

Critical and Cultural Theories in Media Studies

Spring 2024

W: 9:30 a.m.-12:35 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Rachel Grant

Course Description

This course will introduce students to the theoretical underpinnings of critical and cultural approaches to studying media. The course will trace the origins of critical/cultural and explores these developments to various schools of thought. Themes covered will include political economy, critical race theory, feminist media studies (both US centered *and* transnational), media globalization studies and cultural histories, to name a few. Students will engage with a broad range of readings that map the interventions of the field and of the critical/cultural scholars who contribute to the study of media.

Required Text:

- Weekly readings provided by instructor
- Durham, Meenakshi G. & Kellner, Douglas M. (2012). Media and cultural studies: KeyWorks (second edition). Malden, Mass.: Blackwell. (Required) (First edition is okay)

Assumptions:

I have high expectations of students. I will be organized, well prepared, efficient with our time, and enthusiastic about the material and your education, but your learning needs will *only* be fulfilled if you are too. The success of this course is, in many ways, contingent on your investment in it. What will you need to do to succeed?

1. *Adjust your mindset about your role in your education.* I do not subscribe to the “empty vessel” model of education that sees the classroom as a place where the instructor

“pours” knowledge into the minds of passive students. The majority of your learning will be done *before* you come to class, as you engage with, and reflect upon, the readings. So, when you come to class, your priority is not to determine “What can this person teach me?” but to ask *yourself*, “How can I share what I have learned?”

2. *Commit to active reading and critical thinking.* Makes notes. Underline and highlight as you read. Write down your questions and comments. Relate readings to other readings (both inside and outside the course). Always look to make connections.
3. *Be proactive in solving problems.* If something does not make sense in a reading (e.g., a theoretical concept or historical reference), conduct additional research. Talk to your classmates. Work in groups. Push through confusion until you have the answer. If things still don’t make sense, come to class and we will pool our collective wisdom. I do not expect you to understand every word of every reading but I do expect your commitment.
4. *Be diligent in how you manage your time.* Neither the readings nor the assignments for this class are the kind that can be completed in a rush. I appreciate that you are busy and have many constraints on your time but I expect you to make time for the things to which you are committed. Invest in a planner. Budget your time wisely. Manage your other commitments so that I never have to hear what all instructors dread to hear – that your work for my class has taken a backseat to work for another instructor’s class (we are, after all, a vain bunch).
5. *Recognize that our class is a community founded on respect.* When you come to class, bring the readings and a positive attitude. Ask questions. Help others by answering their questions. Provide feedback. Listen to, and appreciate, the perspectives of others. Recognize that we all have different experiences, skillsets, and worldviews, all of which are valuable and none of which are definitive. Be enthusiastic about participating in classroom activities. Never assume. Cultivate good manners. Be kind. Disagree respectfully. Do not talk when somebody else is talking. Do not interrupt. Make eye contact with fellow students, not just me. Direct questions to fellow students, not just me. View discussion as a means of sharing what you have learned and learning from others, not testing the knowledge of others. Recognize that learning is its own reward. Oh, I almost forgot: Don’t pack your bags until class is over. And put your cellphone away.

Canvas:

Canvas will contain the readings for the course, detailed assignment descriptions, and additional resources that will be helpful to you. You will also use it to submit the majority of your written assignments and to keep track of your grade in the course. If you are having difficulty accessing Canvas or a particular reading, please let me know as soon as possible.

Contacting me:

I am dedicated to being as available as possible to help you progress through this course. I recommend emailing in advance to set up an appointment.

Do not expect prompt replies on evenings, weekends, and holidays. In addition, please do not rely on me as a personal planner – it is your responsibility to make note of important deadlines.

I expect courteous etiquette in your emails. This includes a salutation and a sign-off that identifies who you are. Be sure to include an appropriate subject.

Contacting you:

Be sure to check your emails regularly for announcements from me.

Attendance:

I consider chronic lateness and leaving class early to be functionally equivalent to absence. While I do not take attendance, I expect you to be present in and prepared for every class, unless you have an excused absence. In the case of an absence, you must consult with another classmate.

Late work:

Assignments are due by the date and time indicated on the course schedule. The official submission record will be the date and time recorded on Canvas. Deadlines (times as well as dates) are absolutely firm. Exceptions will be granted only for family or medical emergencies. Computer or printer failure is not an acceptable excuse for late submission (remember Murphy's Law – "anything that can go wrong, will go wrong" – and plan your writing and printing in advance).

Academic integrity:

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. Breaches of academic integrity include – but are not limited to – the following:

- Use of materials (whether verbatim or paraphrased) from another author without citation or attribution.
- Extensive use of materials from past assignments without permission of your instructor.
- Extensive use of materials from assignments in other classes without permission of your instructor.
- Fabricating information for assignments, whether for publication or not.
- Fabricating sources for assignments, whether for publication or not.
- Fabricating quotes in assignments, whether for publication or not..

When in doubt about what constitutes a violation of academic integrity procedures, contact me.

Disabilities and Accommodations:

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center.

ASSIGNMENTS

Critical Reading Questions (5 points apiece)

You will come to each class (and will submit on Canvas) with a list of 3 *questions* in response to *each* of the readings. Think of it this way: What did you find interesting, relevant, thought-provoking, controversial, or disagreeable about a particular reading? You will submit these questions on Canvas before class, but you must also bring these questions to class with you. Unless you have an emergency, you must turn in your questions before class in order to receive credit. Also, you must be in class in order to receive credit for the weekly questions.

Discussion Leader

Throughout the semester, you will lead the discussion on 5 readings. You'll choose these 5 during our first class. There are a few times where one reading includes two separate texts (shorter readings). Only one student can be assigned to each reading. When leading the class discussion, you will still write your critical reading questions. These questions should especially be designed to stimulate conversation in class.

Research Proposal (50 points):

You will write a 10-12 page research (or literature) proposal (i.e., introduction through method) identifying the focus of your paper.

Research Paper (100 points):

You will write an introduction, literature review and research questions (approx. 15-20 pages of main text) and an annotated bibliography (at least 20-30 entries).

Research Presentation (25 points):

You will give a 12-15 minute presentation of your paper to class.

GRADING

Assignment	Points
Critical Reading Questions	130
Discussion Leader	100 (25 points per presentation)
Research Proposal	50
Research Paper/Annotated Bib	100
Research Paper Presentation	30
TOTAL	410

To calculate your final grade, your total points will be converted into a percentage and rounded to the nearest whole number. The following scale will be used:

Final %age	Grade
98-100%	A+
93-97%	A
90-92%	A-

88-89%	B+
83-87%	B
80-82%	B-
78-79%	C+
73-77%	C
70-72%	C-
0-69%	F

COURSE SCHEDULE

This course schedule is tentative – any changes will be announced in class and/or over email.

Week 1: (Jan. 11) Introduction to syllabus, course and each other

Frankfurt School and Critical Theory

NPR, “Ideas that make up critical race theory have been around

long before it got its name” <https://www.npr.org/2022/09/13/1122621454/ideas-that-make-up-critical-race-theory-have-been-around-long-before-it-got-its->

Tampa Bay Times, <https://www.tampabay.com/opinion/2022/10/20/what-critical-theory-is-actually-all-about-column/>

Week 2: (Jan. 18) Ideology and Cultural Studies

Hall, Cultural Studies Two Paradigms

Popp, Cultural History and Media Studies

Debord, The Commodity as Spectacle

Week 3: (Jan. 25) Marx, Marxism and Marxist Theory

Marx & Engels, The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas

Bourdieu, The Forms of Capital

Smythe, Audience Commodity

Forsythe, Frantz Fanon -- The Marx of the Third World

Week 4: (Feb. 1) Hegemony

Lull, Hegemony

Gramsci, (i) History of the Subaltern Classes; (ii) The Concept of “Ideology”; (iii)

Cultural Themes: Ideological Material

Bates, Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony-

Luisi, Randall Pearson: Framing Black identity, masculinity,

Week 5: (Feb. 8) The Frankfurt School

Horkheimer and Adorno, The Culture Industry

Habermas, The Public Sphere-

Fraser, Rethinking the Public Sphere

Lipsitz, How Racism Takes Place

Week 6: (Feb. 15) Althusserian Theory

Althusser, Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses

Cacho, Social Death

Herman & Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent

Research Proposal Due by Wednesday at noon.

Week 7: (Feb. 22) Technology and Spectacle

McLuhan, Medium is the Message

Kellner, Media Spectacle and Domestic Terrorism

Lu & Steele, Joy is resistance

Week 8: (March 1) The Politics of Representation

Radway, The Readers and their Romances

hooks, Eating the Other

Davis, Black Rapist Myth

Grant et. al., Selling Breonna

Week 9: (March 8) Race and Media Studies

Said, Orientalism

Crenshaw, Demarginalizing

Week 10: SPRING BREAK

Week 11: (March 22) Feminist and Queer Media Studies

Mulvey, Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema

Bordo, Unbearable Weight

Cabas & Grant, No Longer Interested

Jenkins & Finnman, Gender Trouble in the Workplace

Week 11: (March 29) Media and Social Change

Lievrouw, Alternative and Activist New Media

Jackson & Welles, Hijacking #myNYPD

Altheide, Media Logic, Social Control and Fear

Brock, From the Blackhand Side

Week 12: (April 5) Postmodernism and Cultural Studies

Lazar, Critical Feminist Discourse

Foucault, Right of Death and Power over Life
Ahmed, The Cultural Politics of Emotion
McRobbie, Feminism, Postmodernism and the “Real Me”

Week 13: (April 12) Globalization and Transnationalism in Media Studies

Appadurai, Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy
Anzaldúa, The Homeland/Aztlán
Schiller, The Situation of Transnational Studies
Durham, Scene of the Crime

Week 15: (April 19) Postcolonialism in Media Studies

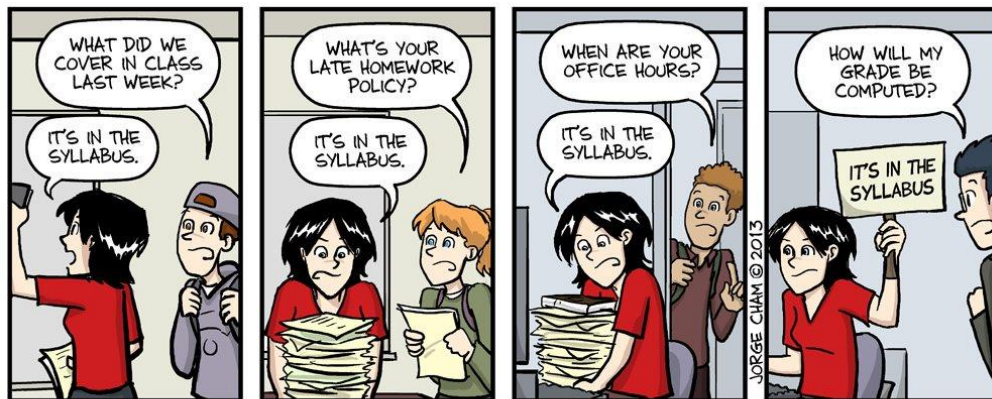
Mohanty, Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses
Plumwood, Dualism: the logic of colonization
Dirlik, The Postcolonial Aura

Week 16: (April 26) Presentations

Submit annotated bibliography.

Week 17: Finals Week

Research papers due on Wednesday.



IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

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