Comparative Media Systems: Production of Culture

Spring 2013
MCC-GE 2184.001 / SOC-GA 2072.001 (FAS/Sociology)
Mon 7:15 – 9:25 PM
Location: TBD

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Course Description
How does the production of culture differ around the world? And to the extent that it does, why? Beyond the personal idiosyncrasies of individual media owners and creative workers, which factors play the greatest role in shaping cultural production: professional values and traditions, forms of ownership and funding, government regulations, organizational dynamics, and/or the social properties of media owners, workers, and audiences? Too much of our media criticism proceeds from hunches and assumptions, rather than real evidence, for the simple reason that it limits itself to a single national context (and often a single time period). Adequately sorting out the factors that shape our media environment can best be accomplished via comparative research drawing on both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This course offers a conceptual roadmap to such a project as well as a close empirical look at media systems (fields, networks, ecosystems) in a variety of sub-national, national and transnational contexts.

Teaching / Course Objectives
* to provide students with an understanding of similarities and differences in cultural production as they vary by genre, audience, and world region
* to provide students with knowledge of the major evaluative and explanatory theories for the production of culture (journalism, music, art, popular entertainment, science, etc.)
* to equip students with the research methods needed for comparative media production research, including analysis of official political and economic data, ethnography, in-depth interviewing, and content analysis
Texts

Required Books (Available at NYU Bookstore)


Recommended book (Available at NYU Bookstore)


Pdf texts: Available on Blackboard under “Course Documents” (indicated in schedule with asterisk).

Course Assignments and Evaluation

Evaluation of your performance in this course will center around four elements:

1. Active and Informed in-class participation (15 percent of grade): Attendance is required, and any absences must be cleared in advance with me. You are expected to complete all readings before class and you will be evaluated on the quality of your in-class participation.

2. Critical Reading Essay (25 percent): Each student will summarize/critique one week’s assigned readings with a 4-page (1000 word) essay. Pick 1-2 (depending on length) closely related readings from a week’s readings (to be approved by me) and address the following issues: a) who is the author addressing, and for what purpose? b) what is the primary argument, c) what evidence is provided in support of the argument, e) what are the actual or potential arguments against it, and f) how does this work contribute to the field of comparative media systems / sociology of news research, noting any significant connections to other authors. Do not consult or cite any outside sources. The paper should
be emailed to your classmates and me by Sunday 9 p.m., prior to class. Be prepared to quickly summarize and discuss the paper in class.

(4) Final paper (60 percent of final grade): In this 16-20 page paper (4000 - 5000 words) paper, you can either: 1) Compare and contrast various methodological approaches, with detailed references to empirical case studies, including at least three from assigned readings or 2) Design a plan to research some aspect or type of news media (medium, genre, targeted audience, nation-state, etc.), drawing on the theories and methodologies presented in the course, and conduct preliminary research.

Grading Policies
It should go without saying that plagiarism is strictly prohibited. This policy will be strictly enforced. “Plagiarism, one of the gravest forms of academic dishonesty in university life, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. In a community of scholars, whose members are teaching, learning and discovering knowledge, plagiarism cannot be tolerated. Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score and/or other materials, which are not your original work. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: Copy verbatim from a book, an article or other media; Download documents from the Internet; Purchase documents; Report from other’s oral work; Paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis and/or conclusions; Copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.” (NYU Steinhardt School of Education Statement on Academic Integrity)

Assignments:
1) must be turned in on-time: late assignments will be down-graded (one half grade if not turned in by the appointed hour; one full grade after one week, and one full grade per week thereafter);
2) must be stapled, if more than one page;
3) must have your name at the top of the page;
4) must have all pages numbered.
Any assignments not formatted as indicated in 2) through 4) may be downgraded an additional 1-3 points.

Grading Standards:
A = excellent. Outstanding work in all respects. Your papers and essays are thoroughly researched, appropriately documented, logically organized and rhetorically convincing. Your analysis is not only comprehensive and sound, but creative and original. In short, you not only get it, but begin to see through it!

B = good. Your understanding of course materials is complete and thorough, and there is at least some evidence of your own critical intelligence at work. You demonstrate basic competence in research, writing and oral presentation.

C = adequate. Your writing is vague and incoherent or riddled with grammatical or spelling errors. You do not make proper use of source materials, and there is little depth or concreteness to your research or analysis. Your understanding of concepts and ideas is
incomplete and often misguided, but there is at least some evidence that you “got” something from this course.

D = unsatisfactory. Work exhibits virtually no understanding or even awareness of basic concepts and themes of course. Your participation has been inadequate or superficial. Either you have not been paying attention or you have not been making any effort.

F= failed. Work was not submitted or completed according to the basic parameters outlined in the course syllabus and any additional information provided about assignments (basic requirements for page length, topical focus, types and number of primary and secondary sources, deadlines).

Grades are calculated according to the following scale: 94-100 A; 90-93 A-; 87-89 B+; 83-86 B; 80-82 B-; 77-79 C+; 73-76 C; 70-72 C-; 67-69 D+; 63-66 D; 60-62 D-; 0-59 F
Schedule (subject to revision):
*course readings available through NYU Home

1 Jan. 28
Overview / What’s at Stake

2 Feb. 4
Explanatory Models
Fligstein and McAdam, A Theory of Fields (selections)

Recommended additional reading:

3 Feb. 11
Cross-National Comparative Research: Justifications, Models, and Methods
*Frank Esser and Thomas Hanitzsch, eds. 2012. The Handbook of Comparative Communication Research (introduction and chapters by Hallin and Mancini; Picard and Russi; and Livingstone). London: Routledge.
Recommended additional reading:

Feb. 18 NYU HOLIDAY: NO CLASS

4 Feb. 25
Case Study of a National Sub-Field of Cultural Production
Medvetz, *Think Tanks in America*

Recommended additional reading:

5 March 4
Studying Transnational Media and Cultural Flows
*Frank Esser and Thomas Hanitzsch, eds. 2012. The Handbook of Comparative Communication Research* (chapters by Couldry and Hepp; Norris).

Recommended for additional reading:
6 March 11
Methods Workshop: Comparative Discourse and Image Analysis
*Frank Esser and Thomas Hanitzsch, eds. 2012. *The Handbook of Comparative Communication Research* (chapters by Rossi; Muller and Griffin).

March 18-22 NYU Spring Break

7 March 25
NO CLASS

MAKEUP CLASS (Time and Location TBD)
Ethnography and The New Media Ecosystem
Anderson, *Rebuilding the News*

8 April 1
Toward a More Expansive Comparative Research Program
*Hallin and Mancini, *Beyond the Western World*, introduction and conclusion, and selected case study and theoretical chapters

9 April 8
Art and other ‘Worlds’ of Cultural Production
Becker, *Art Worlds*

10 April 15
The Networked Public Sphere and the Internet Economy
Williams and Delli Carpini, *After Broadcast News* (selections)

Additional recommended reading:
11 April 22
Methods workshop: In-Depth Interviews
*Other readings TBA

12 April 29
Production of Scientific Expertise
Fourcade, Economists and Societies

13 May 6
Forms of Ownership and Management / Student Presentations

14 May 13
Student Presentations

*Final Paper due Monday, May 20, 6 p.m.