

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

**Communication and Media Studies COMS 471 L01
Audience & Reception**

Winter 2017

Jan. 9 – April 12 (excluding Feb. 19-26)

T 12:30-15:15

Instructor: Dr. S. Thrift
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Office Hours: M (10-11am); W (10-11am)

Course Description

Approaches the communications process from the point of view of the audience. Students will be introduced to the history of media research dealing with the public and the audience, and consider the changes in theoretical and research paradigms from administrative approaches to those centred on fan practices and subcultures. Topics may include public opinion, uses and gratifications, reception theory, consumption and subjectivity, fan cultures, cult texts, participatory audience practices (including fan activism) and political fandoms.

Additional Information

Prerequisite: COMS 371

Objectives of the Course

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

- identify and explain major debates and theories in the field of audience and reception studies;
- articulate intellectual understanding of “the audience” and how this constituency has been conceived over the course of modern media history;
- critically evaluate a range of theoretical approaches to explaining media influence and power, particularly in relationship to their own experiences as media audiences;
- actively engage in class and small group discussions in order to coherently express their insights;

- communicate their knowledge, understanding, and critical thinking about core concepts by completing an analytical research and writing project.

Textbooks and Readings

Brooker, Will and Jermyn, Deborah (eds). *The Audience Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Additional readings will be posted to the COMS 471 D2L site.

Internet and electronic communication device information

The in-class use of computers for activities other than note-taking purposes will not be tolerated. Therefore, cell phones and other electronic communication devices must be set to mute upon entering the classroom and should not be used in the classroom or during class time. If students engage in non-course related online activity during class, the professor will request that they power down their device for the remainder of class time. No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

Email

When corresponding with the instructor via email, students should include the course name (ex. Audience or COMS 471) 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 respectful tone in your correspondence with the instructor.

Email is most useful for short, specific inquiries. If you have detailed questions on the course material, assignments, or grades, visit the instructor 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.

NOTE: Email submissions of work will NOT be accepted unless otherwise specified.

Assignments and Evaluation

All assignments and exams weighted more than 20% must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Weight	Course components	Due
20%	In-class Test	February 14
20%	Fan Auto-Ethnography	March 14
15%	Essay Proposal	February 28
10%	Draft Workshop	March 28
35%	Final Essay	April 11

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

In-Class Test (20%)

An in-class test will be administered on Feb. 14th, worth 20%. The test will have multiple choice, short answer questions, or a combination of the two. Details to be provided in class.

Fan Auto-Ethnography (20%)

Students will write a short five-page fan auto-ethnography describing their own history as a fan of popular entertainment. You should explore whether or not you think of yourself as a fan, what kinds of fan practices you engage with, how you define a fan, how you became invested in the media franchises that have been part of your life, and how your feelings about being a fan might have adjusted over time. (Due: March 10)

Analysis Essay

New media scholar Sonia Livingstone (2013) argues that “audienicing has become a vital mode of engaging with all dimensions of daily life.” For this assignment, students will consider what constitutes an ‘audience’ in online media spaces by selecting and analyzing an online audience or fandom. This could include the comment section of a website, Facebook threads, Twitter feeds, and more. Students will apply course concepts from three assigned readings to critically analyze audience/fan practices in the contemporary media environment. “Fan studies” conducted for credit in other courses will not be accepted.

i. The **essay proposal** (15%) provides an opportunity for students to receive early feedback on the planned structure of their essay, their choice of sources, and writing style. Proposals should be a maximum of 4 pages, double-spaced, including bibliography, and should be formatted using MLA or APA citation style. Proposals should include a preliminary statement of argument, identify main points of discussion, and illustrate an understanding of how to apply theory to the example under discussion through careful selection of course sources. (Due Feb. 28)

ii. In-class time will be provided for a **draft workshop** (10%), where students share and discuss a rough version of your paper in peer groups. Students need to prepare a complete (intro, body, conclusion) draft of their final essay and bring TWO copies to class. You will submit one copy to the instructor at the end of class. (Due Mar. 28)

iii. The **final essay** (35%) will build on the proposal, draft workshop, and the subsequent feedback. The essay should be approximately 8-10 pages long, double-spaced and typed, formatted using MLA or APA, and must include a bibliography. (Due Apr. 11)

Submission of Assignments: 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.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. 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>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

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.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

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. 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 & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film

Final grades are reported as letter grades. Grades will be assessed using percentages.

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF 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	0- 49.99%	0%

* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

** 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.

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 <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. 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.htm>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Lecture Topics and Readings

Date	Readings	Deadlines
Jan 10	Course Welcome	
Jan 17	Early Audience Research Booker & Jermyn, Ch. 1, 2, 3 Key concepts: effects theory, 'hypodermic needle,' boomerang effect, uses & gratifications	
Jan 24	The Vulnerable Audience Booker & Jermyn, Ch. 6, 8 Key concepts: culture industry, moral panic	
Jan 31	Reading Tactics Booker & Jermyn, Ch. 10, 17, 19 Key concepts: active audience, strategies, tactics, <i>la perruque</i> , official text, subtext, maintext, reading 'against the grain'	
Feb 7	'Guilty Pleasures' Booker & Jermyn, Ch. 22, 24 Key concepts: interpretive communities, interpellation	
Feb 14	From Active Audiences to Fandom Booker & Jermyn, Ch. 11, 18 Key concept: ripping, participatory culture Joli Jenson. (1992). "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization." <i>The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media</i> . Ed. Lisa A. Lewis. London: Routledge. pp. 9-29.	In-Class Test (20%)
Feb 21	No class (Reading Week)	
Feb 28	Fan Taste Jonathan Gray. "New Audiences, New Textualities: Anti-Fans and Non-Fans." <i>International Journal of Cultural Studies</i> 6.1 (2003): 64-81. Roberta Pierson. (2007). "Bachies, Bardies, Trekkies, Sherlockians." <i>Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World</i> . Eds. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, & C. Lee Harrington. NYU Press. pp. 98-109.	Essay Proposal (15%)

Mar 7	<p>The Fan Democracy Liesbet van Zoonen. (2004). "Imagining the Fan Democracy." <i>European Journal of Communication</i> 19(1): 39-52.</p>	
Mar 14	<p>Fan Activism Henry Jenkins. (2012). "Cultural acupuncture": Fan activism and the Harry Potter Alliance." <i>Transformative Works and Cultures</i> No. 10.</p>	Auto-Ethnography (20%)
Mar 21	<p>Free Labour? Tamara Shepherd. (2014). "Gendering the Commodity Audience in Social Media." <i>The Routledge Companion to Media and Gender</i>. Eds. Cynthia Carter, Linda Steiner, and Lisa McLaughlin. pp. 157-167.</p> <p>Guest Lecture by Dr. Tamara Shepherd, Department of CMF</p> <p>Recommended: Sut Jhally & Bill Livant. (1986). "Watching as Working: The Valorization of Audience Consciousness." <i>Journal of Communication</i> 36(3): 124-143.</p>	
Mar 28	<p>Draft Workshop Bring two (2) copies of your completed essay draft to class.</p>	Essay Draft Workshop (10%)
Apr 4	<p>Audience Encounters Nancy Baym. (November 2012). "Fans or Friends? Seeing Social Media Audiences as Musicians Do." <i>Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies</i> 9(2): 286-316.</p> <p>Key concepts: symmetrical reciprocity, communion, solidarity, agency</p>	
Apr 11	<p>Wild Card</p>	Final Essay (35%)