University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film
COMS 371 (L01): Critical Media Studies
SPRING 2023: May 4 to June 15
Lecture/Laboratory: TuTh 9:00AM to 11:50AM

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Office Hours:	Friday 9:30-11:30 (Zoom or in person) 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.

Additional Information
The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L.

Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

Objectives of the Course
By the end of this course, students should be able to:
- understand the theoretical foundations of critical media theory.
- identify best practices that foster critical reading of academic texts.
- apply critical theory to better understand everyday media and cultural phenomena.
- analyse media and cultural phenomena to understand its ideological effects.
- critically reflect on their own media consumption and production practices.

Textbooks and Readings
Barthes, R. (1977). The death of the author. In *Image, Music, Text*, (pp. 142-148). Hill & Wang. (D2L)

Butler, J. (2009). Performativity, precarity and sexual politics. *Revista de antropología iberoamericana*, 4(3), pp. I–XIII, https://ucalgary.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01UCALG_INST/15o3ob6/cdi_doaj_primary_oai_doaj_org_article_cf619f93b7b24d80abe0bc2fabdd941d

Durham, M. & Kellner, D. (2012). *Media and cultural studies: Keyworks.* 2nd edition. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Foucault, M. (1979). Panopticism. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (pp. 201-232). Vintage

Books. https://ucalgary.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01UCALG_INST/1rf6mu5/alma991017477579704336

McRobbie, A. (2007). Postfeminism and popular culture. Bridget Jones and the new gender regime. In Negra, D., & Tasker, Y. (Eds.). (2007). *Interrogating postfeminism : Gender and the politics of popular culture*. Duke University Press. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/lib/ucalgary-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1170497&ppg=36

Learning Technologies and Requirements

In order to complete courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external), and a microphone and speaker (built-in or external) or headset with microphone (for online synchronous courses only).

If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact IT support services. See https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html

Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

The use of smartphones or other electronic devices is strictly limited to activities connected with the class.

Please familiarize yourself with the University's policy on the recording of lectures, which is outlined at https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-6.html, and carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
30%	**Reflective photo journal: individual, max. 5 images and 1000 words** The journal consists of five entries, each introduces an original photo produced by the student, and a brief rationale (max. 200 words per entry) that explains how the photo captures the connection between critical theory and everyday life. Students are encouraged to use technology already available to them. The goal of the assignment is to assess students' comprehension of critical theory and analytical skills and not the technical or aesthetic quality of the images produced.	May 24th[1] by 11:59PM (D2L dropbox submission)

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[1] Note that deadlines are scheduled outside class time to allow students extra preparation time.

30%	**Demonstration of critical reading skills: individual**	**Part 1 & 2** due May 12th by 11:59PM (D2L dropbox submission)

	Students will design an assignment that demonstrates their understanding of what constitutes critical reading in the context of the class. To this end students will:
	   a. Research and develop a definition of critical reading,
	   b. Develop an assignment that will measure their critical reading skills in relation to the readings assigned in COMS 371,
	   c. Provide a rationale to justify the assignment they developed as a measure of critical reading skills.
	   d. Complete the assignment to demonstrate their critical reading skills.
	   e. Assess their own critical reading skills based on the experience of having completed the assignment.
	
	 The activity will have three parts:
	   1. The development of an assignment to measure critical reading skills in the context of COMS 371. (part 1)
	   2. The writing of a rationale that justifies the assignment as a measure of critical reading skills. (part 2)
	   3. The completion of the assignment and a 500-word assessment of their own critical reading skills based on the experience of having completed the assignment. (part 3)
	 Note that this assignment follows the principles of "ungrading" (Blum, 2020) and will not receive a standard letter or numerical grade. The evaluation will follow a rubric that stresses engagement and completion (i.e. a student who exceeds the expectations for each part will receive a 30/30 or A+).
	 Further instructions will be posted on D2L.
		Part 3 due June 7th by 11:59PM (D2L dropbox submission)

40%	**Performing critical media theory: individual**
	 This assignment requires students to plan, experience, analyze and reflect on their own media and cultural consumption/production practices. To this end, students will plan an experience that:
	   1. involves an everyday consumption/production practice (e.g. observing, participating in, consuming, analyzing, evaluating and/or producing cultural phenomena)
	   2. will turn the original consumption/production practice into a CRITICAL practice.
	
	 The project has three main parts:
	   a. the description of the experience (800 words max. – could also be multimedia or visual- consult with instructor- 15%).
	   b. the justification of the experience as "critical." This justification will require the engagement of at least three theories studied in the second half of the term. (1500 words max. 15%)
	   c. a written critical reflection to identify the main learning associated with the experience. (approx. 700 words, 10%)
	
	 Further instructions will be posted ion D2L.
		June 16TH by 11:59PM (D2L dropbox submission)

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

<mark>**Note:** You do not have to complete all the assignments and exams in order to receive a passing grade in this course.</mark>

Submission of Assignments
Please submit all assignments, except for the final research art project which will be presented in class, by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox. Include your name and ID number on all assignments. Be sure to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to submit the proper version.

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recording for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments
Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. An assignment received two days after the deadline will receive an automatic 0.

*The Day of Grace: One day of grace is available to all students to cover unforeseen problems that prevent them from meeting a deadline such as computer crashes, vehicle breakdowns, lack of printer ink or money, unexpected family obligations, etc. Students may use this day ONLY ONCE during the semester. **Students using this day of grace must upload the assignment by 11:59 pm the next calendar day** to avoid a late penalty and write "grace" on their subject line. It should be noted that assignments handed in this manner may be returned 1-2 classes later than those submitted on the due date.

Student Accommodations
Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. For the full policy on Student Accommodations, see https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-accommodation-policy

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors.

Expectations for Writing
Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses 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 and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale
The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department. of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, final grades are reported as letter grades. All assignments will receive a percentage grade.

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%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages, A.I. content generators, or visual media.

Students must adhere to the instructor's course policy regarding the use of A.I. generated content in course work. Unsanctioned use of A.I. generated content in course work may be reported as academic misconduct.

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.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation
Course materials created by the instructor (including lectures, course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed, or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

To ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes & electronic versions of textbooks), all students are required to read the *University of Calgary Policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright* at https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy and the requirements of the *Copyright Act* (https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html). Students who use material protected by copy-right in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

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, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferral of term work, see https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see
https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html

Student Support Services and Resources

Please see https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk. For resources on D2L, Zoom, Yuja, etc., see https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/resources-for-students/. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

	Tuesdays Tu/Th 9:00 to 11:50 (TI 140/148)	**Thursdays** Tu/Th 9:00 to 11:50 (TI 140/148)
Week 1 May 4		**Topic:** Introduction to the class and assignments/ Marxism and Hegemony (Williams) **Reading:** Chapter 11
Week 2 May 9 & 11	**Topic:** Frankfurt School (Adorno and Horkheimer)/ Critical Reading **Reading**: Chapter 4 **Activity:** Demonstration of Critical Reading Skills planning	**Topic:** Semiotics, Structuralism and beyond (Barthes) **Readings**: Chapters 7/ Barthes (1977). The death of the author (pp. 142-148) **Assignment**: Demonstration of Critical Reading Skills part 1 & 2 due May 12 (dropbox)
Week 3 May 16 & 18	**Topic:** Cultural battles (Hebdige & Bourdieu) **Readings:** Chapters 12 & 20 **Activity:** Photo journal planning	**Topic:** Participatory Culture (Jenkins) **Reading:** Chapter 34 **Activity:** Q&A photo journal
Week 4 May 23 & 25	**Topic:** Power (Foucault) **Reading:** Foucault (1979), Panopticism, (pp.210-232) **Assignment:** Photo journal due May 24th (D2L)	**Topic:** Postmodernism (Baudrillard) **Readings:** Chapter 30 **Activity:** Discussion and planning of final project assignment.
Week 5 May 30 & June 1	**Topic:** The Public Sphere **Readings:** Chapter 5 **Activity:** Critical Reading assignment planning	**Topic:** Gender, Sexuality and Performativity **Reading:** Butler (2009). Performativity, precarity and sexual politics. **Activity:** Critical Reading assignment planning
Week 6 June 6 & 8	**Topic:** Feminism **Readings:** McRobbie (2007). Postfeminism and popular culture. **Activity:** Q&A critical reading assignment **Assignment:** Critical Reading assignment due June 7TH (D2L)	**Topic:** Race (hooks) **Reading:** Chapter 25 **Activity:** Final project planning
Week 7 June 13 & 15	**Q&A SESSION- FINAL PROJECT**	**Class cancelled- Time dedicated to final assignment completion- Office hours 10Am-1PM** Final assignment due June16th (D2L)