

PERSPECTIVES ON MEDIA: CRITICAL CONCEPTS

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-1:20

Professor Stephen Groening <groening@uw.edu>

Office hours by appointment

TEACHING ASSISTANTS:

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OVERVIEW

The goal of this course is to engage the media culture that surrounds us and shapes our lives as individuals and shapes our society. Students will be introduced to major schools of thought in the study of media, with an emphasis on methodological approaches and critical concepts. As such, much of the material learned for this course is applicable to a wide range of media forms: books, film, magazines, radio, television, websites, video games, social media, or advertising.

This course is part of the Cinema and Media Studies major. Students who major in Cinema & Media Studies learn to engage critically with visual media in diverse global cultures. They examine how film and media reflect and influence art, culture, politics, and entertainment. Through courses covering media criticism, film history and culture, and contemporary cinema and technology, students investigate how visual media shape our experiences in and perceptions of the world. They apply their analytical skills to hands-on practice including internships and courses in screenwriting. Because visual media literacy is an increasingly critical skill in diverse fields, many students pair this major with a degree in STEM, the social sciences, or a pre-professional field. Graduates bring a valued perspective and insights to organizations in a wide range of fields—spanning media, technology, arts and culture, education, entertainment, and more.

<https://cinema.washington.edu/cinema-and-media-studies-major>

WHAT WILL I LEARN?

By the end of this course, students will

- Identify critical concepts in media studies
- Communicate their understanding of these concepts in discussion and in writing
- Recognize historical contexts and social/political effects of media
- Analyze specific media texts

WHAT DO I GET GRADED ON?

CRITICAL SUMMARIES (40 POINTS)

Four critical summaries are due throughout the semester. The first will be graded on a scale of five (5), the second and third on a scale of ten (10), the third on a scale of fifteen (15). The class is divided into groups (posted on Canvas), which determine the readings each student will write about individually. Sample critical summaries can be found in the Canvas course website.

IN-CLASS SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (32 POINTS)

Sixteen of the twenty class meetings will consist of a short lecture and small group discussion. Each small group discussion is worth two points, for a total of thirty-two for the quarter.

Canvas has divided students into small discussion groups. After lecture, breakout rooms will be available. Students will join the breakout room corresponding to their discussion group number on Canvas. The sessions discussion questions will be available on the discussion boards in Canvas.

QUIZZES (24 POINTS)

A quiz will be administered at the end of every class via Canvas. The quizzes will ask questions *about the delivered lecture*, not the group exercises or the readings. The quizzes on the four lecture-only days are worth two points (including the very first day), quizzes on group exercise days are worth 1 point. Normally quizzes consist of four questions. Students have five minutes to complete the quiz.

ENGAGEMENT (4 POINTS)

Engagement includes answering cold call questions in class, visiting virtual office hours, taking engaged and thorough notes, preparation of the materials. The more time, energy and thought you put into the course, the more you will get out of it. I take media studies seriously and expect you to do the same. I expect each student to do all the reading, which amounts to 20-30 pages per class session.

REMOTE INSTRUCTION

CANVAS

This course takes advantage of Canvas, University of Washington's learning management system. Students are responsible for making sure they can access Canvas. All readings can be found online in the course website. Additional materials such as the syllabus, schedule, written assignment style guide, assignment details, course announcements, and so on may also be found on Canvas. Grades are posted on the Canvas site. Most assignments must be submitted through the Canvas website.

EMAIL

Students must use their UW email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class.
Do not correspond with the TAs or professor using Canvas.

ZOOM ETIQUETTE

I expect cameras on during lecture. If you need to leave, take a break, get food, etc., you may turn your camera off. Try to remember to stay muted unless you have a question. The teaching assistants will be monitoring the chat stream, please ask questions using the chat function on Zoom.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT STYLE GUIDE

All written work must be no longer than the assigned number of words in twelve-point Times font. ~~Your assignment must have your name, date, course number and the assignment title in the upper right hand corner (this does not count toward the word limit). Any assignment not following these guidelines will be returned ungraded and uncredited.~~

Written assignments are a chance for you to explore and express your ideas. Therefore, your assignments will be evaluated for clarity of expression, organization and insight. Grammar and syntax are an integral part of communicating your thoughts clearly. I have found grammar checking computer software to be inadequate. You must proofread and revise your assignments before turning them in. Ultimately you are responsible for your grammar and spelling, not your computer.

I am not particular which citation style you use (MLA, APA, or Chicago). But you must be consistent throughout. If you have questions about citations see me. There are several good style and writing guides available. I recommend you obtain one, but consult with me before purchasing.

WRITING TIPS:

- Read aloud what you have written; this will help you achieve clarity.
- Proofread with the intent to revise your paper.
- Do not use emotional appeals.
- Do not ask a series of questions.
- Always specify where and whom.
- Avoid generalizing statements.
- Do not resort to using vague descriptors such as “weird” or “interesting.”
- Italicize television program titles (specific episode titles must be in quotation marks).
- Do not repeat the same word in a sentence.
- Avoid contractions.
- Avoid awkward and unclear word choices.
- Watch out for sentence fragments; revise them into sentences.
- Beware of run-on sentences; revise them into shorter sentences.

Critical summaries that have clearly not taken these tips under advisement will be subject to a grading penalty.

CRITICAL SUMMARIES

Each critical summary must be 500-750 words. All critical summaries must be written in formal academic prose. *Sample critical summaries are available on the Canvas website.*

The primary purpose of these assignments is to make sure that you understand the readings. Therefore, each critical summary must contain three elements: 1) an accurate and full summation of the author's argument; 2) definition of key terms and concepts demonstrating their relationship to the main argument; and 3) an articulation of how the article fits with the rest of the course material. Once you have fulfilled these requirements, you may evaluate the argument, space providing. **Do not** take the three elements above as a "Table of Contents," those elements must be accomplished through your expository writing. I **do not** want a separate section defining terms like a glossary.

The initial paragraph should restate the main argument of the article in question, and the rest of the paragraph should lay out how the author supports that argument (i.e. what is their logic and evidence). The middle of the critical summary should explain the argument, being as precise and specific as possible within the word limit. The concluding paragraph needs to restate the main argument and then elaborate on its significance and implications, potentially linking the article to course materials.

Post your critical summaries to Canvas using the following file-naming format: lastname_assignment.fileformat. Your assignment must be either PDF files or Microsoft Word files. For example: Groening_CriticalSummaryA2.pdf

SOME TIPS TO HELP YOU GET STARTED:

- Read critically and study all the assigned reading materials. Become comfortable in the use of vocabulary, terms and concepts of media studies. Keep a running log and/ or glossary of these terms in your notebook.
- Make sure you know and understand the philosophical underpinnings of the argument, assumed and/ or accepted hierarchies, as well as methods of interpretation and argument.
- Ask yourself: how does this article aid our understanding of media and media studies?
- Support your claims with evidence. When making a declaration about an article, cite or quote the article. For example: "Mary Smith argues that the rise of media conglomerates threatens democracy (Smith, 12)" or "Mary Smith, states "the threat to democracy lies in conglomerates denying access to channels of communication" (Smith, 12)." That way, we can check and make sure you have interpreted the article correctly and have understood it thoroughly.
- I do not subscribe to the conventional wisdom that everything is a matter of interpretation. Too often this position is an alibi for intellectual laziness. Back up your assertions with evidence and logical argumentation.
- Think comparatively: compare and contrast the ideas, concepts, methodologies, and arguments of different authors and articles throughout the semester.
- Evaluations of article should not take the form of "bad," "good," "stupid," "weird," or "cool." Its relevance to your personal life is not a concern for these assignments (but may come up in discussion and/or lecture).
- Make sure that you evaluate the article in terms of its engagement with media and media studies. Does it accomplish what it sets out to do? Is it fair to its object? Does it fairly characterize it opponents?
- Properly identify the title of the reading, be careful not to confuse the title of the book with the title of the chapter, or the name of the journal with the title of the article
- Properly identify the author of the reading (there may be more than one author). The first time you identify the author(s), use first and last name; after that last name only.

SCHEDULE

TUESDAY JANUARY 5:

Introduction to course

Lecture on Frankfurt School

THURSDAY JANUARY 7:

Critical Summary Due: Group A (5 points)

Reading: Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry"

TUESDAY JANUARY 12:

Critical Summary Due: Group B (5 points)

Reading: Raymond Williams, "Controversy"

THURSDAY JANUARY 14:

Critical Summary Due: Group C (5 points)

Reading: Stuart Hall, "Racist Ideologies and the Media"

TUESDAY JANUARY 19:

Critical Summary Due: Group D (5 points)

Reading: Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor" Producing Culture for the Digital Economy"

THURSDAY JANUARY 21:

Lecture on Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan

TUESDAY JANUARY 26:

Critical Summary Due: Group A (10 points)

Reading: Marshall McLuhan, excerpts from *Understanding Media*

THURSDAY JANUARY 28:

Critical Summary Due: Group B (10 points)

Reading: Joshua Meyrowitz, "We Liked to Watch"

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 2:

Critical Summary Due: Group C (10 points)

Reading: William Uricchio, "Media Identity"

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 4:

Lecture on feminist media theory

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 9:

Critical Summary Due: Group D (10 points)

Reading: Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs"

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 11:

Critical Summary Due: Group A (10 points)

Reading: Jennifer Light, "When Computers Were Women"

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 16:

Critical Summary Due: Group B (10 points)

Reading: Lisa Nakamura, "Indigenous Circuits"

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 18:

Lecture on Media Archaeology

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 23:

Critical Summary Due: Group C (10 points)

Reading: Erkki Huhtamo, "Elements of Screenology"

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 25:

Critical Summary Due: Group D (10 points)

Reading: Lisa Gye, "Picture This"

TUESDAY MARCH 2:

Critical Summary Due: Group A (15 points)

Reading: David Beer, "The Comfort of Mobile Media"

THURSDAY MARCH 4:

Critical Summary Due: Group B (15 points)

Reading: Ingrid Richardson, "Pocket Technospaces"

TUESDAY MARCH 9:

Critical Summary Due: Group C (15 points)

Reading: Samir Bhowmik, "The Battery is the Message"

THURSDAY MARCH 11:

Critical Summary Due: Group D (15 points)

Reading: Jennifer Gabrys, "A Natural History of Electronics"

COURSE POLICIES

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Academic freedom is the principle that scholars have the right - without repression - to teach, conduct research, and/or disseminate ideas, even those that are not widely accepted or convenient, with the primary goal of truth-seeking. This is central to the mission, goals, and values of the academy and is a core principle of academia. As the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) states, "institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good...The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition." This course is based on the most recent and relevant research and scholarship in this discipline and in related fields. Although some of the ideas expressed within this course may not be convenient or fit within your worldview, they are grounded in rigorous and informed study.

Our goal is to have deep, informed, and lively classroom debate and discussion. Students must provide logical, rational, and evidence-based argumentation. To be entitled to have your views treated as serious candidates for the truth, you must present evidence for your statements. All "opinions" should be backed up with logical argumentation and evidence with the purpose of seeking truth toward the common good.

STUDENT ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITY

Students are responsible for following the entirety of the Student Conduct Code <https://www.washington.edu/cssc/for-students/student-code-of-conduct/>. I want to draw special attention to the section on Academic Misconduct which includes cheating, falsification, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, destroying or damaging another's work, and recording or disseminating instructional content without permission. For more details, see <https://www.washington.edu/cssc/for-students/academic-misconduct/>.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is expected; excused absences include conference travel, illness, and family emergencies.

DISABILITY-RELATED NEEDS

The University of Washington is committed to providing access, and reasonable accommodation in its services, programs, activities, education and employment for individuals with disabilities. For information or to request disability accommodation contact: Disabled Student Services at (206) 543-8924/V, (206) 543-8925/TTY, (206) 616-8379 (FAX), or e-mail at uwdss@u.washington.edu.

MENTAL HEALTH

It is important that we take care of ourselves inside and outside of class and in our professional lives. Towards that end, there are many different kinds of support services on campus, such as the Counseling Center and Hall Health Mental Health Clinic. If you are concerned about yourself or a friend who is experiencing emotional distress and/or may be at-risk for suicide, you can call SafeCampus at 206-685-7233 (SAFE). They will provide a 24/7 risk assessment and help to connect to appropriate resources on campus. Please save the SafeCampus number in your cell phones.

The SafeCampus website <https://www.washington.edu/safecampus/> is an excellent resource for both mental and physical health concerns. Roughly one out of every five undergraduate students suffers from depression or anxiety while in school. If you are worried about yourself or someone you know, seek help and assistance.