COMM 140: Introduction to Media Criticism, Theory, and History

Spring 2015 – Ms. Maggie Franz | mfranz@live.unc.edu

Class time: MWF 9:05-9:55 am   Class location: Bingham – Room 217
Screening time: W 5:45-7:45 pm   Screening location: Manning – Room 209
Office hours: MW 1:00-2:00 pm & by app't.   Office: Bingham 303

Course description:

This course is designed to familiarize you with some of the basic terms and concepts in the field of media studies. Over the course of the semester we will examine key themes in the discipline, involving the social, political, economic, cultural and technological contexts in which media objects and devices are produced and consumed. Reading classic and contemporary texts in the field, we will ask: how do media operate both as technical formats and institutional forces? And how in turn do these formats and forces generate a frame of reference for people's everyday lives? Formulating responses to such questions will involve considering how media help to maintain the status quo of institutions and societies, while at the same time exploring how they are also routinely invested as agents or conduits for social change.

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

- Understand why media ownership and public engagement with the media are important issues in today's political context.

- Understand how media gadgets and technologies produce a relation to the world, through their design, implementation and underlying infrastructure;

- Understand the significance of how groups and individuals are represented in popular media.

- Apply various perspectives on media discussed in class to your own daily consumption of media products, texts and experiences, as well as to your everyday use of media devices.

- Write succinct essays that bring together distinct ideas from the readings, lectures and discussions.

- Explain and analyze aspects of media industries and the mediation of everyday life, in the past, present and future.

Textbook and Class Readings:

The required text for this course is **Croteau D.R. and W. D. Hoynes. (2013).** *Media/Society: Industries, Images, and Audiences,* **5th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.**
ISBN: 978-1452268378

This text is available at the student bookstore as well as on Amazon and other online outlets.

All other course materials will be available on SAKAI

Assignments and Evaluation:

Attendance and participation:	**10%**	Short papers (2):	**20%**
Midterm:	**25%**	Keyword presentation:	**20%**
Final:	**25%**		

Grading scale

A 94 - 100	B- 80-83	D+ 67-69
A- 90 - 93	C+ 77-79	D 64-66
B+ 87 – 89	C 74-76	D- 60-63
B 84-86	C- 70-73	F 0-59

What grades mean

Grading is a form of communication between instructors and students. This means that you should view each grade that you receive as part of an ongoing learning process. With that in mind, a grade of **C** means that you completed the assignment adequately and according to the given guidelines, demonstrating competence of the concepts. A **B** means that you executed the assignment thoroughly, using well-reasoned analysis, and demonstrating more than cursory understanding of the concepts. An **A** means that your work demonstrates a deep understanding of the concepts, an attention to detail, and well-reasoned and well-executed analysis. **Ds** and **Fs** mean that you did not complete the assignment, did not follow directions, and/or did not demonstrate competence, and/or employ language.

Evaluation guidelines

You will be given a rubric to guide your written assignments. You may also wish to consult the document '**MCCS_writing_advice.pdf**' in SAKAI Resources. The material is written with UK-based students in mind (referring to numbered class evaluations instead of letter grades on page two, for example), but offers some useful guidance for paper writing. It gives advice on argumentation, editing and presentation.

Short papers

During the second week of class, we will discuss how to complete the short papers. Papers will be turned in at the end of lecture on **February 20th** and **April 10th**. On **all** written work, **please include a header with your name, the course name or number, and the assignment.** All written work should have a title, but do not bother including a title page. All assignments should also include a signed declaration of the UNC honor code. Whether submitting on paper or electronically, please use 12pt font, one-inch margins, black ink, double space, and Times New Roman. For more writing advice specific to the short papers for this course, consult the document *COMM140_short_paper_ assignments.pdf* in SAKAI Resources.

Keyword Presentations

Since an introduction into any field involves entering into a new and oftentimes unfamiliar vocabulary, we will have weekly keyword presentations where groups of 2 or 3 will explain and expand on relevant keywords for that week. More information about the assignment is available on SAKAI.

Midterm and Final

Both exams will consist of short essay questions testing your facility with key terms and concepts in the course. Some lecture time will be devoted to discussing and reviewing for both exams.

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend each scheduled class meeting, to be on time, and to be prepared for each class session. The University attendance policy specifies that students may miss up to **three** class meetings (10% of class time) without penalty. Chronic absenteeism beyond three missed meetings will result in a grade penalty of one letter grade; beyond six will result in two letter grades lowered. Class absences will also affect your class participation grade. If you foresee attendance or participation issues, see me during office hours immediately.

Course schedule:

Week One: Introduction to the course – Technology, Media, Culture

January 7: Course introduction

January 9: Ch. 1 from M/S, "Media and the Social World"

Week Two: Media and Mediation (Jan. 12/14/16) |

January 12: Grossberg et al., "Media in Context," pp. 3-33. **SAKAI**

January 14: Ch. 8 from M/S

January 16: No reading, continue discussion on previous readings

Week Three: The Business of Media (Jan. 21/23) | NO CLASS Monday Jan. 19
Screening, Jan 21st: *Network* (dir. Sidney Lumet, 1976, 121 minutes)

January 21: Ch. 2 M/S, "The Economics of the Media Industry"

January 23: Croteau and Hoynes, "Media, Markets, and the Public Sphere," pp. 15-40. **SAKAI**

Week Four: Technological Culture (Jan. 26/28/30)
Screening, Jan 28th: *Wall-E* (dir. Andrew Stanton, 2008, 98 minutes)

January 26: Keyword presentation: **Technology/Technologies**

January 28: Slack and Wise, "Introduction: From Culture and Technology to Technological Culture" and "Defining Technology," pp. 1-5; 93-100. **SAKAI**

January 30: Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" pp. 19-39. **SAKAI**

Week Five: Media and Politics (Feb. 2/4/6)
        Screening, Feb. 4th: *Control Room* (dir. Jehane Noujaim, 2004, 85 minutes)

February 2: Keyword presentation: **Public** and **Public Sphere**

February 4: Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics" pp. 49-90. **SAKAI**

February 6: Karpf, "The New Generation of Political Advocacy Groups," pp. 3-21. **SAKAI**

Morozov, Evgenzy & RSA Animate, "The Internet in Society: Empowering or Censoring Citizens?" March 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uk8x3V-sUgU

Week Six: Media and Consumer Culture (Feb. 9/11/13)
        Screening, Feb. 11th: *Generation Like* http://video.pbs.org/video/2365181302/

February 9: Keyword presentation: **Capitalism** and **Consumption**

February 11: Frank, "Why Johnny Can't Dissent," pp. 32-46. **SAKAI**

February 13: Slack and Wise, "Progress" and "Convenience," pp. 9-25; 27-40. **SAKAI**

Week Seven: Identity and Representation (Feb. 16/18/20)
        Screening, February 18th: *Codes of Gender*

February 16: Keyword Presentation: **Identity** and Choose ONE: **Race, Gender, Sex, Sexuality, Orientalism, Heteronormativity,** or **Colonialism**

February 18: Grossberg et al, "Producing Identities," pp. 219-232. **SAKAI**

February 20: Ch. 6 from M/S, "Social Inequality and Media Representation"
<u>First Short paper due at the beginning of class!</u>

Week Eight: Ideology and Hegemony (Feb. 23/25/27)
        Screening, Feb. 25th: They Live (dir. John Carpenter, 1988, 93 minutes) + excerpts of *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (dir. Sophie Fiennes, 2012, 2h 24 minutes)

February 23: Keyword presentation: **Ideology** and **Hegemony**

February 25: Grossberg et. al, "Ideology," pp. 193-216. **SAKAI**

February 27: Ch. 5 from M/S, "Media and Ideology"

Week Nine: Midterm (Mar. 2/4/6)

March 2: Review

March 4: Midterm

March 6: View in Class: *Hollywood Shuffle* or *Bamboozled*

Week Ten: Theories of the Sign (Mar. 16/18/20)
Screening, Mar. 18th: The Simpsons, Mad Men episodes (various, 60 minutes)

March 16: Sturken and Cartwright, "Images, Power, and Politics," pp.9-36. **SAKAI**

March 18: Manning, "Introduction" and "Coffee," pp. 1-10; 35-59. **SAKAI**

March 20: Semiotics continued

Week Eleven: Video Games (Mar. 23/25/27)
Screening, Mar. 25th: *Indie Game: The Movie* (dir. James Swirsky, Lisanne Pajot 2012, 94 minutes)

March 23: Keyword presentation: **Gaming**

March 25: Bogost, "The Rhetoric of Video Games," pp. 117-39. **SAKAI**

March 27: Nakamura, "Don't Hate the Player, Hate the Game": The Racialization of Labor in World of Warcraft," pp. 620-26. **SAKAI**

Williams et al., "From Tree House to Barracks: The Social Life of Guilds in World of Warcraft," pp. 338-61. **SAKAI**

Week Twelve: The Subject of Surveillance (Mar. 30/Apr. 1) NO CLASS FRI. APRIL 3
Screening, April 1st: *We Live in Public* (dir. Ondi Timoner, 2009, 90 minutes)

March 30: Keyword presentation: **Surveillance** and **Governmentality**

April 1: Gilliom and Monahan, "Introduction" and "Watching you Work," pp. 1-10, 89-107. **SAKAI**

Week Thirteen: Social Media (April 6/8/10)
Screening, April 8th: *Catfish* (dir. Henry Joost, Ariel Schulman, 2010, 87 minutes)

April 6: Keyword presentation: **Digital**

April 8: boyd, chapters 2 & 3, pp. 54-99. **SAKAI**

April 10: Slater, chapter 3, pp. 54-80. **SAKAI**
<u>**Second short paper is due at the beginning of class**</u>

Week Fourteen: Algorithmic media (April 13/15/17)

April 13: Keyword presentation: **Algorithm** and **Algorithmic Media**

April 15: Jenkins, Ford, and Green, "What Constitutes Meaningful Participation?" pp.153-194. **SAKAI**

April 17: Pariser, "Introduction," "The Race for Relevance," and "The User is the Content" pp.1-46. **SAKAI**

Week Fifteen: Media Materialities (April 20/22/24) |

April 20: Boradkar, "Planned Obsolescence: Unsustainable Consumption," pp.179-210. **SAKAI**

Gates, "New Media Addiction," pp.58-60. **SAKAI**

April 22: Finish Boradkar and Gates/Review

April 24: Review

Your final exam is scheduled for Monday, May 4th at 8:00 am.

Course Policies
UNC's Honor Code is in full effect for the duration of this course.

Class Meetings
All readings are to be completed in time for the scheduled class discussion. Be on time. If you are late, do not interrupt the class. If you must leave early, please tell me beforehand. You may be asked to leave if your use of personal technology disrupts class. Please bear in mind that discussions may be sensitive personally as well as politically for some students; be respectful of everyone in the class, especially when their analysis or opinion conflicts with yours.

Our readings are posted online on SAKAI, and some of you may wish to have electronic access to them during class. Some of you may also prefer to take notes on a laptop. In either case, I recommend opening the relevant files and then disabling your network connection during class.

Written Assignments
All writing assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated. Late assignments will not be accepted unless under exceptional circumstances, and doctors notes or other verification may be required. On all written work, include your name, the course name or number, your instructor's name and an honor code signature verifying that you have not given or received any unauthorized aid on

your assignment. All written work should have a title, although not a title page. Please use 12pt font, black ink, double space, and Times New Roman only. Including images in your written work is not required, nor recommended.

Screenings
Screenings on Wednesday evenings are a part of class time, and your attendance is required. You should make every effort to attend screenings, and are expected to take notes on films—for discussion in class and recitation, for possible reference in your written assignments, and to support answers on your exams. It can be especially helpful to view the assigned screenings with other students, in order to gauge their reactions alongside your own. Group as well as individual reactions can be helpful in examining the cultural and political implications of some of the films and programs we will see.

That said, each week's screening will be placed on non-circulating reserve in the Media Resource Center (MRC) at the Undergraduate Library, and you may also be able to find them on your media streaming subscription (eg. Netflix) at home. If you miss a screening, it is your responsibility and a requirement of the course that you view the screening during the week it is assigned.

Plagiarism
At UNC, plagiarism is defined as "the deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise." Please be sure that you have read and understand the UNC-CH writing center's handout on plagiarism. If you have any questions concerning this document or plagiarism in general, be certain that you get them answered. Please note that **plagiarism is grounds for automatic failure of this course.**
http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/plagiarism/

Disclaimer
In line with the course objectives, readings and screenings have been selected to help foster challenging discussions in class and beyond. They have been chosen assuming that you are not only legally adults, but that you understand higher education to involve encounters with ideas and arguments that may question your own beliefs and assumptions. Some of our readings or screenings may startle you or challenge you. Some of the material might be considered controversial or even offensive. All reactions will be welcomed in class and respected, and they will be received in the spirit of extending discussion rather than forestalling it.

References

Bogost, I. (2008). The rhetoric of video games. In K. Salen (Ed.), *The ecology of games: Connecting youth, games and learning* (pp. 117-39). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Boradkar, P. (2010). *Designing things: A critical introduction to the culture of objects*. New York, NY: Berg.

boyd, d. (2014). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W. (2014). *Media/Society: Industries, images, and audiences* (5th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Croteau, D., & Hoynes, W. (2006). *The Business of Media: Corporate Media and the Public Interest.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Frank, T. (1997). Why Johnny can't dissent. In T. Frank & M. Weiland (Eds.). *Commodify your dissent: Salvos from the baffler* (pp. 32-46). New York, NY: WW Norton.

Gates, K. (2009). New Media Addiction. *Television & New Media*, 10, (1), 58-60.

Gilliom, J., & Monahan, T. (2012). *SuperVision: An introduction to the surveillance society.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Grossberg, L., Wartella, E.,Whitney, D. C., & Wise, J. M. (Eds.). (2006). *MediaMaking: Mass media in a popular culture*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Jenkins, H., Ford, S., & Green, J. (2013). *Spreadable media: Creating value and meaning in a networked culture*. New York, NY: NYU Press.

Karpf, D. (2012). *The MoveOn effect: The unexpected transformation of American political advocacy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press

Manning, P. (2012). *Semiotics of drink and drinking.* New York, NY: Continuum Press.

Nakamura, L. (2015). "Don't hate the player, hate the game": The racialization of labor in World of Warcraft. In G. Dines and J. M. Humez (Eds.), *Gender, race, and class in media: A critical reader* (pp. 620-26). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Pariser, E. (2011). *The filter bubble: What the internet is hiding from you*. New York, NY: Viking.

Slater, D. (2014). *A million first dates: Solving the puzzle of online dating*, New York, NY: Current Trade Press.

Slack, J. D., & Wise, J. M. (2005). *Technology and culture: A primer.* New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Sturken, M., & Cartwright, L. (Eds.). (2009). "Images, Power, and Politics." In *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture* (pp.9-36). New York: Oxford University Press

Warner, M. (2002). Publics and counterpublics. *Public Culture,* 14(1), 49-90.

Williams, D., Ducheneaut, N., Xiong, L. Zhang, Y., Yee, N., & Nickell, E. (2006). From tree house to barracks: The social life of guilds in World of Warcraft. *Games and Culture,* 1(4), 338-61.

Winner, L. (1986). *The whale and the reactor: a search for limits in an age of high technology.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.