

Critical media studies

Comm 5211

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office hours (253 Ford): TuTh 10-11:15a, W 10-11:30a, and by appointment

Syllabus

Fall 2011

Course description and objectives

This is a graduate-level survey of major concepts, theories, scholars, and debates in critical media studies (CMS). The topics on our docket map out the contours of the field with very broad strokes. Each of our weekly subtopics could be (and, somewhere on this campus, probably is) the subject of a full-length seminar of its own -- and each of those more narrowly focused seminars is still likely to provide only a broad overview of the subtopic in question. As such, this course doesn't pretend to be an exhaustive introduction to every significant scholar, idea, or school of thought that matters to CMS. Ideally, however, this course will give you the sort of general acquaintance with the field that will help you decide which direction to take your own research program in the future.

Grading policy

Presumably, you're enrolled in this course because you genuinely want to learn about critical media studies, and so you're motivated by something other than the desire to add another A to your transcript -- and that's the way it should be. And so I assume that it's counter-productive for me to make you worry about letter grades. As of Day One, you begin the course with an A. If you show up for all our class meetings, participate productively in our discussions, and complete the annotated bibliographies in satisfactory and timely fashion, you'll keep that A. That said, in cases where people clearly slack off, I reserve the right to go deeper into the alphabet when I submit final grades. Under such unfortunate circumstances, your grade will be calculated using the following formula:

Attendance/participation	10%
Discussion questions	10%
Annotated bibliographies (2 @ 40% each)	80%

Readings

The following required book is available at the University Bookstore in Coffman Union:

- Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (eds.), *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks* (rev. ed.)
- Please note that there is an earlier edition of this book (which contains many, but not all, of the readings we will use this semester) that may still be available elsewhere. If you choose to acquire your book someplace besides Coffman, make sure to get the revised edition. Other required readings will be made available in PDF format.

Attendance/participation

Our weekly meetings will be oriented around seminar-style discussions, rather than formal lectures. Your primary responsibility each week will be to show up prepared to contribute thoughtfully and productively to our conversations about the assigned readings. You are not expected to demonstrate perfect and immediate mastery of the issues raised by our readings -- questions and requests for clarification are appropriate contributions -- but you are expected to participate in our conversations actively and regularly. I'll chime in often enough that you'll certainly get my take on our readings, but this course will not be a spectator event for any of us.

Course blog

We will conduct a significant amount of discussion and course business online. Full details on how to access and contribute to our course blog are available on a separate handout. Among other things, the blog will serve as:

- a central "bulletin board" for official course announcements and major course handouts,
- the primary place where you will submit your written work for the course,
- a space for starting, continuing, and/or augmenting our in-class conversations, and
- a site for mutual support and feedback with respect to your course-related research and writing.

Ideally, the blog should function as a space that's serious enough for people to share extended thoughts on the course material, but also casual enough for people to post quick comments and "in progress" ideas.

Discussion questions

We have 14 weeks of scheduled reading this semester (13 Sep-13 Dec). For *at least 10* of those 14 weeks, you should post 2-3 discussion questions related to those readings to the course blog *by 2:30 pm the day before* the class meeting where we're scheduled to discuss those readings. Exactly what those questions should look like will vary from topic to topic (and from student to student), but you should be aiming for questions that can serve as productive jumping-off points for our in-class discussions: i.e., questions that readily lead the group as a whole into deeper exploration of issues raised by the readings, rather than straightforward informational questions or background/contextual questions that only I am likely to have anything to say about in response.

Annotated bibliographies

You will compile *two* annotated bibliographies, each of which will be a survey of 10-12 major sources related to a different one of the course's weekly themes from 20 Sep-13 Dec. One of these will focus on a theme that I assign, while the other will be on a theme of your choosing. Each item in your bibliographies should provide full and accurate citation information for the source in question, along with an annotation of ~250-500 words that does two main things: (1) briefly summarizes the main argument(s) of the source in question and (2) explains the significance of the source for CMS. More details about this assignment can be found on a separate handout.

Miscellaneous

- I will make every reasonable effort to accommodate individual student needs relating to religious holidays and/or documented disabilities. Please note that, by University policy, my ability to make such accommodations requires you to provide me with written notice (for religious holidays) or official documentation (for disabilities) in advance.
- If you wish to, you may make audio recordings of our class meetings, provided you can do so without disrupting the ordinary flow of the class. The purchase and/or sale of either written notes or audio recordings of our class meetings, however, is strictly prohibited.
- As some of you may already know, I'm the founder/manager of CULTSTUD-L: a cultural studies listserv that has more than 2500 subscribers from over 40 countries around the world. You're welcome to join the listserv, but are under no formal obligation to do so. If you're interested, you should read the list's FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) first to (1) find out how to subscribe and (2) learn the basic rules of conduct for the list. The FAQ is available online here: <http://www.comm.umn.edu/~grodman/cultstud/>

Reading/assignment schedule

[N.B.: Readings from the Durham and Kellner anthology are marked with asterisks.]

6 September **First day**
no readings

13 September **Introductions and overviews**

Raymond Williams, "Defining a Democratic Culture"

James W. Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication"

John Durham Peters, "The Problem of Communication"

Elihu Katz, John Durham Peters, Tamar Liebes, and Avril Orloff, "Shoulders to Stand On"

Lawrence Grossberg, "From Media to Popular Culture to Everyday Life"

Sarah Banet-Weiser and Herman Gray, "Our Media Studies"

Gilbert B. Rodman, "Critical Media Studies: Six Books and a Modest Manifesto"

*Douglas M. Kellner and Meenakshi Gigi Durham, "Adventures in Media and Cultural Studies: Introducing the KeyWorks"

20 September The “mass culture” debates / The Frankfurt School

*Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception”
Theodor W. Adorno, “On Popular Music”
Bernard Gendron, “Theodor Adorno Meets the Cadillacs”
*Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”
Dwight MacDonal, “A Theory of Mass Culture”
Herbert J. Gans, “The Critique of Mass Culture”
John Seabrook, “From Town House to the Megastore”
Lawrence Grossberg, “Teaching the Popular”
Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘the Popular’”
Gilbert B. Rodman, “Notes on Reconstructing ‘the Popular’”

27 September Political economy

Dallas W. Smythe, “On the Political Economy of Communications”
*Dallas W. Smythe, “On the Audience Commodity and Its Work”
*Nicholas Garnham, “Contribution to a Political Economy of Mass Communication”
*Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, “A Propaganda Model”
*Herbert I. Schiller, “Not Yet the Post-Imperialist Era”
Herbert I. Schiller, “The Corporate Capture of the Sites of Public Expression”
Vincent Mosco, “What Is Political Economy?”
Carol Stabile, “The Emperor’s New Clothes: Contemporary Media and the Delusions of Democracy”
Robert W. McChesney, “U.S. Media at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century”
*Eileen R. Meehan, “Gendering the Commodity Audience: Critical Media Research, Feminism, and Political Economy”

4 October Marxism, ideology, and hegemony

*Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas”
Antonio Gramsci, “Hegemony, Intellectuals and the State”
*Antonio Gramsci, “History of the Subaltern Classes” / “The Concept of ‘Ideology’” / “Cultural Themes: Ideological Material”
*Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards and Investigation)”
*Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, “Introduction: Instructions on How to Become a General in the Disneyland Club”
*Raymond Williams, “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory”
Raymond Williams, “Hegemony” / “Ideology”
Lawrence Grossberg, “Strategies of Marxist Cultural Interpretation”
Stuart Hall, “Culture, the Media and the ‘Ideological Effect’”
Stuart Hall, “The Narrative Construction of Reality”
Tony Bennett, “Popular Culture and the ‘Turn to Gramsci’”
*Dick Hebdige, “From Subculture to Hegemony” / “Subculture: The Unnatural Break”
Fredric Jameson, “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture”

11 October Cultural studies

John Frow and Meaghan Morris, “Introduction”
Lawrence Grossberg, “Cultural Studies: What’s in a Name (One More Time)?”
Gilbert B. Rodman, “Cultural Studies: What It Is”
Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies”
Lawrence Grossberg, “Mapping Popular Culture”
*Paul Gilroy, “British Cultural Studies and the Pitfalls of Identity”
Gilbert B. Rodman, “Elvis Culture”
Lauren Berlant, “The Face of America and the State of Emergency”
Constance Penley, “From NASA to The 700 Club (With a Detour Through Hollywood): Cultural Studies in the Public Sphere”

18 October **History**

James W. Carey with John J. Quirk, "The History of the Future"
George Lipsitz, "Precious and Communicable: History in an Age of Popular Culture"
Gilbert B. Rodman, "Making a Better Mystery Out of History: Of Plateaus, Roads, and Traces"
Meaghan Morris, "History in Cultural Studies"
Kathy Roberts Forde, "Journalism, Libel Law, and the Problem of Facts"
Jonathan Sterne, "Hello!"
Charles R. Acland, "Residual Media"
Michele Hilmes, "The Disembodied Woman"
Lynn Spigel, "Media Homes: Then and Now"
Haidee Wasson, "Electric Homes! Automatic Movies! Efficient Entertainment!: 16mm and Cinema's Domestication in the 1920s"

25 October **Texts**

*Roland Barthes, "Operation Margarine" / "Myth Today"
Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* [selections]
Judith Williamson, "Three Kinds of Dirt"
Stuart Hall, "The Determinations of Newsphotographs"
*Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding"
Stuart Hall, "Reflections Upon the Encoding/Decoding Model"
Richard Dyer, "The Light of the World"

1 November **Audiences**

*Ien Ang, "On the Politics of Empirical Audience Research"
Ien Ang, "(Not) Knowing the Television Audience"
Martin Allor, "Relocating the Site of the Audience"
John Fiske, "British Cultural Studies and Television"
Meaghan Morris, "Banality in Cultural Studies"
Janice Radway, "Reception Study: Ethnography and the Problems of Dispersed Audiences and Nomadic Subjects"
Lawrence Grossberg, "Wandering Audiences, Nomadic Critics"
Virginia Nightingale, "What's 'Ethnographic' About Ethnographic Audience Research?"
David Morley, "Theoretical Orthodoxies: Textualism, Constructivism and the 'New Ethnography' in Cultural Studies"
S. Elizabeth Bird, "Imagining Indians: Negotiating Identity in a Media World"
Sarah Banet-Weiser, "The Nickelodeon Brand: Buying and Selling the Audience"
Jonathan Gray, "New Audiences, New Textualities: Anti-Fans and Non-Fans"

8 November **Gender**

*Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"
Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other"
Lana Rakow, "Feminist Approaches to Popular Culture: Giving Patriarchy Its Due"
Lisa McLaughlin, "Feminist Communication Scholarship and 'the Woman Question' in the Academy"
Constance Penley, "Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Study of Popular Culture"
Laura Kipnis, "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading *Hustler*"
Carol A. Stabile, "Shooting the Mother: Fetal Photography and the Politics of Disappearance"
Carol A. Stabile, "Erasing Racism: *Murphy Brown*, Dan Quayle, and the L.A. Riots"
Sarah Banet-Weiser, "Girls Rule!: Gender, Feminism, and Nickelodeon"
*Angela McRobbie, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and the 'Real Me'"
Angela McRobbie, "Young Women and Consumer Culture: An Intervention"

15 November **Queerness**

Judith Butler, "From Parody to Politics"
Judith Halberstam, "An Introduction to Female Masculinity"
*Richard Dyer, "Stereotyping"
Lisa Henderson, "Justify Our Love: Madonna and the Politics of Queer Sex"
Kevin G. Barnhurst, "Visibility as Paradox: Representation and Simultaneous Contrast"
Katherine Sender, "Professional Homosexuals: The Politics of Sexual Identification in Gay and Lesbian Media and Marketing"
Gavin Jack, "A Case of Whorephobia?"
Lisa Henderson, "Queer Visibility and Social Class"
Mary L. Gray, "There Are No Queers Here"
Susan Pelle, "The 'Grotesque' Pussy: 'Transformational Shame' in Margaret Cho's Stand-Up Performances"

22 November **Race**

Stuart Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media"
Stuart Hall, "Race, Culture, and Communications: Looking Backward and Forward at Cultural Studies"
Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis, *Enlightened Racism: The Cosby Show, Audiences, and the Myth of the American Dream* [selections]
*bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance"
bell hooks, "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination"
Herman S. Gray, "Jazz Tradition, Institutional Formation, and Cultural Practice"
Gilbert B. Rodman, "Race . . . and Other Four Letter Words: Eminem and the Cultural Politics of Authenticity"
Carol A. Stabile, *White Victims, Black Villains: Gender, Race, and Crime News in US Culture* [selections]
Peter A. Chvany, "'Do We Look Like Ferengi Capitalists to You?': *Star Trek's* Klingons as Emergent American Virtual Ethnics"

9 November **Globalization**

Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities"
Ien Ang, "Doing Cultural Studies at the Crossroads: Local/Global Negotiations"
J. Macgregor Wise, "Culture and the Global"
*Néstor García Canclini, "Hybrid Cultures, Oblique Powers"
*Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy"
*Annabelle Sreberny, "The Global and the Local in International Communications"
*Jésus Martin-Barbero, "The Processes: From Nationalism to Transnationalisms"
*Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Globalization as Hybridization"
*Joseph Straubhaar, "(Re)Asserting National Television and National Identity Against the Global, Regional, and Local Levels of World Television"

6 December **Technology**

*Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium Is the Message"
James W. Carey, "Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph"
James W. Carey, "Historical Pragmatism and the Internet"
Raymond Williams, "The Technology and the Society"
Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. Macgregor Wise, *Culture and Technology: A Primer* [selections]
Carolyn Marvin, "Dazzling the Multitude: Original Media Spectacles"
Allucquere Rosanne Stone, "In Novel Conditions: The Cross-Dressing Psychiatrist"
Jonathan Sterne, "A Machine to Hear for Them: On the Very Possibility of Sound's Reproduction"
Gilbert B. Rodman, "The Net Effect: The Public's Fear and the Public Sphere"

13 December Digitalization

- *Richard Kahn and Douglas M. Kellner, "Oppositional Politics and the Internet: A Critical/Reconstructive Approach"
- *Mark Poster, "Postmodern Virtualities"
- Henry Jenkins, "The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence"
- *Henry Jenkins, "Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars?: Digital Cinema, Media Convergence, and Participatory Culture"
- Mark Andrejevic, "The Kinder, Gentler Gaze of Big Brother: Reality TV in the Era of Digital Capitalism"
- Ted Striphas, "E-Books and the Digital Future"
- Lawrence Lessig, "Piracy"
- Laikwan Pang, "Copying *Kill Bill*"
- Gilbert B. Rodman and Cheyanne Vanderdonckt, "Music for Nothing or, I Want My MP3: The Regulation and Recirculation of Affect"
- Siva Vaidhyanathan, "The Googlization of Us"

19 December ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE 10:00 am

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