Department of Media, Culture, and Communication
MCC-UE.1016
Media Audiences

Course Description

Communication scholars have long concerned themselves with the relationship between various media/technologies and ‘the audience.’ Different intentions and perspectives inform the discourse and research on how media and communication technologies and their audiences/users interact. This course will proceed historically, theoretically, and methodologically, always questioning the construction of audiences and media users -- constructions that are shaped by commercial, academic, political and cultural contexts. Students will reflect on some historical analyses of ‘emergent’ audiences and critical responses to institutional constructions of audiences. Students will critique mass communication ‘positivist’ studies and questions of ‘media effects’ that dominated debates about audiences beginning in the early twentieth century and still continue today. In addition, students will examine how media and audiences are both situated in particular multiple contexts that have a bearing on how media are generated and circulated, and how audiences experience and make meaning of media/technologies. Methodologically, students will investigate how audiences are conceptualized and researched by scholars and cultural critics. Throughout the course, students will explore the thinking and multiple contexts that frame various conceptualizations of media/technologies and audiences, and how these different approaches inform the concerns, questions, methods, findings, and implications of audience/user research.

Required Reading
--Course Packet of articles/chapters at Advanced Copies (552 LaGuardia Place) [The packet is unbound so that you can bring individual readings to class, which is required; additional readings may be added as the course proceeds, and will be provided by the instructor. Recommended readings not included in the packet can be searched for by the student, or, provided by the instructor if not found.

Grading and Assignments (Specific guidelines will be provided)
Attendance and Thoughtful Participation in Class 15% (5% attendance; 10% participation)

Written Responses to Readings (1-2 pp each) 20%

2 Short Papers (Critical Comparisons of Perspectives,(4-5 pp each) 40% (20% each)

Final Paper (a Research Proposal based on the readings 12-15 pp) 25%

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance will be taken. A drop in grade will occur for unexcused absences, meaning: absences that are not explained in writing either before class or after. In class, you must be prepared to discuss readings and participate in critical discussions; participation is not simply about showing up, but about being an active, thoughtful, respectful, and collaborative member of the class. Blackboard discussions
can prompt, complement, counter, and augment in-class participation. Office hours can also contribute to participation.

**Format of Written Work**

In the upper left corner, include your name, course name, date, assignment heading. All work must be typed and double spaced with numbered pages; multiple pages should be stapled; double sided- printing is welcomed, environmentally. Follow a formal writing style manual for guidelines on citations, quotations, etc., and specify which style manual you use in your reference list in all writing. Make sure you edit/proof your paper before submitting it via paper copy in class as well as Blackboard discussion board—Blackboard submission alone is insufficient, you must bring a paper copy to class on the day the reading response is due. Your grade will be partly based on your ability to follow the norms and conventions of writing using Standard Written English styles and conventions.

**Academic Plagiarism & Dishonesty**

Plagiarism/cheating is not tolerated and will result in failure. Consult University rules and guidelines regarding this serious breach of ethics. Note that turning in the same or similar papers to this and/or another course without first discussing it with the instructor(s) is considered plagiarism; in this class, doing this will result in failing the assignment.

**Evaluation of Work**

**A= Excellent**
Outstanding work in all respects. This work demonstrates comprehensive and solid understanding of course material, and presents thoughtful interpretations, well-focused and original insights, and well-reasoned commentary and analysis. Includes skillful use of source material, illuminating examples and illustrations, and fluent verbal/written expression. “A” work is coherent, fluent, and thorough and shows some creative flair.

**B= Good**
This work demonstrates a complete and accurate understanding of course material, presents a reasonable degree of insight and broad level of analysis. Work reflects competence, but stays at general or predictable level of understanding. Source material, along with examples and illustrations, are used appropriately and articulation/writing is clear. “B” work is reasonable, clear, appropriate and complete.

**C= Adequate/Fair**
This work demonstrates understanding that covers most or some of the basics but which remains superficial, incomplete, or expresses some important errors or weaknesses. Source material may be used inadequately or inappropriately. The work may lack concrete, specific example and illustrations, and articulation/writing may be vague or hard to follow.

**D= Unsatisfactory**
This work demonstrates a serious lack of understanding, and fails to express the most rudimentary aspects of the course. Sources may be used entirely inappropriately or not at all. The work may be inarticulate or extremely difficult to read.

**F= Failed-----Nothing submitted.**
Plus (+) or minus (-) grades indicate your range with the aforementioned grades.

**Schedule**

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<th>Classes</th>
<th>Topic/Assignments Due</th>
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<td>1&amp;2</td>
<td>Overview and introduction/what are the issues?</td>
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Historical Analysis: the construction of the audience


Class 6 • Critical Theory: intellectual responses to audience construction


Academic Positivist Research: studies of effects and uses & gratifications

Looking at short term effects


Looking at long term effects


Looking at individual uses

Class 10  Review/prep for paper

Class 11  Paper #1 Due

**Cultural studies: considering contexts, identities, genres, and lived experience**

*Changing paradigms, grounded studies*


*Situating audiences in everyday life*


>>>>>>>Spring Break<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<


*Audiences living with Multiple Media/Convergent Contexts*


Class 18 Review/prep for paper

Class 19 Paper #2 Due

Changing Audiences, Expanding Contexts


[Recommendations for Classes 20-23:
See this link to a series of edited books on young people and new media published 2008, available online: http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/browse/browse.asp?btype=6&serid=170
Class 24 Overview and Discussion of Final Paper Assignment

Class 25 Proposal Outline for Final Paper Assignment

Class 26 Feedback on Final Paper Outline

Class 27 tba

Final Paper and Writing Portfolio Due (TBA, MCC office)

Please organize your portfolio to guide my review. It should include ALL writing you have accomplished for this class (Reading Responses, Short Papers 1-8, Final Paper, Extra Credit...). But NO BINDERS OR HEAVY FOLDERS, I have to carry all these things home; keep it light. And don’t waste precious earthly resources; so NO PLASTIC--use biodegradable/recyclable materials. Printing both sides of paper is GREAT if you can manage it. Indeed, it is best if you hand in the copies of responses and papers you already handed in that have my comments on them, so that what your portfolio contains is a track record of your work and my feedback. This way, both you and I can trace your LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT throughout the course. If you want to get your portfolio back before the next semester, submit a self-addressed envelope big enough to accommodate the portfolio; otherwise, you can contact me next semester to get it back in person or via the front desk.