

**Communications Studies (COMS) 371 - L02**  
**Critical Media Studies**  
**Fall 2013**  
**Tuesday, 14:00 – 16:45**

**Instructor:** Dr. Delia Dumitrica  
**Office**  
**Location:** SS344  
**E-Mail:** dddumitr@ucalgary.ca  
**Office Hours:** Monday, 10:00 – 12:00 (or by appointment)

**Course Description**

This course emphasizes major critical approaches in Communications Studies with the intent of introducing students to the theoretical foundations of media and mass communication 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 communication and media. Areas to be covered include: the problem of ideology, the culture industry (the Frankfurt School), the Canadian school (McLuhan), structuralism and semiotics (Barthes), Cultural Studies (Hall), globalization studies (Appadurai), feminism, poststructuralism (Foucault) and postmodernism (Baudrillard).

**Additional Information**

- ⤴ This is a reading and writing intensive course.
- ⤴ The course assumes basic familiarity with communication theories (COMS 201).

**Objectives of the Course**

The goal of this course is to familiarize students with the major critical theories relevant to media studies. By the end of the course, you should:

- ⤴ Be able to recognize and contrast the major authors, concepts and ideas within the critical traditions;
- ⤴ Be able to apply them to analyze media texts and practices;
- ⤴ Develop a critical awareness of media texts and practices.

**Internet and electronic communication device information**

All cell phones should be silenced for the entire duration of the class. Laptops, smartphones and tablets can only be used for taking notes.

**Textbooks and Readings:**

Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Douglas Kellner (Eds.) (2005). *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*. Revised Edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

## Assignments and Evaluation

You will be graded on five components:

- Participation (10%)
- Group project (10%) – *December 3, 2013*
- 3 x Quizzes (30%) – *October 8, November 5 & December 3, 2013*
- Media analysis journal (20%) – *October 8 & November 26, 2013*
- Final project (30%)
  - Proposal (5%) – *November 19, 2013*
  - Final paper (25%) – *December 6, 2013*

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 instructor. 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.

### Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. Late assignments submitted five or more days after the deadline will not be accepted.

### Description of assignments

All assignments should follow the APA guidelines for in-text citation and references.

#### 1. Participation (10%)

You are expected to be present for all classes, read assigned texts prior to class, take detailed notes and actively participate in class discussions. Your participation grade will be assessed based on a combination of your substantial and consistent contribution to the discussion of the assigned readings, and your participation in small in-class activities.

#### 2. Group project (10%) – *December 3, 2013*

This assignment tests your ability to critique and challenge media texts. The group project consists of a culture jamming exercise. In groups of four, you will choose a media text (e.g., a print advertisement, a political campaign, a magazine cover, a television ad, a website), provide a critique of its message 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 to the class as either a poster or a multimedia presentation. Further details for this assignment will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.

### **3. Quizzes (30%) – October 8, November 5, and December 3, 2013**

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 questions. The quizzes are non-cumulative. For each missed quiz, you will receive zero points.

### **4. Media analysis journal (20%) – October 8 and November 26, 2013**

This assignment tests your understanding of the required readings and of the material covered in class, and your ability to apply them to an analysis of media texts and practices. The journal consists of 4 entries discussing 4 different theories and 4 different media texts or practices (e.g., television show, movie, commercial, magazine cover, newspaper article, etc.). Each entry will use one of the required readings to discuss the respective media text. Further details for this assignment will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.

Length: approx. 8 pages, double-spaced.

### **5. Final project (30%) - Proposal (5%) – November 19, 2013; Final paper (25%) – December 6, 2013**

This assignment tests your ability to make use of the theories discussed in this course to provide a substantial evaluation of media texts and practices. The proposal lists the question to be answered in your paper, the specific case to be discussed, and four references. The final paper makes use of one of the critical media theories discussed in this course to examine a specific media text or practice. Further details for this assignment will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.

Length:

- Proposal – 1 page, double-spaced.
- Final paper – approx. 15 pages, double-spaced.

### **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 (3<sup>rd</sup> 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**

A detailed schedule of lectures and readings will be provided in the first day of class and posted on Blackboard.