

Communications Studies COMS 371 L20
Critical Media Studies
Spring 2011
Tuesdays and Thursdays 14:00-16:45 SA 119

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 16:45 to 17:45 or by appointment

Course Description

This course emphasizes major critical approaches in the field of communication studies with the intent of introducing students to the theoretical foundations of media 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 communications and media.

Areas to be covered include: the problem of communication (Carey), the culture industry (Adorno, the Frankfurt School), semiotics (Saussure and Barthes), psychoanalysis (Freud and Lacan), cultural studies (Hall, Williams), power (Foucault, Said), identity (Fanon, Mulvey), consumption (De Certeau, Hebdige), postmodernism (Lyotard and Baudrillard) and sexual identity (Rubin).

Objectives of the Course

To offer students a first approach to the theoretical foundations of critical media research.

To encourage students to develop critical awareness before media strategies and contents.

To help students develop analytical skills necessary for communication research.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops are permitted in class as long as they are used EXCLUSIVELY for note taking. Cell phones should be turned off during class.

The use of electronic devices for extracurricular activities during class will have a direct impact on the participation mark.

Textbooks and Readings:

Badmington, Neil and Julia Thomas (Eds.) *The Routledge Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*. New York; Routledge, 2008.

Additional MANDATORY reserved readings found in the library:

Carey, James. "Reconceiving 'Mass' and 'Media'." In *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, edited by James Carey, 69-88. New York: Routledge, 1989.

Adorno, Theodor. "Culture Industry Reconsidered." In *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, edited by J. M. Bernstein, 98-107. London: Routledge, 1991.

Hebdige, Dick. "Subculture: The Unnatural Break." In *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*, edited by Douglas Kellner and Meenakshi Gigi Durham, 207-212. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

Assignments and Evaluation

Group presentation and abstract (20%)

Students will select a theory, apply it to a communication or media event, and organize and deliver a presentation. This presentation will be accompanied by a short summary or abstract. Presentations are due the class that follows the class in which the theory is discussed. Students will form groups and choose the theory they will work on the first day of class.

Additional instructions will be posted on blackboard,

Short paper: Individual theoretical analysis of a media or cultural event (20%)

This mandatory short paper is independent from the presentation. Its due date is determined by the students based on their selection of the theories they want to address. For example, if a student decides to write the paper as a response to cultural studies, which will be discussed in class on May 26th, the paper will be due the following class, in this case May 31st.

Short papers should apply any theory discussed in class except for the theory that the student will engage with as part of his or her group presentation activity.

Additional instructions will be posted on blackboard,

"Foundations" Quiz: May 31st (20%)

This test will concentrate on the "theoretical foundations" studied from May 12 to May 26th. The format will be short answers and definitions.

Final Exam: TBA (35%)

The final exam will include three sections: definitions, short answers and analysis. The exam will be cumulative though emphasis will be placed on the theories studied after the “Foundations” quiz.

Participation (5%)

This mark will be based on attendance and in-class participation.

Assignment guidelines will be handed in the first day of class.

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.

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://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

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 4th floor, 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>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment
05/12	The Problem of Communication	Carey (in reserve)	
THEORETICAL	FOUNDATIONS		
05/17	The Culture Industry	Adorno (in reserve) Benjamin (B&T, pp.34-56) ¹ Marx (B&T, pp. 6-9)	
05/19	Semiotics	Saussure (B&T, pp. 16-24) Barthes (B&T, 121-125)	Student presentations Short paper
05/24	Psychoanalysis	Freud (B&T, pp. 10-15) Lacan (B&T, pp. 57-62)	Student presentations Short paper
05/26	Cultural Studies	Williams (B&T, pp. 82-94)\ Hall (B&T, pp. 234-244)	Student presentations Short paper
05/31	“Foundations” Quiz		Student presentations Short paper
06/02	READING DAY		
CRITICAL	THEMES		
06/07	Power	Foucault (B&T, pp. 178-201) Said (B&T, pp. 213-233)	
06/09	Identity	Fanon (B&T, pp. 63-81) Mulvey (B&T, pp. 202-212)	Student presentations Short paper
06/14	Resistance	De Certeau (B&T, pp. 149-165) Hebdige (reserves)	Student presentations Short paper
06/16	Postmodernity	Baudrillard (B&T,	Student

¹ “B&T” = Badmington, Neil and Julia Thomas (Eds.) *The Routledge Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*.

		pp. 267-271) Lyotard (272-280)	presentations Short paper
06/21	Sex	Rubin (B&T, pp. 281-323)	Student presentations Short paper
06/23	Final Review		Student presentations Short paper