

New York University
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication

Seminar in Media, Culture, and Communication

E58.2001

Section 001: Monday 2 – 4:10, Silver 208

Section 003: Tuesday 2 – 4:10, Silver 403

Fall 2008

Professor: Helga Tawil-Souri
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1 – 2 pm; and by appointment

Course Description

This core seminar is required of all MA students. The course examines theoretical approaches that are central to the study of media, culture, and communication. It will provide students with a historical and critical framework for understanding the literature and research tradition within the field of media studies.

Required Texts

Books:

John Durham Peters, *Speaking Into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Articles / Excerpts from books:

These will all be made available on Blackboard.

Helpful Background Readings:

Dictionaries / Encyclopedias:

1) *The Blackwell Dictionary of Twentieth Century Social Thought*, Eds. William Outhwaite & Tom Bottomore, Malden, MA: Blackwell. Provides a good for overview of terms and terminologies, social theories, social movements, main bodies of social thought and social institutions.

2) *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies*, Eds. Tim O'Sullivan, John Hartley, Danny Saunders, Martin Montgomery, John Fiske. New York: Routledge. Not as in-depth as you'd want it to be, but does cover the communication/cultural/media field's main terms.

Books:

1) *Critical Communication Studies: Communication, History and Theory in America*, Hanno Hardt. New York: Routledge. A good historical overview of the intellectual and professional forces that have shaped communication research in the US.

2) *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, Dominic Strinati. New York: Routledge. A good, quick guide to major theories of popular culture in Western thought (European and American).

3) *Culture, Society and the Media*, Ed. Michael Gurevitch. New York: Routledge. Examines media from perspective of liberal pluralist vs. Marxist approaches to analysis.

Expectations and Grading

- **Class Participation: 10%**
 - Timely, active and intelligent participation in class discussions. Graduate school is not the place to shy and quiet!
- **Leading Class Discussion: 10%**
 - Every week, selected students will be in-charge of summarizing readings, bringing up discussion questions and relevant examples, and leading class discussion.
 - Depending on class-size, this may be done in groups.
- **6 Short Essays / Response Papers: 80%**
 - Short essays based on careful and critical reading of the assigned texts; between 800 – 1100 words each. Must be **posted on Blackboard no later than 6pm on the eve of class**.
 - Details to follow.
 - You will have the option of re-writing one essay of your choice, due no later than 12/10 by 2pm.

Grading Policies

- Students with special needs, either with physical and/or learning disabilities, or religious observances, must come talk to me at the beginning of the semester in order to assure any special needs: extra time for papers; access to materials, etc. Moreover, any student 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, www.nyu.edu/csd
- Late papers **will be graded down by -.1 for every day late** (24 hours from beginning of class, including weekends and holidays). Papers and assignments will

not be considered once they are more than 4 days late (including weekends and holidays) and will automatically result in an F (0%).

- Prompt and regular attendance is required. Your participation grade will be **lowered by -.2 for every absence**. Notify me in advance if you are going to miss a class or a deadline. You will need a legitimate excuse (doctor's note, etc.)
- You are expected to abide by NYU's and Steinhardt's standards of Academic Integrity. Cheating or plagiarizing the work of another will result in an automatic "F" on the assignment. Additionally, departmental and university policy permits harsher actions, if warranted.

Grading Scale and Standards

Grading will be done on a 4-point scale

A (4.0) = Excellent. Outstanding work in all respects. Work demonstrates comprehensive understanding and presents thoughtful and creative interpretations, well-focused and original insights, well-reasoned commentary and analysis.

B (3.0) = Good. Work demonstrates complete and accurate understanding of course materials, presents a reasonable degree of insight and broad level of analysis. Work reflects competence but stays at a general or predictable level of understanding.

C (2.0) = Adequate. Work demonstrates adequate understanding but remains superficial, incomplete, vague or expresses some important errors or weaknesses. Work may lack concrete, specific examples and illustrations; writing may be vague or hard to follow.

D (1.0) = Unsatisfactory. Work demonstrates a lack of understanding and fails to express basic aspects of the course. Participation was inadequate or superficial.

F (0) = Failed. Work was not submitted or completed according to parameters (page length, topical focus, types of sources), or completely failed to express the most basic and elementary aspects of the course.

Schedule

The syllabus is a roadmap at best. While it is intended that the course will follow the schedule, modifications along the way are **inevitable**. Please refer to Blackboard for up-to-date schedule and PDF's.

Readings are to be completed BEFORE class. Come to class prepared to discuss all the readings. Background readings are strongly recommended for everyone, especially class discussion leaders, and/or those with little background knowledge of media studies.

Class 1 **(Section 003: 9/2. Section 001: 9/8)**

Introduction: A History of Mis/Communication

- Plato, *Phaedrus*, p.43 (line 259e1) to p. 69 (line 278b5)
- John Durham Peters, *Speaking Into the Air* (entire book)

**** Paper 1 Due**

Class 2 **(003: 9/9. 001: 9/15)**

Ideology and Hegemony

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Class Struggle'
- Marshall Berman, *Adventures in Marxism*, 'All that is Solid Melts into Air: Marx, Modernism and Modernization'
- John Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, 'The Concept of Ideology'
- Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 'Hegemony'
- Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus'

Background:

- Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 'Culture'
- Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*: 'History of the Subaltern Classes', 'The Concept of Ideology', and 'Cultural Themes: Ideological Material'

Class 3 **(003: 9/16. 001: 9/22)**

Politics and Persuasion

- C. Wright Mills, *People, Power, Politics*, 'The Cultural Apparatus' and 'Mass Media and Public Opinion'
- Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence* (excerpts)

- Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda* (excerpts)

Background:

- Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky 'A Propaganda Model'

**** Paper 2 Due (on Sections 2 & 3)**

Class 4
(003: 9/23. 001: 9/29)

Critical Theory of Media & Technology

- Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'
- Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception'
- Raymond Williams, *Television, Technology and Cultural Form*, 'The Technology and the Society'
- Langdon Winner, *The Whale and the Reactor*, 'Do Artifacts Have Politics?'
- Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the message* (excerpt)

Background:

- Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology'

**** Paper 3 Due (on Section 4)**

Class 5
(003: 9/30. 001: 10/6)

Social Interaction and Communication as Culture

- Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 'Deep Play' and 'Thick Description'

Class 6
(003: 10/7. 001: 10/20)

Spectacular Images

- Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, 'The Photographic Message' and 'Rhetoric of the Image'
- Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 'In Plato's Cave' and 'The Image-World'
- Guy Debord 'The Commodity as Spectacle'
- Laura Mulvey 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'

Class 7
(003: 10/21. 001: 10/27)

Post-Modernism

- Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*, 'Staking out the Posts'
- David Harvey, *The Condition of Post-Modernity*, 'Postmodernism'
- Jean Baudrillard, 'Simulacra and Simulations: Disneyland'
- Frederic Jameson 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism'

Background:

- David Harvey, *The Condition of Post-Modernity*, 'Modernism'

****Paper 4 Due (on Sections 5, 6, & 7)**

Class 8
(003: 10/28. 001: 11/3)

Cultural Studies

- James Carey, 'Mass Communication Research and Cultural Studies: An American View'
- Pierre Bourdieu *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (excerpt)
- Stuart Hall, 'Encoding / Decoding'
- Ien Ang 'On the Politics of Empirical Audience Research'
- Janice Radway 'Reading the Romance Novel'

Background:

- Klaus Bruhn Jensen and Karl Erik Rosengren 'Five Traditions in Search of the Audience'

Class 9
(003: 11/4. 001: 11/10)

Political Economy

- Karl Marx 'The Values of Commodities' and 'The Fetishism of Commodities'
- Nicholas Garnham 'Contribution to a Political Economy of Mass-Communication'
- Sut Jhally 'The Political Economy of Culture'
- Nicholas Garnham, 'Political Economy and Cultural Studies: Reconciliation or Divorce?' and Lawrence Grossberg 'Cultural Studies vs. Political Economy: Is

Anybody Else Bored with this Debate?' *Colloquy*, March 1995.

Background:

- John Thompson, *The Media and Modernity*, Chapters 1 and 2.
- Herbert Schiller, *Culture, Inc.*, 'The Corporation and the Production of Culture'

**** Paper 5 Due (on Sections 8 & 9)**

Class 10
(003: 11/11. 001: 11/17)

The National & Post-Colonial Imagination

- Ernest Renan, Joseph Stalin, Clifford Geertz, various (very!) short readings on definitions of nation/alism
- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (excerpt)
- Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (excerpt)
- Edward Said, *Orientalism* (excerpt)

Background:

- Homi Bhabha 'DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation'

Class 11
(003: 11/18. 001: 11/26*)

Feminism and the Sub-altern^δ

- Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments* (excerpt)
- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'
- Chandra Talpade Mohanty 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses'
- bell hooks 'Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance'
- Donna Haraway, 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs'

Media and the Public Sphere^δ

- Jurgen Habermas 'The Public Sphere'
- Craig Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (excerpt)
- Peter Dahlgren 'The Public Sphere and the Net'
- Douglas Kellner 'Oppositional Politics and the Internet: A Critical/Reconstructive Approach'

* 11/26 class may have to be re-scheduled.

Class 12
(003: 12/2. 001: 12/1)

Globalization

- Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy'
- Jesus Martin-Barbero 'The Processes: From Nationalisms to Transnationalisms'
- Annabelle Sreberny 'The Global and the Local in International Communications'
- Jan Nederveen Pieters 'Globalization as Hybridization'

Background:

- Joseph Straubhaar '(Re)Asserting National Television and National Identity Against the Global, Regional, and Local Levels of World Television'

****Paper 6 Due (on Sections 10, 11 & 12)**