Doctoral Core Seminar I, Fall 2010
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication
New York University
E57.3100.001

Tuesdays, 3-5:10, 7th Floor, Room 718 (Conference Room), 239 Greene Street

Prof. Rodney Benson

Office: 551-A, 5th Floor Pless Annex
82 Washington Square East (entrance at 36 Washington Place)
(b/w Washington Square East and Greene Street, same side of the street as the old NYU Bookstore) Note: It says 82 Wash. Square East on the door, and 36 Washington Place over the door; take the elevator around the corner to the left of the security guard station.

Mail Address and Drop-off Box:
239 Greene Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10003-6674 USA

E-mail: rodney.benson@nyu.edu
Telephone: 212/992-9490

Office Hours: Mondays 12-1:30 and Thursdays 2-3:30

Books: Available at NYU Bookstore
Other readings indicated with a * will be available on Blackboard or distributed by email.

Course Description
This course will offer a tour d’horizon of classic and contemporary U.S. and European theorizing and research relevant to media, culture, and communication. It is an advanced graduate seminar designed primarily for PhD students in the Department of Media, Culture, and Communication. Together with Doctoral Core Seminar II (taught in the spring), this course serves as the basis for the department’s PhD first year theory candidacy examination.

Course Policies
This course has three requirements: Active in-class participation, Two short papers, and one final comparative paper. All requirements must be completed in order to pass the course.

(1) Active and Informed in-class participation: Attendance is required, and any absences must be cleared in advance with me.

(2) Two Short Papers (1000-1250 words): For each paper, 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) how does the author conceptualize power, d) 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 media, culture, and communication studies, noting any significant connections to other authors. Most of the paper should be concerned with b-e. 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.
(3) Final Comparative Paper (3000-3750 words). This paper should offer a detailed comparison of the conception/analysis of power in two of the theorists considered in the course, at least one of whom should be from the second half of the course. Only one may have been the topic of one of your short papers. Topic and approach must be approved by me.

These requirements will count toward your final grade as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active, Informed Participation in Class Discussions</td>
<td>20 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short papers (15 percent each)</td>
<td>30 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Comparative paper</td>
<td>50 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A = excellent. Outstanding work in all respects. Your papers and essays are thoroughly researched, appropriately documented, logically organized and rhetorically convincing. Your analysis is comprehensive, insightful, 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. Note, however: for a PhD student, any grade less than a B+ should be considered a serious warning that your work is not meeting expectations.

C = barely 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 (basic requirements for page length, topical focus, types and number of sources).

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

It should go without saying that plagiarism is strictly prohibited. “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 Statement on Academic Integrity)

Assignments must be turned in on-time. Late assignments will be accepted, with one full-grade penalty, up to one week after the due date but not beyond. Unless other arrangements are made beforehand, assignments must be turned in as hard copies, not by e-mail. You are responsible for keeping a copy of the paper. Please staple and number the pages of your assignments.
Books


Schedule (subject to modification): *indicates text available on Blackboard

9.7

1  Introduction and Overview: Course Themes and Approaches


Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, introduction and ch. 1 (pp. 1-59)

9.14

2  Durkheim


Marx / Gramsci
Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching*. Preface, Introduction, Chs. 1-3, 6-10


Weber / Frankfurt School


  “Class, Status, Party (pp. 180-195)
  “Bureaucracy” (pp. 196-244)
  “The Sociology of Charismatic Authority” (pp. 245-252)
  “The Meaning of Discipline” (pp. 253-264)
  “Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions” (pp. 323-359)


**Power and Culture: some alternative approaches**


Lukes, *Power*, chs. 2-3

---

**Habermas and the Public Sphere**


**Additional optional reading:**

Bourdieu: Basic Concepts


Pierre Bourdieu, Sketch for a Self-Analysis


Additional optional reading:

Bourdieu and Cultural Production


Additional optional reading:

11.2 Latour and Actor-Network Theory


Additional optional reading:


11.9 Medium Theory


**Network Society**


**Additional optional reading:**

---

**Critical Responses to Medium Theory**

**Media reception and audience studies**


**Politics, Policy, and Activism**

