MCA+/practice/methodology/approach/analysis/framework/concept/theory/

with

Professor Jamie Skye Bianco [email] [twitter]
Tue, Thur 11:00-12:15 PM, 7E12 LL23, section 001
Office Hours: Tuesday, 12:30-1:30, or email to schedule
Office Location: 239 Greene St., #721, NYC 10003 (Mail: 8th floor)

Professor Nicole Starosielski [email] [twitter]
Tue, Thur 2:00-3:15 PM, BOBS LL149, section 002
Tue, Thur 3:30-4:45 PM, BOBS LL149, section 003
Office Hours: email to schedule Office Location: #724, 239 Greene St., NYC 10003 (Mail: 8th floor)

TA Shira Feldman [email] [twitter]
Lab Hours: Mon, 1:00-3:00 PM (East Building, 7th fl)

TA Marcha Johnson [email] [twitter]
Lab Hours: Wed, 2:00-4:00 PM (East Building, 7th fl)

TA Hediya Sizar [email] [twitter]
Lab Hours: Thur, 9:00-10:30 AM & 1:30-2:00 PM (East Building, 7th fl)

HOW DO WE DO MEDIA + MEDIA STUDIES?

"the idea of practice-based research, long integrated into the sciences, is relatively new to the humanities. the work of making--producing something that requires long hours, intense thought, and considerable technical skill--has significant implications that go beyond the crafting of words. involved are embodied interactions with digital technologies, frequent testing of code and other functionalities that results in reworking and correcting, and dynamic, ongoing discussions with collaborators to get it right." -- n. katherine hayles, how we think: digital media and contemporary technogenesis
from the catalog:

an introduction to the theoretical approaches and practices used to analyze the content, structure, and context of media in society. students will explore factors shaping modern media texts, including: politics, economics, technology, and cultural traditions. the dominant critical perspectives that contribute to our understanding of media will be read, discussed, and employed. the course has three broad objectives: develop a critical awareness of media environments, develop a familiarity with concepts, themes and theoretical approaches of media criticism, and the terms associated with these approaches, and develop an ability to adopt and adapt these frameworks in your own analyses of mediated communication.

so what are the theories, approaches and practices of media studies? how do we analyze a media object, platform or the interactions and worlds produced by and through them? what is a medium, media?

this class will travel through a variety of methods and texts that attempt to get at or study the workings, materialities, effects and dispositions of what we call (without really knowing what it means...) media. but we will not do so passively. we will practice different methods and modes of study and documentation in our work. we will practice the use of the material world and our bodies and media.

how will this work? we will go out into the city and we will collect, capture, document, note, observe and participate. we will research using five approaches and a host of methods and modes:

- textual analysis (semiotics and discourse analysis)
- psychoanalysis, and narrative and genre analysis
- political economy (production, ownership, and labor)
- media archealogy and archival practice
  (media historiography, power of the archive, media archealogy and media practice),
- ethnography (observation, interviews, and fieldwork)

we will look, listen, feel and be in media ecologies in the classroom and on site. we will also learn modes of practice: take notes, take pictures, capture sound and video. we will learn how to build websites, cultivate digital images and sound, and to edit video. we will build an archive of projects and archive them on dropbox. and, we will each build media-specific projects exploring the specific approaches that the class is engaging.

we will critically identify, analyze, build skills, cultivate design and aesthetic sensibilities, understand that we experience the world through our bodies, cognitively and affectively and design our projects with this in mind.

this class is a labor of love and will be well worth your time, but you will need to give time, lots of time. work time, thinking time, psychic investment time, collaboration time and creative time. make sure this is the semester to do this.

this is a core course for the mcc major and minor and you can count on your other courses building on what you learn here. so invest with heart!

students are encouraged to contact their professor in advance of the course regarding software requirements (see below under required materials) and consult this website for office hour and lab hour schedules.

Requirements

- attend all classes and arrive on time.
- complete all assignments as assigned and on time. assignments described in the schedule.
- meet with your professor as requested and as scheduled for your mid-term evaluation, if requested.
- present your final collaborative project project as scheduled. you may not miss the final presentation, so do not schedule a departure from campus prior to our final class.
- fully participate in class activities and especially our collaborative critiques of each others work.
- proactively attend labs & office hours to get the help you need... before the due dates

Projects

- on time attendance at all classes (15%)
- in-class work, writing, exercises (5%)
- assignment 1: media annotation
  » xxxxproposal (2.5%)
  » xxxxassignment(15%)
- assignment 2: visualizing political economy
  » xxxxproposal (2.5%)
  » xxxxassignment(15%)
- assignment 3: media history (parts a & b)
  » xxxxproposal (2.5%)
  » xxxxassignment(15%)
- assignment 4: ethnography (parts a & b)
  » xxxxproposal (2.5%)
  » xxxxassignment(15%)
- final presentation (10%)

note: attendance at lab & office hours if you have trouble or need help (your professor may require this of you if you fall behind). all assignments must be completed to pass the course.

Required Materials

all reading materials will be made available through the course website.

adobe cc (we will discuss in class)
you are not required to purchase this software package, but you will need to be able to access it though bobst library and various computer labs. also available to students from the nyu computer store at a seriously discounted price.

there are mcc work-around alternatives, including use of the mcc departmental lab (239 greene st., #703 - check in on 8th floor) during its specified hours and use of the nyu/bobst library computing labs.

i guarantee you we will use the following adobe applications (though others may be used depending on our progress): photoshop, premiere, media encoder & media player.

**memory stick/portable external drive**

you will need a minimum of 16g of memory. this is required.

this memory stick will be used exclusively for this class. bring it to class. use it as backup. while your work will always be posted on your website, you must also keep every single assignment from class on the usb drive, including project files, old files, and scratch files. you will provide your final coursework to your professor on this drive.

**regular access to digital camera, camcorder, microphone/sound recording equipment**

equipment may be checked out from the mcc dept. office at 239 greene, 8th fl. this is a first-come, first-serve provision. you will need to email mcc.medialab@nyu.edu (cc your professor) requesting specific equipment on specific days. check out is for one day or for the weekend. equipment must be returned by 10am on the following day/monday.

do not use your cell phone cameras... they have limited resolutions and lenses. make sure that whatever camera you use (especially if you borrow a videocamera) that you have the software to access the image files and to download them to your computer or memory key.
Course Guidelines

Expectations

I make a commitment to my students as individuals and to the class as a collaborative whole to offer a challenging, rewarding, smart, fun, and captivating experience with our course and our time spent learning together. In the end, it is my classroom, and I set the terms. So please be aware of my position regarding your participation in my class.

All policies, requirements, assignments, materials, expectations, rules, operating methods and procedures including but not limited to office hours, classroom practices, assignments and grading policies and methods, conferencing as well as informal and/or oral guidelines provided by your professor and are fully subject to change. If changes are made notification to students may be made in and/or out of the classroom, on one or several of our online community pages, the website, twitter, or any other communication method established in the class. Changes are the immediate and ongoing responsibility of the students.

Grading Policies

- Every single assignment must be completed to pass the course. This includes making up any in-class work that you may have missed due to absence. You must tweet your assignments to your professor with the specific URL on your website where the assignment may be found. This is required to receive on-time credit. **Almost all assignments for this course are group assignments.**

- This course practices experiential learning techniques and a “minimal marking” style of grading that respects the student’s work. We will regularly critique and discuss work in class. Your professor will also discuss your work with you individually as often as you make yourself available in lab and office hours. Furthermore, you will receive constant in-class “collaborative feedback” in class. In the end, your university career, your work, your education, your progress in this class are yours—your responsibility, your achievement, and your brilliance. Learning to evaluate the quality of your own thinking and composing is the number one goal for this course.

- Work completed within designated assignment parameters and on time receives a “grade” of 100%. Work turned in up to one week late will receive a grade of 80%. Any work turned in more than a week late will receive a ‘0’ grade, but all work must be turned in to pass the course.

- Each student will produce a final digital portfolio (dropbox) of all work produced for this course. Your dropbox folder and USB drive (containing all project and final files) will be organized and maintained for presentation at the end of the semester. Students are strongly urged to keep a running list of assignments on their websites with up-to-date links.

- Participation in class is a significant portion of your grade and the only aspect of the class that can only be earned by regular active and engaged on-time attendance in class.

- A mid-term assessment/student-professor conference may be scheduled to discuss your progress.

Evaluation of Assignments

- Again, first, last and foremost: you must tweet your completed, already-uploaded to dropbox assignments to your professor’s Twitter (this is also how you document completing your work on time).

- All assigned practice, in-class and studio work, readings, listenings, and watchings must be practiced, read, listened to, and/or watched at least once and any assigned writing must be completed and uploaded prior to class meetings and according to the given due date and time.

- In-class projects, writing, assignments or exercises cannot be made up for credit in the event of absence or tardiness, even excused absences or tardiness. However, all assignments must be completed to pass the course.

- You must adhere to your assigned dates and times. All assignments must be prepared prior to the class meeting, according to the due date and time, and fully complete. No credit will be given to assignments if components are missing or if the assigned date is missed. If hardcopy is requested, it must be prepared before class…no exceptions. Students must complete all assignments to pass the course. This means that if your assignment is late for up to one week, it will receive 80% credit. After that, it will receive a “0”; nevertheless, all assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

- Writing and speaking in response to each other (written peer responses and oral critique) is a major component of the course. Care, consideration, and constructive criticism are expected.

- All homework and composing for class must be produced as digital documents using the assigned software platforms, exported in the assigned formats, and successfully uploaded, copied, exported, and/or legibly printed and/or photocopied prior to class (if hardcopy is required). If in-class writing assignments are completed by hand, you must write legibly, all
assignments must be accurately and fully labeled. all assignments must be transferred to your website as digital documents and saved to your usb drive.

- though in few cases collecting only final drafts, preparatory writing and drafts as well as pre-production assignments will be presumed for all assignments. drafts and pre-production are required assignments.

- all student work will be read, discussed, and/or evaluated in class through the use of public websites, online digital communities, a digital projector, and photocopies.

- each assignment will be discussed in great detail in class. if you are absent, you will have missed this discussion. it is your responsibility to get notes from your peers regarding the in-class discussions. your professor does not hold the same class twice, once for everyone and once for you.

- mla documentation or assigned documentation/citation is expected for all research work, papers, projects and presentations.

- be brilliant often…you are, so share it with the class.

Digital Communications

use of communication devices & computers in class:

in order for us to work together well, we need to construct the boundaries of digital device usage. first: turn off cellphone ringers for this and every public venue in which you attend or participate. this is a matter of basic etiquette.

so, unless given permission to use a specific device in a particular manner, usage is not permitted. this means that using your computer to take notes is always fine, but texting is not ok, unless the class is texting. this means that when we are using the computers, you should not be on facebook unless the class is doing something with facebook...and this is not likely.

furthermore, when permission is granted specific devices may only be used as directed by your professor. if you are confused at a given moment in class, please ask her and she will let you know what is permissible.

please be aware that the class may be audio recorded to fulfill needs of students with disabilities. no other recording is permitted except by express written permission of your professor.

Tardiness

tardiness is not accepted. this is very simple. tardiness=rudeness. tardiness=disruption. tardiness=unhappiness for your professor = unhappiness for late student.

the class takes place twice per week. no break will be given. please use the restroom and make phone calls prior to or after class. unless an absolute emergency, please do not get up and wander in and out of the class while class is in session.

Absences

first and foremost, this course requires your active presence and participation in and out of the classroom.

if you miss two classes, your grade will be affected. if you miss four classes, you will not pass. you must make up any in-class work no later than the following class meeting.

for religious observances, you must contact your professor at least one week in advance to give notification.

and you only are responsible for acquiring missed notes, information, assignments, materials, and announcements. this does not mean simply asking your professor to write up and email notes for the class time that you missed, this means asking twitter, one or two peers to take notes for you, checking all online course resources, and making sure that even if you are not in class, your work due is.

your professor will be happy to confirm any information collected from peers, but she will not redo the class for you. in a seminar and studio workshop, we work together, so this is impossible even if she were willing (and she is not).

Contact

do not wait until the night before class to contact your professor to confirm what you should have already prepared for class.

plan ahead.

when emailing your professor (and anyone for that matter), fully identify yourself and indicate the course that you are taking. consider the context in which you are writing...is your professor your neighbor, best friend, parent, or shoe salesperson? no, she is your professor. use the appropriate language codes for any given communication in order to a) not offend; and more importantly, b) to optimize the outcome.

your professor does not work 7 days/week or 24 hours/day and despite the investigation of our class, she has a non-digital life as well as a digital one. so she does not spend 24 hours/day logged onto her various online accounts waiting for you to contact her, so plan ahead and take responsibility for yourself in this course.

this means that from you are required to contact your professor at least 48 hours in advance of class with any questions.

twitter is preferred. your professor will do her best to get back to you within 48 hours.

Plagiarism & Academic Integrity

the relationship between students and faculty is the keystone of the educational experience at new york university in the steinhardt school of culture, education, and human development. this relationship takes an honor code for granted and mutual trust, respect, and responsibility as foundational requirements. thus, how you learn is as important as what you learn. a university education aims not only to produce high-quality scholars, but to also cultivate honorable citizens.

academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams to making oral presentations to writing term papers. it requires that you recognize and acknowledge information derived from others and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours.
you recognize and acknowledge information derived from others and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours. You violate the principle of academic integrity when you:

- cheat on an exam,
- submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors,
- receive help on a take-home examination that calls for independent work, or plagiarize.

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 that 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; or
- copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.

Your professors are responsible for helping you to understand other people’s ideas, to use resources and conscientiously acknowledge them, and to develop and clarify your own thinking. You should know what constitutes good and honest scholarship, style guide preferences, and formats for assignments for each of your courses. Consult your professors for help with problems related to fulfilling course assignments, including questions related to attribution of sources. Through reading, writing, and discussion, you will undoubtedly acquire ideas from others, and exchange ideas and opinions with others, including your classmates and professors. You will be expected, and often required, to build your own work on that of other people. In so doing, you are expected to credit those sources that have contributed to the development of your ideas.

Avoiding academic dishonesty:

- organize your time appropriately to avoid undue pressure, and acquire good study habits, including note taking.
- learn proper forms of citation. Always check with your professors of record for their preferred style guides. Directly copied material must always be in quotes; paraphrased material must be acknowledged; even ideas and organization derived from your own previous work or another’s work need to be acknowledged.
- always proofread your finished work to be sure that quotation marks, footnotes and other references were not inadvertently omitted. Know the source of each citation.
- do not submit the same work for more than one class without first obtaining the permission of both professors even if you believe that work you have already completed satisfies the requirements of another assignment.
- save your notes and drafts of your papers as evidence of your original work.

Disciplinary sanctions:

If a professor suspects cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken following the department procedure or through referral to the committee on student discipline. The Steinhardt School statement on academic integrity is consistent with the NYU policy on student conduct, published in the NYU student guide.

Student Resources

Students with physical or learning disabilities are required to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 726 Broadway, 2nd floor, (212-998-4980) and are required to present a letter from the center to the instructor at the start of the semester in order to be considered for appropriate accommodation.

Responsibility for Communication

Check in!

The class is your responsibility!

You are responsible to attend class always, read communications regularly, insure that your proper email account is registered with your professor, and to check daily the content of Twitter, NYU email, course websites, and any other digital community that is established for this course.

Again, if additional course platforms are used, you will be expected to check these daily as well. Students are responsible, accountable for and subject to any changes made in the course. These changes might be announced in class, by email, Twitter, and/or on digital community sites. Check them!

Questions? Confused...

Confused...

If you do attend class and are confused, ask questions in class. Then pose your questions on the class twitter feed. Try Google...yes, Google! Office hours are posted on the website...stop in. There are lab hours...tons of lab hours.

If these questions come to you later and you have tried all other options listed above, and you have started your work early enough that you may contact your professor outside of class in time to help.
READEINGS

- Week 1: Semiotics and Discourse Analysis (9/8 & 9/10)
  Stuart Hall, Encoding and Decoding (1973)
- Week 2: Reading Bodies and Performativity (9/15 & 9/17)
  Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, Sex in Public (1998)
- Week 3: Psychoanalysis (9/22 & 9/24)
  Laura Mulvey, Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (1999)

ASSIGNMENTS

- Media Annotation
  For this assignment, you will analyze a media "text": a set of images, television show, radio program, film, video game, website, or physical installation, using one of the approaches discussed in class. This includes semiotic and discourse analysis, bodies and performativity, and psychoanalysis.
  Your analysis will be comprised of both a visual and written component. The visual analysis should take the form of an annotated commentary on a media text/object. Using an image editing software such as PhotoShop, translate the media text/object into 1-3 images that explicate its underlying codes, performances, and/or relationships. These images might in themselves have multiple frames, or it may have no frames at all. The critical approach that you have chosen should be clear in your images.
  In the written component of this assignment, you should reflect on the strategies you have used in creating your visual analysis and connect your work to the critical approaches and readings discussed in class. This should be no more than 3 pages long.
  You should submit this assignment via Dropbox, and tweet the url of the file to your professor's twitter handle. You should also be prepared to show your analysis in class.
**READINGS**

- **Week 4: Introduction to Political Economy (9/29 & 10/1)**
  
  Final Media Annotation Due Tuesday 9/29
  
  - Adorno and Horkheimer, "Introduction," "The Culture Industry" (1946)
  
  - Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor" (2000)

- **Week 5: Media Ownership and Control (10/6 & 10/8)**
  

  Thursday 10/8 Rough Draft Due

- **Week 6: Labor and Production (10/15 & 10/20)**

**ASSIGNMENTS**

For this assignment, as a group you will create a data visualization of an aspect of media's political economy. Using one of the following data visualization software packages - ArcGis, CartoDB, Plot.ly, Raw, or Tableau - you will research, collect data and create a visualization that compares media ownership, financing, access, content generation and use, or labor across nations, platforms, or industries. For example, you might visualize the expansion of Bollywood cinema’s on-location productions over the past ten years. You might undertake a comparative analysis of media censorship in multiple countries. Or, you might look at the rates of user-generated content/free labor on one social media platform over time. You are required to work with the Bobst Library Data Services and Research Librarians in order to pursue both technical expertise and research for this project.

Prior to creating your data visualization and as group, you will write up a proposal and description of your project and research inquiry. This should be at least than 2 pages long. This should be submitted in a blog post to the MCA data visualization website. You should also be prepared to show your visualization in class as a rough draft and then after critique and revision, as a final draft, also posted on the MCA data visualization website. Please tweet the url of your blog posts and data visualization to your professor’s and your TAs’ twitter handles.
ASSIGMENTS

- Week 7: Media Historiography (10/22 & 10/27)

  10/22 Proposal Due

  Laine Nooney, "A Pedestal, A Table, A Love Letter: Archaeologies of Gender in Videogame History"

  Lisa Gitelman, "Introduction" Always Already New Media, History and The Data of Culture (2006)

- Week 8: Media Archeology and New Media Histories (10/29 & 11/03)

  10/29 Rough Draft Due


  Nicole Starosielski, "Surfacing"
READINGS

- Week 10: Observations and Interviews (11/12 & 11/17)
  - Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description” (1973)
  - deCerteau, excerpts from Practice of Everyday Life (1984)

- Week 11: Expanded Ethnography (11/19 & 11/24)
  - Nicole Starosielski, “Pipeline Ecologies: Rural Entanglements of Fiber-Optic Cables,” (2016)

- Week 12: Visual/Audio Ethnography (12/1 & 12/3)

ASSIGNMENTS