



IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

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COM271 Media, Culture & Communication Spring 2016

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Email: schandorf@gmail.com
Office Hours: After class & by appointment

Class Time: 4:15 – 6:45, M
Class Location: Corboy Law Center - Room 602

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines contemporary U.S. American media and culture from a critical-theoretical standpoint while examining popular social practices with particular attention to their influence on individual and collective identities. Outcome: Students will learn critical cultural theories and reflect upon the influences of contemporary cultural texts and practices with an eye for their economic, social, and political influence on individual and collective identities.

TEXTBOOKS

All reading materials will be provided on Sakai, or otherwise, as needed.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

Media, Culture & Communication is a seminar/workshop-style class. There is nothing to memorize. There are no quizzes. There are no tests: no midterm, no final exam. Your performance will not be evaluated, and your grade in this course will not be based, on your ability to regurgitate arbitrary facts or definitions from the course materials and lectures. (There will be very little “lecturing,” in any case.)

Your grade will ultimately be based on the effort you demonstrate in engaging with the ideas we will be confronting this semester. Your engagement and contribution will have a decisive impact on the success of the course as a whole. This means three things: 1) you must attend class, 2) you must be prepared, and 3) you must actively participate both in class and online. Individual grades will be computed as follows:

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| Participation (in class): | 20% |
| Participation (online): | 15% |
| Weekly Response Blog | 20% |
| Group Discussion Leads | 15% |
| Supplemental Reading Presentations | 15% |
| Final Project | 15% |

Grades will **not** be posted on Sakai. Your grades will be returned to you with comments on your weekly reading responses. You can keep up with your progress using the grade distribution above.

READING (AND READING...)

We will be reading quite a lot this semester (but it's not anywhere near as bad as it looks). The schedule of weekly readings is divided into three parts for each week: key texts (which everyone reads), group texts (presented by small groups), and presentation texts (to be presented by individual students). **You are expected and required to read and respond to the key texts and at least one other provided text each week.** Those in groups or giving in-class presentations are strongly encouraged to make use of the group texts and the presentation reading options as well as the required key texts. I *do not* expect you to read *all* of the materials provided for the course (I'm not sure even I will be able to do that). I *do* expect you to demonstrate an effort at understanding, which means at least in part, exploring the readings provided and making connections among them, including material from earlier weeks as we move through the semester, as well as with other material you find on your own and your previous knowledge and experience. It also, of course, means demonstrating a familiarity with the ideas in the readings in discussions (both in class and online). The material in this class can sometimes be dense difficult. The dictionary and Wikipedia (and Hartley's *Communication, Cultural Studies, & the Media: Key Concepts*) will be your friends. Use them.

PARTICIPATION

In order to participate in class discussions, you must attend class. **Absences and tardiness will negatively and significantly affect your participation grade.** Sitting quietly in class and hoping others do the talking is not an option. **Silence and reticence will negatively affect your participation grade.** Do not be afraid to say something "dumb." We are going to be reading materials that will sometimes be entirely alien. The only way to get a grip on them will be to confront them openly together as a class. Go ahead and say something "dumb" – it probably won't be as dumb as you think (and you'll probably find that you're not the only one thinking it), and at the very least you may bring up interesting questions. At the same time, do not assume that you "get it." If it seems easy or simple, you're probably missing something. Try to figure out what you're missing. Talk to each other. Ask questions.

Your participation, both in class and online, will be evaluated in terms of **activity, depth, and consistency.** You will also be given credit for adding or integrating your class notes onto the wiki, and for editing reading outlines on the wiki—so integrating your class notes is an easy way to earn credit and help everyone out at the same time. Though I expect to see each student contributing online on a weekly basis, there are no hard-and-fast quantifiable measures that I am looking for: no minimum/maximum number of expected posts or comments, no checklist of who speaks and who doesn't in each class, no maximum

number of absences. That's too easy. This class is not a game, not a competition. There is no score. Your job is to read, think, engage, and learn. Do *that*, and your grade will take care of itself.

The online discussions should be an ongoing process of engagement rather than just a weekly burst of activity after class. Ignoring others' reading responses and comments (failing to respond to comments) and a general lack of online interaction will doom your online participation grade. Do not expect to whip up a flurry of comments and activity in the last or two week of the semester in order to "make your points."

Try not to think of the in-class and online discussions as separate events. Let them reference and engage with one another in an ongoing dialogue.

When someone comments on one of your posts, *reply to them*.

READING RESPONSE BLOG

Each week (no later than Wednesday) you will be expected to post a response to the week's key text(s), at least one other reading, and the class discussion on our class blog (at www.persuasioning.wordpress.com/). You will need to sign up for a WordPress account, if you don't have one already. Send me your WordPress username or the email you used to register/sign in to WordPress, and I will add you as an Author to our class blog.

While there is no minimum required length for your responses, **each week's reading response should do four things:**

- 1) Demonstrate that you've read the week's key text and at least one other reading,
- 2) Demonstrate that you've thought about both the reading and the class discussion,
- 3) Make connections among the ideas in the week's readings and among previous weeks' materials,
and
- 4) Reference (and link to) at least one other classmate's post.

Your reading response should be a well-considered, (loosely) essay-style discussion of the week's material that adds to the class discussion and promotes further discussion. As we move through the semester, your responses should make connections among readings, ideas, and discussions from previous weeks. Your reading responses should demonstrate your active efforts to make connections and to question the ideas presented in the readings and class discussions. Your understanding of the material will be demonstrated in your application of the ideas presented to your own knowledge and experience.

Remember that everyone in the class will be reading the key texts: **your reading response should NOT be a summary of the readings**. A summary tells us (at most) that you read; it doesn't tell us that you've thought about what you read or anything about *what you think*.

You are not required or expected to read *all* of the weekly responses by *all* of your classmates. You are, however, expected to pay attention to what your classmates are saying and to engage one another by questioning, answering, and/or reinforcing each other's ideas and concerns on a regular basis throughout the week. If someone comments on your post, *respond to them*.

GROUP TEXT DISCUSSION LEAD

By the second week of the semester, students will sign up on the Sakai wiki for **4 separate weeks** to be responsible for presenting in class (with 2-3 group members) one of the group texts and for providing an outline of that reading on a separate dedicated page of the Sakai wiki. Each group text will be presented to the class in an semi-formal overview that

- 1) identifies the author(s)
- 2) identifies the main argument(s) and points of the reading,
- 3) attempts to articulate what the article is trying to do and how,
- 4) attempts to position the reading in relation to the other readings of that week, and
- 5) provides a couple of initial discussion questions.

Each overview, in other words, should explain what the reading says, what it does, and how it does it, and then position it in relation to the other readings in order to facilitate class discussion. How this is accomplished is up to the presenting group. **An outline of the reading(s) is to be posted on the Sakai wiki before class**, but the presentation *cannot simply be a reading of the outline*.

Outlines should be complete enough to function as study guides. In composing the outline, pay attention to the organization and structure of the argument being presented and try to present the main points of that argument succinctly. Sakai does not get along well with MSWord. Please do not simply cut-and-paste *anything* from MSWord into the Sakai wiki without properly formatting it so that it is readable. Remember that the outlines are on a wiki: anyone can contribute, emend, or improve once the initial responsibility of posting the outline has been completed. Such contributions will count toward your online participation grade. Work together. Have fun. This is not a competition

No student should have more than one class responsibility each week, i.e. don't sign up for a group and a supplemental presentation in the same week.

READING PRESENTATION

By the second week of the semester, each student will sign up to present (in separate weeks) **three** of presentation readings (in the right-hand column of the reading schedule) in class. There are no tests or midterms in this course. Instead, consider the presentations to constitute your "midterm" grade.

Your job is to teach your chosen reading to the class. In informal presentations of no more than 15 minutes and an outline posted on the Sakai wiki (same requirements as for group text outlines), you will be expected to:

- 1) identify the author(s),
- 2) succinctly present and explain the main argument and points of the reading,
- 3) succinctly explain what the reading does and how it does it, and
- 4) position the reading in relation to the week's other materials as well as to previous ideas and perspectives covered in class.

Do not just read your outline. Find the best way to present the argument of the reading to the rest of the class. Simply going linearly through the reading itself may not be (is *most likely not*) the best or clearest way to present the ideas of the reading and what it accomplishes. Presenters are encouraged to bring their readings into online discussions and supplement continuing discussion with the additional ideas and material.

FINAL PROJECTS

Final projects will be developed according to student interests. The final project will largely be of your own design. We'll talk about it after spring break as we get closer to the end of the semester.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are responsible for reading and abiding by the University principles regarding academic integrity. Make sure to document all of your work and acknowledge the ideas and the work of others. Citations are how you join the academic conversation; they are how you help your reader find out *more*.

READING SCHEDULE

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| <p>2. Communication & Media (Feb 1)</p> <p>Key Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Danesi (2002), The mediated world (ch 1 in <i>Understanding Media Semiotics</i>) (27) <p>Group Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carey (1989), A cultural approach to communication (14)• Peters (2006), Media as conversation, conversation as media (in Curran & Morley, <i>Media & Cultural Theory</i>) (12) | <p>Presentation Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bengtsson (2011), Imagined user modes• Niman (2013), The allure of games• Burroughs (2014), Facebook & Farmville• Mason (2014), Video games, theater, & the paradox of fiction• Storey & McDonald (2014), The uses of media in romantic relationships |
| <p>3. Communication & “the” Media (Feb 8)</p> <p>Key Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grossberg et al (1998), <i>Mediamaking</i>, ch 1: Media in Context (29) <p>Group Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adorno & Horkheimer (1969), The culture industry (in <i>During</i>) (14)• Debord (1977), The commodity as spectacle (in Durham & Kellner) (5)• Freedman (2006), Internet transformations (in Curran & Morely, <i>Media & Cultural Theory</i>) (13) | <p>Presentation Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potter (2011), It’s a small world after all• Freedman (2014), Paradigms of media power• Rowe (2014), Media & culture |

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| <p>4. Semiotics (Feb 15)</p> <p>Key Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Berger (2010), <i>The Objects of Affection</i> (ch 1: The Science of Signs) (27) <p>Group Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Danesi (2010), Semiotics of media & culture (in Copley, <i>Routledge Companion to Semiotics</i>) (15) Hall (1980), Encoding/Decoding (in Durham & Kellner) | <p>Presentation Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chmielewska (2010), Semiosis takes place or radical uses of quaint theories (in Jaworski & Thurlow, <i>Semiotic Landscapes</i>) Chuang & Roemer (2014), Shifting signifiers of otherness Forceville (2014), The strategic use of the visual mode in advertising metaphors (in Djonov & Zhao, <i>Critical Multimodal Studies of Popular Discourse</i>) van Leeuwen (2014), Toward a semiotics of listening (in Djonov & Zhao, <i>Critical Multimodal Studies of Popular Discourse</i>) Zhao (2014), Selling the 'indie taste' (in Djonov & Zhao, <i>Critical Multimodal Studies of Popular Discourse</i>) |
| <p>5. Mediated Reality (Feb 22)</p> <p>Key Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grossberg et al (1998), <i>Mediamaking</i>, ch 6: Interpretation of Meaning (29) <p>Group Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> McLuhan (1964), The medium is the message (in Durham & Kellner) (10) Thussu (2011), Infotainment Inc. (in Papathanassopoulos <i>Media Perspective for the 21st Century</i>) (15) Deuze (2011), Media life (in Papathanassopoulos <i>Media Perspective for the 21st Century</i>) (12) | <p>Presentation Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DeLuca (1999), Participatory democracy in enemy territory (Ch 5 in <i>Image Politics</i>) Phalen et al (2012), Imagined presidencies Reilly (2012), Satirical news and/as American political discourse Jacobs & Wild (2013), A cultural sociology of <i>The Daily Show & The Colbert Report</i> Olson (2013), An epideictic dimension of symbolic violence in Disney's <i>Beauty & the Beast</i> Hong (2015), When life mattered |
| <p>6. Ideology (Feb 29)</p> <p>Key Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Althusser (1971), Ideology & ideological state apparatuses (in Durham & Kellner) (8) <p>Group Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grossberg et al (1998), <i>Mediamaking</i>, ch 7: Ideology (24) Danesi (2008), Logo power (ch 3 in <i>X-Rated</i>) (23) | <p>Presentation Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driessens (2012), The celebritization of society & culture Holland (2012), It's complicated Cassar (2013), Gramsci & games Pineda & Jimenez-Varea (2013), Popular culture, ideology & the comics industry van Elteren (2013), Celebrity culture performative politics & the spectacle of 'democracy' in America Gill & Elias (2014), 'Awaken your incredible' Ruckenstein (2015), Playing Ninendogs |
| <p>Spring Break</p> | |
| <p>7. Consumer Culture 1: Advertising (Mar 14)</p> <p>Key Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DuGay (1997), <i>Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman</i> (100) <p>Group Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Williams (1977), Advertising: The magic system (in During) (15) McAllister (2011), Consumer culture & new media (in Papathanassopoulos <i>Media Perspective for the 21st Century</i>) (12) | <p>Presentation Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milstein & Dickinson (2012), Gynocentric greenwashing O'Neill et al (2014), Advertising real beer Jameson (2015), Televisual senses Lebduska (2015), Ivory soap & American popular consciousness |

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| <p>8. Consumer Culture 2: Consumerism (Mar 21)</p> <p>Key Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berger (2010), <i>The Objects of Affection</i> (ch 2: Consumer Cultures) (21) <p>Group Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danesi (2008), Spectacle-power (ch 6 in <i>X-Rated</i>) (21) • Nova (1991), Consumerism reconsidered (<i>Cultural Studies</i> 5.2) (15) | <p>Presentation Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cox & Proffitt (2012), The housewives' guide to better living • Woodstock (2014), Tattoo Therapy • Baber & Spickard (2015), Crafting culture • Shugart (2014), Flesh made word • Freeman (2015), Branding consumerism • Nayar (2015), You did(n't) build that |
| <p>9. Visual Cultures (Mar 28)</p> <p>Key Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McCloud (1994), <i>Understanding Comics</i> <p>Group Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dyer (1977), Entertainment & utopia (in <i>During</i>) (11) • Jenkins (1992), Television fans, poachers, & nomads (in Gelder & Thornton) (17) | <p>Presentation Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frow (2012), Avatar, identification, pornography • Kelly (2012), Dead bodies that matter • Brown (2014), Big losers • Fernandez (2014), The somatope • Miller & Van Riper (2015), Marketing, monsters & music • Wayne (2015), Guilty pleasures & cultural legitimation |
| <p>10. (Sub)Cultures (Apr 4)</p> <p>Key Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hebdige (1979), From culture to hegemony & Subculture: The unnatural break (in Durham & Kellner) (15) <p>Group Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frith (1980), Formalism, realism, & leisure (12) & Thornton (1995), The social logic of subcultural capital (in Gelder & Thornton) (8) | <p>Presentation Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebollo-Gil & Moras (2012), Black men & black women in hip hop music • Roberts (2012), Secret ink • Sigler & Balagi (2013), Regional identity in hip-hop music • Chapman (2014), The punk show • Robertson (2014), Of ponies & men • Sunden (2015), Clockwork corsets • Roberts (2016), Subcultural boundary maintenance in a virtual community |
| <p>11. Mediated Identity (Apr 11)</p> <p>Key Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grossberg et al, <i>Mediamaking</i>, ch 8: Producing Identities (29) <p>Group Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bauman (1996), From pilgrim to tourist (in Hall & DuGay, <i>Questions of Cultural Identity</i>) (19) | <p>Presentation Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kavoori & Joseph (2011), Bollywood • Zemmels (2012), Youth & new media • Bryan (2013), Yeoman & barbarians • Ng (2013), A post-gay era? • Jane (2014), Beyond anti-fandom • Ahad (2015), Imagining communities in <i>Dave Chappelle's Block Party</i> • Leavitt et al (2015), Frozen in time |

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| <p>12. Race & Ethnicity in the Media (Apr 18)</p> <p>Key Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hall (1981), The whites of their eyes • Nakamura (2010) Race & identity in digital media (in Curran, <i>Media & Society</i>) (10) <p>Group Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown (1997), Basketball, Rodney King, Simi Valley (in Hill, <i>Whiteness: A Critical Reader</i>) (13) • Lott (1993), Racial cross-dressing & the construction of American whiteness (in During) (14) | <p>Presentation Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newitz & Wray (1997), What is “white trash”? (in Hill, <i>Whiteness: A Critical Reader</i>) • Nakamura (2007), Allooksame? (ch 2 in <i>Digitizing Race</i>) • Dubrofsky (2013), Jewishness, Whiteness, & Blackness on <i>Glee</i> • Russell (2013), Don’t it make my black face blue • Johnson (2014), Figuring identity • Melancon (2014), Reading race & the difference it makes • Sastre (2014), The ‘Guido’ situation • Barbour (2015), When Captain America was an Indian • Hunt (2015), Off the record • Landenburg (2015), Illuminating whiteness & racial prejudice with humor in <i>It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia</i> |
| <p>13. Digital Cultures (Apr 25)</p> <p>Key Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jenkins et al (2013), What constitutes meaningful participation? (Ch 4 in <i>Spreadable Media</i>) (42) <p>Group Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poster (1995), Postmodern virtualities (in Durham & Kellner) (14) • Fisher (2015), You media | <p>Presentation Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goriunova (2012), New media idiocy • Nikitina (2012), Hackers as tricksters of the digital age • Bertozzi (2014), The feeling of being hunted • Chess (2014), Strange bedfellows • Schulzke (2014), The critical power of virtual dystopias • Bunds et al (2015), Bank shots • Burgess (2015), From ‘broadcast yourself’ to ‘follow your interests’ • Chess & Shaw (2015), A conspiracy of fishes • Fleischer (2015), Towards a postdigital sensibility • Goodman (2015), Disappointing fans • Kervin et al (2015), Collaborative onscreen & offscreen play |
| <p>14. Mediated Past, Mediated Futures (May 2)</p> <p>Key Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landsberg (1995), Prosthetic memory • Brockmeier (2010), After the archive <p>Group Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoskins (2004), Television & the collapse of memory • Haskins (2007), Between archive & participation | <p>Presentation Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhodes & Westwood (2008), Commerce is our goal (ch 5 in <i>Critical Representations of Work & Organization in Popular Culture</i>) • Slotkin (2012), Haunted infocosms & prosthetic gods • Corona (2013), Memory, monsters & Lady Gaga • Scolari (2013), Roots, representation, & resistance? • Shahani (2013), The queer politics of nostalgia • Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2013), Bridging collective memories & public agendas • Kaplan (2014), Hoarding memories • Lohmeier & Pentzold (2014), Making mediated memory work • Reading (2014), Seeing red • Kinsley (2015), Memory programmes • Swann (2015), The once and future earth |