

University of Calgary
Department of Communication and Culture
Communications Studies (COMS) 371 - Lecture 01
Critical Media Studies
Spring 2014
MW 12:00-14:45

Instructor: Aiden Buckland
Office Location: SS 204
Office Phone: 210-9471
E-Mail: abucklan@ucalgary.ca
Monday & Wednesday
Office Hours: 11:00-12:00 pm
Or by appointment

Course Description

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 culture industry (Adorno, the Frankfurt School), the Canadian school (McLuhan), structuralism and semiotics (Barthes), Cultural Studies (Hall, Williams), postmodernism (Lyotard, Baudrillard, etc.), globalization (Appadurai), the politics of representation and feminist approaches to media studies.

Additional Information

This is a reading and writing intensive course that requires basic familiarity with communication theories (COMS 201).

Objectives of the Course

Through readings, lectures, discussions and additional course materials, the course will

- Introduce students to critical and qualitative traditions of communications research;
- Provide an integrated sense of the development of theory and method in critical and qualitative research;
- Consider the contributions of critical and cultural studies traditions to the broader practices of communications research;
- Develop a critical awareness of media content and practices;
- Produce academically rigorous written and oral communication assignments, while developing research and critical thinking skills.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Students are expected to use these technologies exclusively for the enrichment of their class experience. All networked devices should be placed on mute or vibrate during class time. I reserve the right to ask any student to power down a device if it becomes a distraction to the other students in the class.

Textbooks and Readings

Readings will be provided online

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation 10%

Will be evaluated on the basis of a series of in class activities and attendance.

Blog Reflection Essays 20% (Schedule will be provided)

Students will be expected to contribute two 150-250 word contributions to the class blog. A schedule and further details about expectations will be posted on the blog and handed out during the first week of class.

Paper Proposal 5% Due May 28, 2014

Students will prepare a brief 1 page outline of the theory they would like to address in their media theory paper. Proposals will identify your interest in a theory and why. As well you will be expected to provide a short list of 3 potential academic sources for your final paper.

Application of a Media Theory Paper 20% Due June 11, 2014

For this assignment you will be asked to provide a brief literature review of one of the theories covered in the course. The paper should be 8-10 pages, double-spaced not including works cited or title page. You will be required to do research beyond the parameters of the course readings.

Group Culture Jamming Project 20% Due June 25, 2014

In groups you will choose a media text (for example an advertisement, political campaign, television ad, website) 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 in class during the last week of class. Detailed assignment guidelines will be posted on blackboard and discussed in class.

Take Home Exam 25% Due June 30, 2014

The exam will consist of a combination of short and long answer questions and will cover material from the entire course. Students will be expected to be able to synthesize and apply what they've learned from the course to this final assignment. Office hours will be posted for those students who want to hand in their assignment in person.

You do not need to complete all assignments to receive a passing grade in the course.

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: No

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://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 (3rd 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 on the first day of class and posted to D2L.