

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communications Studies COMS 371 – L01
Critical Media Studies

Winter 2015 – January 13 to April 14

Tuesday 14:00 – 16:45

Instructor: Andrea Whiteley
Office: SS307
Office Phone: N/A
E-Mail: amwhitel@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: Tuesday 1 pm – 2 pm

Course Description

This course approaches critical media studies both thematically and theoretically to demonstrate how critical media theory engages the social world. The course will investigate how critical theory can be used to analyze media technologies, mass media and culture to raise awareness and promote change. Using the concept of praxis, or theory into action, we will explore the major critical approaches focusing on the historical and social contexts in which the theories arose and applying the theories to our own critiques. Areas to be covered include: the economics and politics of the media, media organizations and professionals, media and ideology, social inequality and media representation, active audiences and the construction of meaning, media technology and media and globalization. The final theme will unite the approaches by looking at media theorists as public intellectuals and the policy implications of critique.

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

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify the intellectual foundations of critical media studies;
- Recognize and contrast the major theories, concepts and ideas within the critical traditions;
- Develop a critical awareness of media content and practices;
- Understand the core sociological concepts of agency versus structure, the public sphere and ideology;
- Produce academically rigorous written and oral communication assignments, while developing research and critical thinking skills;
- Participate in critical discussions about media issues on an academic and practical level; and
- Apply the tools and techniques found in critical media theory to their own communication experiences.

Textbooks and Readings

Croteau, David and William Hoynes (2014). *Media/Society: Industries, Images and Audiences*. Fifth Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

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 other students in the class.

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation (10%)

Participation will be evaluated on the basis of a series of in class activities and participation in discussions.

Reading Reflections (20%) (Schedule will be provided)

Students will be expected to read four articles of their choice (list provided on D2L), in addition to the textbook and assigned readings, and complete the following assignments with one of each of the articles:

1. With one of the readings contribute a 300 - 500 word summary and reflection to the class blog (5%);
2. With the second reading, make an "elevator presentation" to the class (three minutes) (5%);
3. & 4. Respond to two of the blog posts (100 words each), one each for the third and fourth readings (each worth 5%).

Students will sign up for the assignments during the first two weeks of class. Further details about expectations will be posted on D2L during the first week of class. These are pass or fail assignments.

Quizzes (25%) February 24 and March 24

This assignment tests your understanding of the required readings and of the material covered in class. The first quiz is multiple choice (1 hour worth 10%) and the second is short and long answer (1.5 hour worth 15 %). Details will be posted on D2L.

Group Culture Jam Project (15%) Presentations on April 7th and April 14th

This project has three parts. 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 in a critical way. Your finished product, along with an analysis of both the original product and your re-created product, will be presented in class. Groups will also hand in a short essay (5 pages) relating their project to theories and themes learned in class. Finally, the group will create a collective resume. Detailed assignment guidelines will be posted on D2L and discussed in class. Students will be assigned to groups and the schedule will be handed out the first class. Groups will present in the last two lectures of the semester.

Paper Proposal (5%) Due March 31

Students will prepare a brief two-page proposal for the final research paper. Students must also provide at least six bibliographical references to sources they will be using. Proposals will identify your interest in your chosen topic and the reason for your chosen theory.

Final Research Paper (25%) Due April 17, 2014

Students will choose one of the theoretical approaches to media studies to analyze a contemporary media form or issue (i.e. a political economy analysis of iPhone use in tween market, a critical discourse analysis of a dating website, a media ecology analysis of the evolution of note taking as a learning tool; narrative analysis from a feminist perspective of anime fan forums). Research papers will also include a section on “knowledge mobilization” for students to think about how their critique might be disseminated to a wider audience to promote change. Approx. 8-10 pages double-spaced including bibliography. Note this is due the week after classes are finished. I will be accepting hard copies of your paper in my office on April 17 from 9 am – 12 pm. Also please note that the research paper must be handed in to pass the course.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

All assignments and exams must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Submission of Assignments: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For in class assignments, please hand in directly to your instructor or post on D2L. For final papers, please hand in an electronic copy to your instructor on D2L by the due date. 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.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

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.

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 14 days after the start of the course.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, 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. Sources used in 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 & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Work in this course will be graded using percentage grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film:

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department grade scale equivalents	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	0%

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

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/node/208> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

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 (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 <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/research/research-ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (PIC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 picarts@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calgary Police Service• Emergency Text Messaging• Emergency Evacuation & Assembly• Safewalk Program	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-

	5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support • IT help line	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman	http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombud s
SU WELLNESS CENTRE • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 403-266-HELP (4357) http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

	Date	Topics	Events	Readings
1	Jan 13	Introduction to Critical Media Studies		Chapter 1 <i>Media and Society</i>
2	Jan 20	Economics of the Media Industry – Political Economy Approach		Chapter 2 <i>Media and Society</i>
3	Jan 27	Media Influence and the Political World – Media Effects and the Public Sphere	Guest Speaker – Social Media and Social Movements	Chapter 7 <i>Media and Society</i>
4	Feb 3	Media and Ideology - Marx and the Frankfurt School		Chapter 5 <i>Media and Society</i>
5	Feb 10	Media Technology		Chapter 9 <i>Media</i>

				<i>and Society</i>
6	Feb 17	Reading Week – no class	Media “Fast” Assignment	Postman (1986) Intro & Chapter 1
7	Feb 24	Real Life Critical Theorist	First Quiz Documentary Screening: <i>Manufacturing Consent</i>	
8	March 3	Social Inequality and Media Representation	Library Workshop TFDL rooms 440 A and D	Chapter 6 <i>Media and Society</i>
9	March 10	Political Influence on the Media Media in a Changing Global Culture	Guest Speaker	Chapter 3 <i>Media and Society</i> Chapter 10 <i>Media and Society</i>
10	March 17	Media Organizations and Professionals Active Audiences and the Construction of Meaning	Guest speaker – former CBC journalist	Chapter 4 <i>Media and Society</i> Chapter 8 <i>Media and Society</i>
11	March 24	Writing Workshop	Second Quiz	
12	March 31	Review and Group Project Workshop	Paper Proposal Due	
13	April 7	Group Project Presentations		
14	April 14	Group Project Presentations	Last Class	
	April 17	No Classes	Final Paper Due	

Postman, Neil (1986). *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. pp. XVII – XVIII and Chapter 1. Pp 1 – 15.