19:232/160:233

critical and cultural theories
of the media and communication
fall 2013

professor: Meenakshi Gigi Durham
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class meets: 10:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. Mondays in E254 AJB

office hours: 1-3:30 pm Wednesdays; 9-10:30 a.m. Fridays in E338 AJB

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication office is located in E305 AJB. The Director of the School is Prof. Julie Andsager, who may be contacted at (319) 335-3486.

course overview and goals

This course offers an introduction to the most significant theoretical turning points in media and cultural studies, and to the progressive politics that underlies such scholarship. The course is organized in a rough chronology that traces the origins of contemporary critical/cultural studies of the media to Marxian concepts of ideology, but follows the development of these ideas through various schools of thought, illustrating how the field has grown more complex, diverse and energetic over time. Designed for the beginning graduate student, the course will provide a broad working knowledge of the main interventions in the field and of the scholars whose work fueled new trajectories. By the end of the course, students will have a familiarity with the key concepts, movements, and approaches to media and cultural studies.

The primary goal of the class is for seminar participants to reach an understanding of the development and range of critical/cultural theories of the media through the process of debate, discussion, critical analysis, and synthesis.

texts

There is one required text for this course:

A recommended book when it comes to writing the final paper is:


The textbook will be supplemented by readings placed on electronic reserve via ICON. Supplemental readings will be online at least a week before they are due. Because this class will rely heavily on this system, students must have regular access to a computer with an Internet connection and a printer.

course web site

The class has an ICON site that students can access using their Hawk IDs. Reading responses and paper drafts will be uploaded to this site.

The site is password protected. Each student has access to his/her grades on this site, as well as all the course information that is online (syllabus, course calendar, etc.)
To access the ICON site, go to:

icon.uiowa.edu (please note that there is no “www” at the beginning of this URL)

log on to ICON using your Hawk ID and password

[Note: The login ID for each new account will be your HawkID. If you don’t know your HawkID, you can find out what it is by calling the Customer Information Desk (384-0800), looking it up in WebISIS (http://isis.uiowa.edu/) or calling the ITS Help Desk (384-4357)].

Select the appropriate semester, and click on the plus sign next to “Spring 2011” if you don’t see this class listed right away.

Click on “019:232 “Mass Communication Theory II”

To upload your files once you are in the course web site:
Click on “Discussions” in the navigation bar at the top left.
Go to the appropriate forum (e.g. “Intro, Kellner, Hall”) and click on it
Click on “Add message” (top right)
Copy and paste the text of your paper into the “Message” box or
Click on “Attach file” at the bottom left and browse for your story
[It is generally easier for me if you copy and paste.]

accommodations

If you have a disability that needs accommodation, please come to my office hours to discuss it as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements in advance. A student seeking academic accommodations first must register with Student Disability Services and then meet with a SDS counselor who determines eligibility for services. A student approved for accommodations should meet privately with the course instructor to arrange particular accommodations. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ I can only make accommodations for students who have been evaluated by SDD, following that office’s specific recommendations.

ethics

It is expected that all work submitted for a grade in this course reflects the original work of the student submitting it. Students are encouraged to discuss their work with others (inside and outside of class), and to exchange drafts of papers with one another for comments and criticisms. But keep in mind that if you borrow an idea from someone else, you must cite the source, even if it is based on a conversation or correspondence.

In addition, turning in the same paper for two classes is considered to be academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will result in serious academic penalties, including the possibility of failing this class. Examples of academic dishonesty are given in the Student Academic Handbook:
www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook//ix.shtml

This course is given by the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. This means that class policies on matters such as requirements, grading, and sanctions for academic dishonesty are governed by the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. Students wishing to add or drop this course after the official deadline must receive the approval of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. Details of the University policy of cross enrollments may be found at: http://www.uiowa.edu/~provost/deos/crossenroll.doc

All CLAS students have, in essence, agreed to the College’s Code of Academic Honesty: “I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty.” Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled.
Any student who does not fully understand the standards of academic honesty should speak to me in advance of submitting coursework.

understanding sexual harassment

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Visit www.sexualharassment.uiowa.edu/ for definitions, assistance, and the full policy.

reacting safely to severe weather

In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Public Safety web site.

student rights

Students have the right to make suggestions or complaints and should first visit with the instructor, then with the course supervisor if appropriate, and next with the departmental DEO. All complaints must be made within six months of the incident. www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml#5

course requirements

Grades will be broken down according to the following criteria. Please note that grades of “Incomplete” will not be given except under exceptional, documented dire circumstances such as a very serious illness. Lack of time is not a sufficient reason to grant an incomplete—all of us have grading, papers, and excessive amounts of work at the end of every semester, and learning to manage these tasks is part of a graduate education!

attendance and compliance with deadlines (5% of final grade):

All students are expected to attend every class. Attendance will be taken at each meeting of the seminar and will count toward your final grade. Excused absences are granted for the following reasons: serious illness (which should preferably be documented with a doctor’s certificate), a death in the family, or, in very rare cases, a school-related event that requires your presence and that you have arranged with the professor in advance (e.g. an out-of-town academic conference in which you are participating, a religious holiday, or a job interview). Make-up or late work will be permitted only in these documented circumstances; in all other cases, the student must accept the grade penalty.

class participation (10% of final grade):

Class participation is a very important aspect of a graduate seminar. Your final grade in the class is dependent on a large degree on your participation in class discussions. You will be encouraged to voice your ideas and thoughts and to contribute to the discussion of every topic. Respect for others’ feelings, beliefs, and values are essential to the success of the class, so please be considerate of your classmates’ different backgrounds and experiences as you discuss various points of view.

Those who are usually silent in class, or whose participation is unrelated to the readings or conceptual terms discussed in the class, will not earn the 10 percent of the grade that is based on class participation.
responses to the readings/other in-class assignments (10% of final grade)

Each week, students will be responsible for preparing short comments culminating in a single discussion question that aims at integrating and synthesizing the readings each week. This reflection should not exceed about 100 words of writing, and can be shorter. In your responses, try to identify the key contributions to media scholarship made by the assigned readings, considering the context in which they were written — in other words, what makes these readings “keyworks?” These comments and questions should be posted to the appropriate folder on the ICON Discussions board no later than noon on Sunday of each week, so that everyone has a chance to read the various questions and think about them before Monday's class meeting. Please also bring hard copies of your responses to class (or be able to access them on a laptop or other portable device).

seminar leadership (30% of final grade)

Starting in week 6, pairs of student will be the discussion leaders for each seminar session, and they will prepare a discussion plan that integrates the various questions that have been posted and points the discussion toward broader engagement with the key issues in the readings for the week. The discussion leaders will be primarily responsible for the conduct of the seminar session (the professor will supplement and offer guidance as needed). In order to facilitate open discussion and interrogation of every idea that comes before us, students should refrain from relying exclusively on individual identities or personal experience to advocate or justify particular positions. Rather, related reading and some contextualization of the topic in the relevant scholarly literature is expected.

final paper (45% of final grade)

The final paper will represent the student's overall understanding of the class material, as well as her/his ability to use this material in original scholarship. The final paper will involve two parts:

(1) a detailed analysis of a refereed journal article that was predicated on a theoretical area covered in this class. The article will be identified by the student and must be approved by the professor. The analysis will explain why the author used the theoretical framework selected, identify the key concepts, explicate the link between the theory and the research question(s), and explore the link between the theory, methodology, analysis and findings.

(2) a proposal for an original research study, involving a detailed theoretical framework and a set of clear, theoretically based research questions, as well as a proposed methodology. The second part of the paper will be roughly 1,250 words in length. These proposals could be the basis for your Spring PhD seminar presentations, or future conference submissions.

The final paper must be the original, individual work of each student. Please note that the same paper cannot be turned in for two classes: that constitutes academic misconduct according to the CLAS code of academic honesty.

NB: All deadlines are set in stone! There will be grade penalties of one letter grade per hour for late work.
course calendar

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are on the course ICON site, either under the “Content” or “Links” tab. “D&K” refers to the Durham & Kellner text. The schedule may change depending on circumstances; it is the student’s responsibility to attend class and check email to keep up with such changes. Extra readings may be added throughout the semester. Changes will be posted on ICON as well as communicated via email.

week one

Reading for 8/26: D&K—“Adventures in media and cultural studies: Introducing the KeyWorks”

8/26: Introductions, syllabus, overview of media and cultural studies

Readings for next class (don’t forget to post any questions about these readings online by noon on Sunday; and please bring print-outs of your responses to class):


(Please note that Sept. 2 is the Labor Day holiday, so we will next meet on Sept. 9)

week two

Questions posted to ICON by noon Sunday, Sept. 8; hard copies of responses due in class (every week)

9/9—The concept of ideology; questions of power in media studies

Readings for next class:


D&K Part I: Introduction to Part I, Marx & Engels, Gramsci

week three

(Please post responses and questions to ICON on Sunday; bring copies of responses to class)

9/16—Discussion of readings; great debates and cultural studies; British, American and other cultural studies.

The relevance of Marxism to cultural studies

Readings for next class:
D&K Part I: Benjamin, Horkheimer & Adorno
week four
Reading responses must be posted to ICON by noon Sunday; hard copies due in class.

9/23—Discussion of readings; the Frankfurt School
Readings for next class:
D&K Part I: Habermas, Althusser

week five
Reading responses must be posted to ICON by noon Sunday; hard copies due in class.

9/30—Discussion of readings; Althusserian theory
How to analyze a journal article: thinking about theory, method, structure and elegance

Readings for next class:
D&K Part II: Intro to Part II, Barthes, McLuhan, DeBord, Dorfman

week six
Reading responses must be posted to ICON by noon Sunday; hard copies due in class.

10/7—Discussion of readings; semiotics and spectacle (student seminar leaders #1)
Readings for next class:
D&K Part II: Williams, Hebdige, Hall, Ang

week seven
Reading responses must be posted to ICON by noon Sunday; hard copies due in class.

10/14—Discussion of readings; British Cultural Studies (student seminar leaders #2)
Readings for next class:

D&K Part III: Intro to Part III, Smythe, Herman and Chomsky, Schiller, Meehan (skip Garnham and Bourdieu)

week eight
Reading responses must be posted to ICON by noon Sunday; hard copies due in class.

10/21—Discussion of readings (student seminar leaders #3)
Readings for next class:
D&K Intro to Part IV + all readings in Part IV
week nine
Reading responses must be posted to ICON by noon Sunday; hard copies due in class.

10/28—Discussion of readings

Readings for next class:
Readings: Intro to Part V, Baudrillard, Jameson, McRobbie

week ten
Reading responses must be posted to ICON by noon Sunday; hard copies due in class.

11/4—Discussion of readings (student seminar leaders #4)
Postmodern theory

Readings for next class:
Poster, Jenkins, Lievrouw, boyd & Ellison

week eleven
Reading responses must be posted to ICON by noon Sunday; hard copies due in class.

11/11—Theorizing new media environments (student seminar leaders #5)
Discussion of final paper topics
Readings for next class:
Intro to Part VI + Appadurai, Sreberny, Anzaldua, Martín-Barbero

week twelve
Reading responses must be posted to ICON by noon Sunday; hard copies due in class.

11/18—Globalized media (student seminar leaders #6)
Guest: Dan Berkowitz on writing a research paper
Readings for next class: Pieterse, Straubhaar, Kahn & Kellner

week thirteen
Thanksgiving Break (11/25-29)

week fourteen
12/2—Reading responses must be posted to ICON by noon Sunday; hard copies due in class.

Upload complete first draft of paper by 9 am Thursday, December 5

week fifteen
12/9—Bring first draft of final paper to class; workshop paper in class (attendance mandatory!)

12/13 (Friday)—Final paper due at 5 p.m. in hard copy in Gigi’s mailbox and online in the course Dropbox

Good luck with your further adventures in media and cultural studies!