

## MEDIA AND CULTURAL ANALYSIS

MCC-UE 14.001

Spring 2013/ MW 9:30-10:45am / 7 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street (7E12), LL25

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**Office hours:** W 11am – 12pm or by appointment

**Office location:** tba

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course investigates media through a variety of theories and methods. The focus will be on the dominant critical perspectives that contribute to our understanding of media and its role in society. The course will provide the basic vocabulary and concepts used in the analysis of different types of media. The purpose throughout the semester will be to explore, understand, and effectively apply various critical methodologies through reading, watching, listening, discussing, and writing a wide range of media texts, environments, and experiences.

#### Objectives:

- Develop a critical awareness of your media environment;
- Learn the major concepts, themes, and theories of media criticism;
- Understand how these theoretical frameworks are used to analyze media and culture;
- Learn to use these frameworks and their concepts to perform your own media analyses.

**Format:** Each class will begin with a brief introductory lecture examining the methods, readings, and media examples assigned. The remainder of the class will be in seminar form (i.e., class discussion about the various readings and media). Towards the end of each class, we will preview readings and media for the next class. **Bring a copy of the assigned readings to class.**

### REQUIRED READINGS AND MEDIA

All readings will be posted as pdf's under "Resources" on our NYU Classes site. Readings should be completed **before** the class in which they are assigned in this syllabus. Please bring copies with you to class discussion. You will also be responsible for viewing a number of media examples on your own. These should be complete **before** the start of the week in which they appear in this syllabus. All media will be available either online (via YouTube, for example) or under "Course Reserves" at Avery Fischer on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Bobst Library.

### METHODS OF EVALUATION

<b>Attendance and Participation</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Reading Responses</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Media Analyses</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Final Essay</b>	<b>25%</b>

***Attendance and Participation***

**10%**

Good class participation involves contributing to the ongoing discussion of the class in an informed and responsible manner, being attentive to class conversation, and being **respectful** of your fellow classmates. Monopolizing discussion time and/or interacting aggressively with your classmates are examples of disrespectful behavior. **More than TWO absences** will automatically result in a lower grade. Chronic lateness will also be reflected in your evaluation of participation. Regardless of the reason for your absence, you will be responsible for any missed work.

***Reading Responses (7 x 1.43%)***

**10%**

To deepen our discussion, you will be required to post 7 reading responses (**300 words**) where you will provide a sustained engagement with the main ideas in the readings and media. Ending your post with questions and/or adding useful links are encouraged. **These must be posted to the “Forums” section of NYU Classes by 6pm the day before class** (Sunday or Tuesday).

***Media Analyses (3 x 10%)***

**30%**

Apply theoretical approaches from this class to analyze a media industry, practice, text, or environment of your choice (**750 words each, sent electronically to [jlh473@nyu.edu](mailto:jlh473@nyu.edu) by midnight on February 20, March 27, and April 24**). You should choose two course readings relevant to your example. Develop your analysis by drawing on the arguments of the authors.

***Midterm Exam***

**25%**

Write a short review essay (**1200 words**) of at least three approaches to media discussed in the first six weeks of the course. You will be expected to demonstrate your understanding of these approaches, especially their strengths and limitations, and to include media examples. I will provide you with a prompt question one week prior to the due date. **Your essay should be sent electronically to [jlh473@nyu.edu](mailto:jlh473@nyu.edu) by midnight on March 13.**

***Final Essay***

**25%**

Rewrite one of your media analyses, adding two additional approaches from the second half of the course (**1200 words sent electronically to [jlh473@nyu.edu](mailto:jlh473@nyu.edu) by midnight on May 13**).

**Evaluation Rubric:**

A= Excellent                      This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

B=Good                              This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

C=Average                         This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

D=Unsatisfactory                This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty and unprepared.

F=Failed                            This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments.

## POLICIES

**General Decorum:** Slipping in late or leaving early, sleeping, text messaging, surfing the Internet, doing homework in class, eating, etc. are distracting and disrespectful to all participants in the course. Please avoid such behavior.

The ideas and media examples we will discuss may challenge or conflict with your beliefs. Such challenges should not be considered as value judgments nor should anything discussed in class be constructed as a personal offense. But, if you experience any discomfort with material discussed in class, please talk with me directly, and we'll work together to resolve the situation effectively.

**Portable Electronics:** Please turn off your mobile phones and other portable electronic devices while in class. If you use such devices during class **your participation and attendance grades will be lowered**. Please turn off the wireless link on computers and similar devices, which should be used *only* for taking notes or presenting multimedia materials.

**Late Work:** Assignments are due on the dates stated on the syllabus. Assignments turned in late will be **reduced by one letter grade for each day** they are late. Absences are not an acceptable excuse for not having done the required work. In case of extenuating circumstances that will prevent you from meeting a deadline, you should discuss the matter with me well before the due date of the assignment. **Incompletes will not be given for this course.**

**Written Work:** All written work for this course will be submitted electronically. Essays should be double-spaced, use 12-point font, and include page numbers. All material should be sourced, including direct quotations and any ideas not your own. Plagiarism is not tolerated, and will result in a failing grade for the course. You may use any citation method, but please be consistent.

**Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism:** Please be sure that you have read and understand NYU's Statement of Academic Integrity. If you have any questions concerning plagiarism in general, be certain that you ask them. Please note that plagiarism is grounds for automatic failure of this course. Please see NYU Steinhardt's *Statement of Academic Integrity* for further information on this matter: [http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic\\_integrity](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity).

“Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do...you violate the principle when you: cheat on an exam; submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home courses without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home that calls for independent work; or plagiarize. Plagiarism, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: copy verbatim from a book, article, or other media; ... paraphrase or restate someone else's facts, analysis, and/or conclusions...” (See *Steinhardt School Bulletin 2008-2010*, p. 177-8).

**Grade Appeals:** Please allow two days to pass before you submit a grade appeal. This gives you time to reflect on my assessment. If you still want to appeal your grade, please submit a short but considered paragraph detailing your concerns. Based on this paragraph, I will review the question and either augment your grade or refine my explanation for the lost points.

## RESOURCES

**Writing Center:** The Writing Center is a place where any NYU student can get help with his or her writing. It is a place where one-on-one teaching and learning occur, as students work closely with professional consultants at every stage of the writing process and on any piece of writing except for exams. Schedule an appointment online or just walk-in:

[http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing\\_center.html](http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html).

**Students With Disabilities:** Any student attending NYU who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility and/or learning disability, or is Deaf or Hard of Hearing should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212 998-4980, 240 Greene Street: <http://www.nyu.edu/csd>.

**NYU Wellness Exchange:** The Wellness Exchange is the constellation of the University's expanded and enhanced programs and services designed to address the overall health and mental health needs of our students. Students can access this service through a private hotline, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week that will put them in touch with professionals who can help them address both day-to-day challenges as well as any other crises they may encounter, including depression, sexual assault, anxiety, alcohol and drug dependence, sexually transmitted infections, and eating disorders. The Wellness Exchange is also available for students who just need to talk or to call about a friend: <http://www.nyu.edu/999> or call 212-443-9999.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

***Please Note:** This syllabus is subject to an occasional change, and it is your responsibility to keep track of those changes as we progress through the semester. Unless otherwise noted, all reading/viewing assignments are to be prepared for the week they appear in the syllabus.*

### Week 1: Introduction and Overview of Theories

MEDIA: McLuhan, *The Medium Is the Massage* – Part 1 (1967) [online]

01/28 Introduction. No assigned readings.

01/30 Bradbury, “The Happiness Machine” (1957)  
Attali, “Noise and Politics” (1985)  
Silverstone, “Morality and Media” (2007)

### Week 2: Ideology, Culture, and Marxist Critique

MEDIA: Romero, *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) [online]

02/04 Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936)  
Adorno & Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry” (1944)

02/06 Hall, “Culture, the Media and the ‘Ideological Effect’” (1977)

### Week 3: Political Economic and Industrial (Production-Centered) Approaches

MEDIA: Frontline, *Merchants of Cool* (2001) [online]

02/11 Chomsky, “What Makes Mainstream Media Mainstream” (1997)  
McChesney, “U.S. Media at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century” (1999)

02/13 Levine, “Toward a Paradigm for Media Production Research” (2001)

Week 4: Audience and Reception Studies

MEDIA: Nygard, *Trekkies* (1997) [course reserves]

02/18 **NO CLASS – President’s Day**

02/20 Seiter, “Qualitative Audience Research” (1999)  
Sturken & Cartwright, “Viewers Make Meaning” (2009)

***Media analysis #1 is due by midnight Wednesday 2/20.***

Week 5: Semiotic and Genre Analysis

MEDIA: BBC, *The Year of the Sex Olympics* (1968) [online]

02/25 Hall, “Encoding/Decoding” (1980)  
Seiter, “Semiotics, Structuralism, and Television” (1992)

02/27 Mittell, “Television Genres as Cultural Categories” (2004)

Week 6: Psychoanalysis and Affect Theory

MEDIA: Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960) [course reserves]

03/04 Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975)  
Modleski, “Hitchcock, Feminism, and Patriarchal Unconscious” (1988)

03/06 Williams, “Structures of Feeling” (1977)

Week 7: Cultural Materialism and Medium-Centered Approaches

MEDIA: Coppola, *The Conversation* (1974) [course reserves]

03/11 Gitelman, “Souvenir Foils” (2004)

03/13 McLuhan, “The Medium Is the Message” (1964)  
Boyer, “Talking Media, Thinking Media” (2007)

***Your midterm exam is due by midnight Wednesday 3/13.***

**SPRING BREAK – March 18 – 24, 2012**

Week 8: Media, Representation, and Identity – Race

MEDIA: Tarantino, *Django Unchained* (2012) [currently playing in cinemas]

03/25 **NO CLASS**

03/27 **GUEST – in class screening of *Reel Injun* (Diamond, 2009)**

hooks, “Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance” (1992)  
Ginsburg, “Screen Memories” (2002)  
Gray, “The New Conditions of Black Cultural Production” (2005)

***Media analysis #2 is due by midnight Wednesday 3/27.***

Week 9: Media, Representation, and Identity – Gender and Sexuality

MEDIA: Epstein & Friedman, *The Celluloid Closet* (1995) [course reserves]  
Uman, *Removed* (1999) [online]

04/01 Harding, "Is There a Feminist Method?" (1987)  
Kaufman, "Debbie Does Salad" (2005)

04/03 Gross, "Out of the Mainstream" (1991)  
Dyer, "The Role of Stereotyping" (1999)

Week 10: Media, Representation, and Identity – Class, Family, Age, Disability

MEDIA: Granik, *Winter's Bone* (2010) [course reserves]

04/08 Kendall, "Class Action in the Media" (2011)

04/10 Fore, "The Tracks of Sully's Tears" (2011)  
Creative Diversity Network (BBC), "Serving All Ages" (2012)

Week 11: Discourse Analysis and Postcolonial Critique

MEDIA: Cameron, *Avatar* (2009) [course reserves]

04/15 Foucault, "The Discourse on Language" (1971)

04/17 Shohat & Stam, "The Imperial Imaginary" (1997)  
Mrazek, "Language as Asphalt" (2002)

Week 12: Ethnographic & Sensory Approaches

MEDIA: Flaherty, *Nanook of the North* (1922) [online]

04/22 Geertz, "Thick Description" (1973)  
Ginsburg et al., "Introduction: The Social Practice of Media" (2002)

04/24 Pink, "Rethinking Ethnography Through the Senses" (2010)

***Media analysis #3 is due by midnight Wednesday 4/24.***

Week 13: New Media Approaches

MEDIA: Frontline, *Digital Nation* (2010) [online]

04/29 Gitelman, "Media as Historical Subjects" (2006)  
Stubbs, "Telegraphy's Corporeal Fictions" (2004)

05/01 Galloway, "Playing the Code" (2006)  
Manovich, "The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life" (2009)

Week 14: Postmodernism and Review of Theories

MEDIA: Cronenberg, *eXistenZ* (1999) [course reserves]

05/06 Sturken & Cartwright, "Postmodernism, Indie Media, and Popular Culture" (2009)

05/08 Jenkins et al., "The Culture that Sticks to Your Skin" (2002)

Week 15: Celebration and Review

05/13 No assigned readings or media.

***Your final essay is due by midnight Monday 5/13.***