

Communications Studies (COMS) 371 – L02
Critical Media Studies
Winter 2014
Thursday, 14:00 – 16:45

Instructor: Andrea Whiteley
Office Location: SS 339
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Office Hours: Tuesday 10:00 – 12:00

Course Description

This course approaches critical media studies both thematically and theoretically to demonstrate how critical media theory engages the social world. The course will investigate how critical theory can be used to analyze media technologies, mass media and culture to raise awareness and promote change. Using the concept of praxis, or theory into action, we will explore the major critical approaches focusing on the historical and social contexts in which the theories arose and applying the theories to our own critiques. Areas to be covered include: Foundations of critical media studies, The Frankfurt School, Media Ecology, Structuralism and Semiotics, Cultural Studies, Political Economy, Media Effects, Post-modernism and feminism, Media Convergence and New Media. The final theme will unite the approaches by looking at media theorists as public intellectuals and the policy implications of critique.

Additional Information

This is a reading and writing intensive course that requires basic familiarity with communication theories (COMS 201).

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify the intellectual foundations of critical media studies
- Recognize and contrast the major theories, concepts and ideas within the critical traditions
- Develop a critical awareness of media content and practices
- Produce academically rigorous written and oral communication assignments, while developing research and critical thinking skills

- Participate in critical discussions about media issues on an academic and practical level
- Apply the tools and techniques found in critical media theory to their own communication experiences

Internet and electronic communication device information

Students are expected to use these technologies exclusively for the enrichment of their class experience. All networked devices should be placed on mute or vibrate during class time. I reserve the right to ask any student to power down a device if it becomes a distraction to other students in the class.

Textbooks and Readings:

Marris, Paul and Sue Thornham (eds) (2009). *Media Studies: A Reader*. Third Edition. New York: New York University Press.

Additional readings:

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation 10%

Will be evaluated on the basis of a series of in class activities and attendance.

Blog Reflection Essays (20%) (Schedule will be provided)

Students will be expected to contribute a 250-300 word contribution to the class blog as well as two blog responses (100 words). Students will sign up for the blog assignment during the first class. Further details about expectations will be posted on the blog and handed out during the first week of class.

Quizzes (20%) February 13, 2014 and March 20, 2014

This assignment tests your understanding of the required readings and of the material covered in class. Each quiz takes 30 minutes and consists of multiple-choice and short answer questions. For each missed quiz you will receive zero points.

Group Culture Jamming Project (15%) (Schedule will be provided)

In groups you will choose a media text (for example 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 on blackboard and discussed in class. Students will be assigned to groups and the schedule will be handed out the first class. Groups will present throughout the semester.

Paper Proposal 5% Due March 27, 2014

Students will prepare a brief three page outline for the final research paper including a one-page bibliography. Outlines will identify your interest in your chosen topic and the reason for your chosen theory.

Final Research Paper 30% Due April 17, 2014

Students will choose one of the theoretical approaches to media studies to analyze a contemporary media form or issue (i.e. a political economy analysis of iPhone use in tween market, a critical discourse analysis of a dating website, a media ecology analysis of the evolution of note taking as a learning tool; narrative analysis from a feminist perspective of anime fan forums). Research papers will also include a section on “knowledge mobilization” for students to think about how their critique might be disseminated to a wider audience to promote change. Approx. 10-12 pages double spaced including bibliography.

All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

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://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 Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) 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/ethics/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

	Date	Topics	Events	Readings
1	Jan 9	Introduction to Critical Media Studies		
2	Jan 16	Key Concepts		Text: Intro; Lazarsfeld and Merton (TBC); Roszak UTube
3	Jan 23	Ideology and the Frankfurt School	Library Workshop	Text Ch. 1, 5, 14
4	Jan 30	Cultural Studies		Text Ch. 3, 26, 65
5	February 6	Political Economy		Text Ch. 12, Mosco, Havens
6	February 13	Critical Methodologies	First Quiz Documentary: The Corporation	Fairclough (TBC), CMCP
7	February 20	Reading Week		
8	February 27	Representation	Writing Workshop	Text Ch. 6, intro "Representation" p. 251 – 254.
9	March 6	Media Ecology and Media Effects		Text Ch. 2, 32, 35, Postman
10	March 13	Feminism and Political Communication	Guest speaker	Text Ch. 30, 31, 50, 51
11	March 20	Media Convergence and Internet	Second Quiz	44, 53, Jenkins
12	March 27	Social Media/ "New" Media	Paper Proposal	61, Fuchs, boyd
13	April 3	Public Intellectuals and Policy		Rosen, Shochat
14	April 10	Review - Final Class		
	April 17		Final Paper Due	

TBC – to be confirmed

boyd, danah (2007). Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life (December 3, 2007). *Youth, Identity and Digital Media*. David Buckingham, ed., The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on

Digital Media and Learning, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2008 ; Berkman Center Research Publication No. 2007-16. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1518924>

Canadian Media Concentration Research Project (2013). *Growth and Concentration Trends in the English-Language Network Media Economy in Canada, 2000 – 2012*. <http://www.cmcrp.org/2013/11/04/growth-and-concentration-trends-in-the-english-language-network-media-economy-in-canada-2000-2012/>

Fairclough, Norman (1995). “Critical analysis of media discourse.” *Media Discourse*. Hodder Arnold.

Fuchs, Christian. “Google Capitalism.” *tripleC* 10(1): 42-48. ISSN 1726-670X
<http://www.triple-c.at>
CC: Creative Commons License, 2012.

Havens, Timothy, Amanda D. Lotz, & Serra Tini (2009). “Critical Media Industry Studies: A Research Approach.” *Communication, culture & critique*. 2 (2) pg:234 -253

Jenkins, H. (2004). The cultural logic of media convergence. *International journal of cultural studies*, 7(1), 33-43.

Mosco, Vincent (2009). “Chapter four: Development of a Political Economy of Communication.” *The Political Economy of Communication*. London: Sage.

Postman, Neil (1986). *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. Introduction and Chapters One and Two. PDF available online [**to be read alongside McLuhan**]

Rosen, J. (1994). Making Things More Public: On the Political Responsibility of the Media Intellectual. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 11(1994), 362, 388.

Roszak, Theodore (1986) . Interview on the Cult of Information.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4mzEvqsuY>

Shochat, Gil (2010). The Dark Country. *The Walrus*. January/February 2010.
<http://walrusmagazine.com/articles/2010.01-national-affairs-the-dark-country/>