chapter 6 in Finn
- Woodward, chapter 1, 2 (online here:
<http://www.sagepub.com/books/Book225857#tabview=samples>)

Week 8: March 6**Cultural Sites: Place**

- Gedalof, Unit III, chapter 16 Dubinsky
- chapter 17 Shields
- Payne, chapter 20 in Finn

Week 9: March 13**Cultural Sites: Nation**

- Gedalof, Unit I, chapter 7 Rutherford
- Unit II, chapter 12 Devereux
- Whitelaw, Chapter 18 in Finn
- Lidchi, Chapter 3 in Hall "The poetics and politics of exhibiting other cultures"

Week 10: March 20**The Body: performance**

- Unit II, chapter 10 Mahtani and Salmon
- Real, chapter 8 in Lull
- Butler, chapter 3.3 in Counsell and Wolf

Week 11: March 27**The Body: spectacle**

- Gedalof, Unit IV chapter 20 Creed
- chapter 21 Bukatman
- Foucault, chapter 5.1 in Counsell and Wolf
- Bahktin, chapter 8.3 in Counsell and Wolf

Week 12: April 3**The Body: reception**

- Gedalof, Unit IV, chapter 22 Ito
- Botterill and Kline, chapter 25 in Finn
- Iser, chapter 7.1 in Counsell and Wolf

Week 13: April 10**Presentations and Conclusion****RESERVE READING LIST:**

Bennett, Andy (2004). *After Subculture*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Counsell, Colin and L. Wolf (2001). *Performance Analysis: An Introductory Coursebook*. Routledge.

Finn, Jonathan, ed. (2011). *Visual Communication and Culture*. Oxford.

Hall, Stuart, ed. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Routledge.

Hammer, R. and D. Kellner, editors (2009). *Media/Cultural Studies*. Lang.

Harding, J. and D. Pribram (2009). *Emotions: A Cultural Studies Reader*. Routledge.

Lull, James (2001). *Culture in the Communication Age*. New York: Routledge.

Mayer, V. (2009). *Production Studies*. Routledge.

Monaghan, Leila and Jane Goodman, eds. (2006). *A Cultural Approach to Interpersonal Communication: Essential Readings*. Blackwell.

Pickering, M., editor (2008). *Research Methods in Cultural Studies*. Edinburgh University Press.

Ryan, Michael. (2010). *Cultural Studies a Practical Introduction*. Wiley.

Ryan, Michael, ed. (2008). *Cultural Studies: An Anthology*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Saukko, Paula. (2003). *Doing Research in Cultural Studies*. Sage.

Tilley, Christopher and Patricia Spyer, eds. (2006). *Handbook of Material Culture*. Sage.

Woodward, Ian. (2007). *Material World: Understanding Material Culture*. Sage.