

Media Studies: Ideas, 5077 - NMDS 5006 - H
Course Syllabus
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Media Studies Program, The New School University
Online
Fall 2012

Course Description (as defined by the Media Studies Department)

This course is required of all first-year Media Studies students; students may be advised to take the course either concurrently with or in the semester after Understanding Media Studies. Media Studies: Ideas overviews the major schools of academic thought that have had an influence on the field of Media Studies, as they pertain to three central themes: Media and Power, Media and Technology, and Media and Aesthetics. The historical and philosophical roots of the discipline are emphasized through a wide variety of readings, discussions, and academic writing assignments. This course is required for all students, to be taken in the first year of study.

Specific Focus of Seminar

Given the pervasiveness and growing ubiquity of computing, this section of Media Studies: Ideas will focus on the historical importance of media at large as well as new media in relation to the aesthetics of emerging technologies. Participants will be expected to evaluate selected readings along with actual media production, available online, which includes video, music, film, and gaming. This approach should provide participants with a well-rounded introduction to the complexity of media in contemporary culture.

Class Structure

At the beginning of each week—on Mondays, I will post introductory notes along with some key concepts and questions. Participants will be expected to post at least two responses and comments each week demonstrating that they have read the assigned texts. My notes and questions should be considered starting points for a fruitful conversation. Some notes and questions may also be selected for the midterm and final exams—so it is worthwhile to consider them closely. By Thursday night every participant should have **at least two posts**, at which point we will come to the end of the discussion. If somebody posts on the discussion thread after Thursday, it will not be considered late, but it is in your best interest to focus on the current readings for each week according to schedule. Posting late comments after the discussion is officially over may prove to be overwhelming, so try to keep up and focus on the current activities as much as possible. This is done in order to give participants enough time to focus on the next set of readings and media works. There will be discussions every week except for the midterm, thanksgiving and finals week.

Given that some students are inclined to engage with some texts more than others, it is encouraged that at least once during the semester, the student leads the weekly conversation. What this means is that the student can write a bit more than usual and should be the first to comment after the introduction by the instructor. **Doing this will help in class participation, but it does not replace the basic two postings per week.** What it will do is help the overall student's evaluation if s/he is borderline between two grades, as the extra effort will be noted. If you would like to lead a discussion, please let the instructor know and you will be scheduled accordingly.

Consequently, you can team up with another student or students, and do a joint lead of the discussion.

Student Evaluation

Students' evaluation will be based on participation in weekly discussions. Rambling about a subject with no specific reference to the texts will not count as participation. Each post should demonstrate some understanding of the subject, and use of specific terms. There is no word limit, but a strong post is one that shows clear engagement with the subject matter. If students do not understand something, a question should be posted for discussion. However, such question should demonstrate that the participant has read the material. Students will also be evaluated according to a midterm and a final. Each exam will consist of five short essay questions. See details on distributed percentage for each of these items below under grading.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Conceptually map and critique specific theoretical frameworks of media criticism in relation to contemporary culture.
2. Organize and present thoughts in a clear, systematic, and convincing manner through weekly discussions as well as written assignments.
3. Focus on the development of an informed critical opinion.

A Note on Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. A student who commits plagiarism will be reported to the office of the Media Studies. The student's behavior will be taken very seriously and dealt with according to the guidelines provided by The New School. To avoid plagiarism, please cite your sources when appropriate.

THE NEW SCHOOL ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY POLICY (excerpt)

The New School views "academic honesty and integrity" as the duty of every member of an academic community to claim authorship for his or her own work and only for that work, and to recognize the contributions of others accurately and completely. This obligation is fundamental to the integrity of intellectual debate, and creative and academic pursuits. Academic honesty and integrity includes accurate use of quotations, as well as appropriate and explicit citation of sources in instances of paraphrasing and describing ideas, or reporting on research findings or any aspect of the work of others (including that of faculty members and other students). Academic dishonesty results from infractions of this "accurate use". The standards of academic honesty and integrity, and citation of sources, apply to all forms of academic work, including submissions of drafts of final papers or projects. All members of the University community are expected to conduct themselves in accord with the standards of academic honesty and integrity.

Definitions and Examples of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating on examinations, either by copying another student's work or by utilizing unauthorized materials
- using work of others as one's own original work and submitting such work to the university or to scholarly journals, magazines, or similar publications

- submission of another students' work obtained by theft or purchase as one's own original work
- submission of work downloaded from paid or unpaid sources on the internet as one's own original work, or including the information in a submitted work without proper citation
- submitting the same work for more than one course without the knowledge and explicit approval of all of the faculty members involved
- destruction or defacement of the work of others
- aiding or abetting any act of academic dishonesty
- any attempt to gain academic advantage by presenting misleading information, making deceptive statements or falsifying documents, including documents related to internships
- engaging in other forms of academic misconduct that violate principles of integrity.

Please download the complete document, available on Blackboard along with this syllabus.

Required Readings

Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Douglas Kellner (Ed.); *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*, 2nd Edition, Blackwell Publishers, 2005

Nick Montfort, Noah Wardrip-Fruin (Ed.); *The New Media Reader*, MIT Press, 2003.

Other selected readings in PDF as described in Semester Schedule

Check Blackboard for readings. You may acquire the *main readers* at any major online store.

Course Requirements

Please note that final grades are dependent upon consistent performance in all course requirements.

- **Read all assigned material on time and participate in class discussion between Monday mornings and Thursday evenings of each week.**
- **Midterm:** Answer five questions in essay form on material covered to date.
- **Final:** Answer five questions in essay form on material covered after the second half of semester. One of the questions will ask you to evaluate a text in relation to a current event.
- **There are no make-ups.** Please check with me for possible exceptions. Not consulting with me prior to the dates when assignments are due will lead to an automatic F. **Midterm and Final cannot be late—no exceptions.**

Grading

- Participation 30%
- Midterm 30%
- Final 40%

Total 100%

Grade Scale

Letter grade assignments are as follows:

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

Attendance

- Three weeks of non-participation = F, Inability to post commentary by Thursday evening of each week will result in 0 points for that week.
- One week of non-participation is worth 8.5% of overall grade.
- There is no excuse for non-participation unless it is an extreme case. Please check with me for exceptions.

Office hours: Contact via e-mail

Semester Schedule

Note: MCS = Media and Cultural Studies, NMR = New Media Reader. Each lecture will be complemented with online media material.

INTRODUCTION

Week 1

August 27 - September 1, 2012

Introduction to Class

View online material and discuss

FOCUS: Media and Technology

Week 2

September 3 through 7 2012

“The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” 18

Walter Benjamin (MCS)

“What is An Appartus?”

Giorgio Agamben (PDF)

Week 3

September 10 through 14, 2012

“The Medium is the Message” 107

Marshall McLuhan (MCS)

“From Culture to Hegemony” 144

Dick Hebdige (MCS)

Week 4

September 17 through 21, 2012

"The Materiality of Informatics," excerpt from *How We Became Post Human*
Katherine Hayles (PDF)
Excerpts from *The Future of Human Nature*
Jurgen Habermas (Book)

Week 5

September 24 through September 28, 2012
"The GNU Manifesto" 543
Richard Stallman (NMR)
"The World Wide Web" 791
Tim Berners-Lee et. al. (NMR)

FOCUS: Media and Power

Week 6

October 1 through 5, 2012
"The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas" 9
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (MCS)
"Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" 130
Raymond Williams (MCS)

Week 7

October 8 through 12, 2012
Review week for Midterm

Week 8

October 15 through 19, 2012
Midterm
Details on short essay released

Week 9

October 22 through 26, 2012
"Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)" 79
Louis Althusser (MCS)
"The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" 41
Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno (MCS)

Week 10

October 29 through November 2, 2012
"Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" 342
Laura Mulvey (MCS)
"Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance" 366
bell hooks (MCS)

Week 11

November 5 through 9, 2012
"The Commodity as Spectacle" 117
Guy Debord (MCS)
"The Precession of Simulacra" 453

Jean Baudrillard (MCS)

FOCUS: Media and Aesthetics

Week 12

November 12 through 16, 2012

"A Cyborg Manifesto" 543

Donna Haraway (NMR)

"The Fantasy Beyond Control" (644)

Lynn Hershman (NMR)

Week 13

Short Week: Discuss third text from Week 12.

November 19 through 23, 2012

Thanksgiving

Week 14 & 15

November 26 through December 4, 2012

"Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, 482"

Fredric Jameson (MCS)

"Beyond Eurocentrism"

Enrique Dussel (PDF)

Week 16

December 5 through 12, 2012

Review of material (guidelines for study released)

December 13

Final Exam released

Week 17

December 18

Final Exam Due