

**University of Calgary**  
**Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**COMS 371 (L01): Critical Media Studies**

**FALL 2022: September 6 to December 7 (excluding Sept. 30 and Nov. 6-12)**

**Lecture: TR 11:00 to 11:50**

Lab 1: F 9:00–9:50; Lab 2: F 10:00 –10:50

Lab 3: F 11:00-11:50; Lab 4: F 12:00-12:50

Lab 5: F 1:00-1:50; Lab 6: F 2:00-2:50

**This course is in-person in room MFH 162.**  
**Labs are located in room SS006.**

<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Samantha Thrift
<b>Office:</b>	SS 210
<b>Email:</b>	samantha.thrift@ucalgary.ca
<b>Web Page:</b>	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
<b>Office Hours:</b>	TR 12:00-12:30 (or by appt on Zoom)

**Course Description**

Emphasizes major critical approaches and theoretical foundations of media studies research. Explores the contexts in which these theories arose, identifies their major strengths and weaknesses and analyzes how critical theory engages the social world. Areas covered include the Frankfurt School, structuralism and semiotics, cultural studies, post-structuralism and feminist media studies.

Prerequisite: COMS 201

**Additional Information**

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found on D2L. Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

Please note that there are two online quizzes in this course. You will be allowed a window of 24 hours to access the online quizzes, but there is a 30-minute time limit for completing the each quiz once they are opened. This time limit includes a 10-minute allowance for technical difficulties.

**Respect and Diversity in the Classroom:** This course is built around student participation. Our classes will often contain opportunity for student contributions, and I welcome your insightful comments (based on course materials) and questions. During these discussion periods, I ask that students be respectful of diverse viewpoints; however, racist, sexist, trans/homophobic, Islamophobic, and other types of discriminatory comments are not permitted in the classroom. Comments of this nature will be dealt with at the professor's discretion on an individual basis.

On pronouns: I respect all students' preferred names and/or choice of pronouns. Please alert me to your pronoun and I am happy to oblige.

## **Objectives of the Course**

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Critically evaluate and discuss a range of theoretical and empirical approaches to media
- Understand the development of media studies theories in relation to their historical, social, and political context
- Articulate the relevance of power, agency, identity, and representation to media, communication, and culture
- Apply key critical theories to primary research examples and case studies
- Develop both verbal and written analytic skills needed for undergraduate study

## **Textbooks and Readings**

Readings will be supplied through D2L. Please note that required readings should be read prior to Tuesday's class each week.

## **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**

Laptops, tablets, and mobile phones may be used in class and tutorials only:

- for course-related purposes;
- if their use is not distracting others;
- if their use does not negatively impact the learning environment.

**No audio or video recording is allowed in any class without the instructor's explicit permission.**

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.

## **Email**

When corresponding with the instructor via email, students should include the course name (COMS 371) in the subject line. If you do not include the course name in your email's subject line, your message may get overlooked in the instructor's inbox and go unread.

Please maintain a professional tone in your correspondence with the instructor.

Email is most useful for specific inquiries. If you have more detailed questions about the course material, assignments, or grades, please schedule an appointment to speak with the instructor (via Zoom) during office hours. The instructor will respond to emails during the week, usually on a first-come, first-served basis. Emails sent in the evening or on weekends will not be read (or replied to) until the next working day.

### Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
10%	<b>Lab Participation</b> Weekly labs are essential to your success in this course. You are expected to come to labs prepared (having attended the weekly lectures and completed the required readings) and participate in the lab activities and discussions. You will be graded on the quality of your contributions to the lab, which includes an ability to discuss course material thoughtfully during discussions, engage with peers and TA in lab activities, and ask questions when clarification is required.	Weekly
15%	<b>Quiz #1 (Online)</b> You will be responsible for completing a multiple-choice quiz based on course materials from weeks 1-6. The quiz is designed to be completed in 20 minutes, however, as per university policy, you will be given 30 minutes to complete the quiz.  Quiz 1 (30 min). Available: Oct. 20, 8am – Oct. 21, 8am.	Oct. 20
30%	<b>Media Analysis</b> For this written assignment, you will conduct a 4-5 page media analysis based on a provided prompt. Your analysis will require you to use one or more theories covered in the course to date. Detailed information about this assignment (including prompts) will be posted to D2L and discussed in both recorded lecture and lab.	Nov. 3 (11:59pm)
15%	<b>Quiz #2</b> You will be responsible for completing a cumulative multiple-choice quiz based on course materials from weeks 6-12. The quiz is designed to be completed in 20 minutes, however, as per university policy, you will be given 30 minutes to complete the quiz.  Quiz 2 (30 min). Available: Dec. 2, 8am – Dec. 3, 8am.	Dec. 2

30%	<p><b>Reflection Journal</b></p> <p>Throughout the term you will be required to keep an online reflection journal (using the free platform Padlet) where you will answer questions about each week's course material. Journal questions for each week are included in the syllabus in the weekly schedule, along with the length of answer I expect. Each week, after you've attended lectures and completed the readings, you'll answer the question(s) posed. I expect answers to be thoughtful and demonstrate an engagement with course material. During lab periods, you'll often be asked to draw upon your journal entry as a 'jumping off' point for discussion.</p> <p>Detailed information about this assignment will be posted to D2L and will be discussed in class during the first week.</p>	Dec. 9 (12pm)
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**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination:** No

**Note: You must complete all assignments and exams or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.**

If you miss a required course component, please contact your instructor as soon as possible. **Make-up assignments are not permitted, barring exceptional circumstances.**

### **Submission of Assignments**

Please submit all assignments in class or 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 the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

**Assignments seven days or more (unexcused) late will not be accepted and will receive a grade of zero.**

### **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/](http://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. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require a medical note. For information on the use of a statutory declaration, see the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>

### 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, letter grades will be used for written assignments, including the Media Analysis and Reflection Journal, while numerical scores will be used to assess quizzes and participation grades.

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

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](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 copyright 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**

The schedule of topics and readings will be posted to D2L in advance of the first class.