

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 502 L01

Political Economy of Communication

Fall 2018

Tuesday September 10 – Tuesday December 4 (excluding Tuesday November 13)

Tuesdays 12:30 – 15:15

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Office Hours: Monday 11:00 – 12:00, Tuesday 10:00 – 11:00 or by appointment

Course Description

The political economy of communications looks at how humans communicate through the lens of how economic and political power over the media of communication is obtained, organized and applied. The seminar will explore the historical and intellectual origins of key ideas about the political economy of communications by reviewing in-depth the ideas of a select group of scholars, several of them Canadian, who have made seminal contributions to defining this field of study and in setting out its fundamental perspectives and theories.

The course will be conducted as a seminar in which individual students prepare, present, discuss and debate ideas and positions based upon in-depth readings of selected texts. The seminar method relies on division of labor, whereby exploration of a significant body of literature is shared among participants.

Requirements

The class reading list is extensive and all students are required to familiarize themselves with all the readings. For assessment purposes, however, students will be responsible only to investigate selected readings in-depth (totaling 7-8 readings per student over the duration of the Term). Each student will present these in-depth explorations in two prepared seminar expositions and debates, and in two written journals. They will also write individual Term Papers that apply political economy perspectives to topical issues of the student's own choosing.

Structure

Each seminar session will be structured around a panel of 4-5 students. Each seminar constitutes an assessed assignment for each of the students in each panel. Every student will participate in two panels over the course of the Term, each time being responsible for one reading. In the first half of each session, each of the 4-5 readings relevant for that session will be presented and reviewed in-depth by the participant assigned to it (assessment requirements outlined below).

In the second part of the seminar, the panel will debate the various points of view in the readings for that day as related to a set of issues or questions provided in advance by the instructor. Each session is also open to comment and question from the class.

Students will demonstrate wider familiarity with an expanded number of readings through critical journals which will be turned in and marked (assessment criteria below), and in the Term Paper.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the course students should:

- be familiar with the ideas, approaches and methods that have had decisive influences on the study of communication from a political economy perspective;
- have a theoretical and methodological grounding in concepts that are essential for understanding the logic, development, and practices of the communication industries;
- have developed critical reading, analytical and debating skills that are relevant to exploring communication phenomena from a political economy perspective.

Textbooks and Readings

All readings will be available electronically on D2L

The roots of communication studies in classical political economy

Fleischacker, Samuel (2009) *On Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations": A Philosophical Companion*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. Part III: Foundations of Economics

Ruskin, J. (1921/1862) *Unto this Last*, London & Toronto: Dent. Essay I: "The Roots of Honour"

Giddens, A. (1971) *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Part One: Marx

Veblen, T. (1994/1899) *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, New York: Dover. Chapter 3 "Conspicuous Leisure" and Chapter 4 "Conspicuous Consumption"

Veblen, T. (1921) *The Engineers and the Price System*, New York: Huebsch. Chapter 3 "The Captains of Finance and the Engineers"

Persuasion, propaganda and mass culture

Adorno, T. and M. Horkheimer (1973) Abridged in J. Curran, M. Gurevitch and J. Woollacott (1977) (eds,) *Mass Communication and Society*, London: Edward Arnold.

Bernays, E.L. (1928), *Manipulating public opinion: the why and the how*, *American Journal of Sociology*, 33 (6), 958-71.

Smythe, D. (1981) *The Audience Commodity and its Work*, in D. Smythe (1981) *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness and Canada*, Norwood NJ: Ablex.

Leiss, W. (2014) (1975) *The Limits to Satisfaction: An Essay on the Problem of Needs and Commodities*, Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. Parts One and Two. (two reviewers)

The communication infrastructure, economic power and dependency

Innis, H.A. (1944), On the economic significance of culture, *Journal of Economic History*, 4, (Issue supplement: The Tasks of Economic History), 80-97.

Innis, H A. (2000) (1951) *The Bias of Communication*, Second Edition, Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Chapter 2, The Bias of Communication.

Smythe, D. W . (1957). *The structure and policy of electronic communication*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press. (two reviewers)

McLuhan, M. (1960) Effects of the Improvements of Communication Media, *The Journal of Economic History*, 20 (4), 566-575.

The post industrialists

Hayak, F. A. (1945) *The Use of Knowledge in Society*, *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 519-530.

Machlup, F. (1962) *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the US Economy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. Chapters 1 and 2

Drucker, P. (1993) *Post-Capitalist Society*, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann. pp 1-42 (Introduction and Chapter 1)

Duff, A. S. (1998) Daniel Bell's theory of the information society, *Journal of Information Science*, 24 (6), 373–393.

Lamberton, D. (1984) The economics of information and organization, *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, 19, 3–30.

The regulators

Melody, W. H. (1985) The Information Society: Implications for Economic Institutions and Market Theory, *Journal of Economic Issues*, 19 (2) 523-539.

Melody, W. H. (1987) Information: An emerging dimension of institutional analysis, *Journal of Economic Issues*, 21 (3), 1313-1339.

Trebing, H. J. (1969) Government Regulation and Modern Capitalism, *Journal of Economic Issues*, 3 (1), 87-109

Gabel, R. (1969) The Early Competitive Era in Telephone Communication, 1893-1920, *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 34 (2), Communications: Part 1, 340-359.

Babe, R. E. (1990) *Telecommunication in Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Chapter 1, Mythologies of Canadian Telecommunications.

The media industry perspective

Schiller, H. (1991) *Culture, Inc.: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression*, Oxford: OUP. Chapter 7 Thinking About Media Power. Who Holds It? A Changing View.

Murdock, G. (1982), Large corporations and the control of the communications industries, in M. Gurevitch et al. (1982) *Culture Society and the Media*, New York: Methuen.

Mosco, V. (1983) Critical research and the role of labor, *Journal of Communication*, 33 (3), 237-248.

Mosco, V. and A. Herman (1981) Critical Theory and Electronic Media, *Theory and Society*, 10 (6), 869-896.

Wasko, J. (1982) *Movies and Money: Financing the American Film Industry*, Norwood NJ: Ablex. Chapters 1 and 2

The production of culture perspective

Williams, R. (2005/1974) *Television*, London: Routledge. (two reviewers)

Garnham, N. (2001) Reaching for my revolver: Problems with the concept of culture, *European Review*, 9 (4), 413–420.

Garnham, N. (1979) Contribution to a political economy of mass communication, *Media, Culture and Society*, 1 (2), 123-146.

Schiller, H. (1991) *Culture, Inc.: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression*, Oxford: OUP. Chapter 2 The Corporation and the production of culture.

Political economy and the new media

Mansell, R. (2010) The life and times of the Information Society, *Prometheus*, 28 (2), 165-186.

Mansell, R. (2010) New visions, old practices: Policy and regulation in the Internet era, *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 25 (1), 19–32.

Garnham, N. (2011) The Political Economy of Communication Revisited, in J. Wasko et al. (eds.), *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 41-61.

Gordon, R. J. (2000) Does the 'new economy' measure up to the great inventions of the past?, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 14 (4), 49-74.

Castells, M. (2007) Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society, *International Journal of Communication* 1, 238-266.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Except for purposes of direct relevance to the conduct of the seminar – e.g. note taking and reference to course materials, assignments and readings – the use of electronic devices in class is not permitted. Upon prior notification, exceptions may be granted in the case of expected important or emergency communications.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assignments	Due
30%	Panel expositions and discussions (2 @ 15% each)	As scheduled
10%	Term paper abstract (ca 3 pages with bibliography)	Oct 30
30%	Critical journals (2 @ 15% each) (each 5-6 pages)	Oct.16 and Nov. 20
30%	Term paper (10-12 pages excluding bibliography)	Dec. 4

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO

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

Panel expositions and discussions:

- 30% of final grade
- scheduled throughout the Term
- two seminar assignments per student (15% each)

In the first half of the session, each student in the panel for that day will give a 10-15 minute critical exposition of one of the 4-5 readings assigned for that day. Each exposition should be structured around “five key ideas” which the student must extract from the paper. The student will be expected to explain and comment critically on each of these five ideas. The second half of the seminar will involve the panel in a discussion/debate in which the ideas they presented in their expositions are explored with respect to a set of questions or issues as provided by the instructor. The assignment will be assessed on the basis of the relevance, coherence and clarity of the five key ideas extracted from the paper and the ability of the student to incorporate these ideas into debate.

Where excused for legitimate reasons, students unable to present scheduled panel discussions will be afforded one of two “make up” options: (1) present as part of a subsequent panel or (2) engage in a scheduled discussion with the instructor.

Term Paper abstract:

- 10% of final grade
- Due November 4 (may be submitted for comment any time before this deadline)

Abstracts must state the topic and approach and include an indicative bibliography.

Critical journals:

- 30% of final grade
- two submissions per student (15% each)
- Journal One due October 16
- Journal Two due November 20

Each student will prepare two critical journals based upon a selection of their own choice from the assigned readings. The student must select 3 readings for each journal (excluding the readings worked up for the seminar presentations). In ca 1.5- 2 pages per reading, similarly to the seminar expositions, students will outline key concepts and issues that arise from the papers. Journals should comment critically on the readings – discussing possible origins, strengths and weaknesses, agreements and disagreements, consequences and so forth. Journals will be assessed on the strength of this commentary.

Term Paper:

- Due 4 December in class

Term papers provide the student with the opportunity to apply some of the ideas about the political economy of communication that were explored in the seminars to specific topics and issues of their own choosing. Papers should demonstrate how the concepts and approaches taken by political economists could be used to interpret, analyze and contribute to solutions regarding a significant problem in the contemporary communications milieu as chosen by the student. Students may elect to investigate these issues from an overall political economy perspective, or from the perspective of an individual scholar or school of thought.

IMPORTANT: The seminar method requires active participation by all students in all sessions throughout the Term. This is not an option. A check-in sheet will be distributed each week. Except for legitimate reasons – illness, emergencies or special circumstances of which the instructor is notified – participants who are absent for more than three sessions will lose 10% of their final grade.

Submission of Assignments: 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. If extenuating circumstances, assignments may be submitted to the instructor by email, provided the instructor is notified and permission is granted beforehand.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

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.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Final grades are reported as letter grades.

Grades for panels, abstracts and journals will be reported as whole point scores (e.g. 7/10, 14/15 etc.)

Term paper grades will be reported as decimalized point scores (20.5/30).

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* *
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

** These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

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. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. Research and citation resources are also available on the website of the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/> If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

Academic Misconduct

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

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

This course does not require research with human subjects.

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calgary Police Service• Emergency Text Messaging• Emergency Evacuation & Assembly• Safewalk Program	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/

DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App 	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 403-266-HELP (4357) http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

	Date	Topic	Readings
1	Tu Sept 11	Course Introduction and organization	N/A
2	Tu Sept 18	The roots of communication studies in classical political economy	Fleischacker, Ruskin, Giddens, Veblen (1), Veblen (2)
3	Tu Sept 25	Persuasion, propaganda and mass culture	Adorno & Horkheimer, Bernays, Smythe, Leiss
4	Tu Oct 2	The communication infrastructure, economic power and dependency	Innis (1), Innis (2) Smythe, McLuhan
5	Tu Oct 9	The post industrialists	Hayak, Machlup, Drucker, Duff, Lamberton
6	Tu Oct 16	Mid-term check-up (scheduled group appointments) Journal One due (Weeks 2-5)	
7	Tu Oct 23	The regulators	Melody (1), Melody (2) Trebing, Gabel, Babe
8	Tu Oct 30	The media industry perspective Term Paper abstract due	Schiller (1), Murdock, Mosco (1), Mosco (2), Wasko
9	Tu Nov 6	The production of culture perspective	Williams, Garnham (1), Garnham (2), Schiller (2)
10	Nov 11 – 17 Reading Week		
11	Tu Nov 20	Political economy and the new media Journal Two (Weeks 6-11) due	Mansell (1), Mansell (2), Garnham (3), Gordon, Castells
12	Tu Nov 27	Review (whole class) and Term Paper check-up (scheduled appointments)	
13	Tu Dec 4	Wrap up-what we learned Term Papers due	