New York University
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication

Media Activism

Professor: Victor Pickard    E58.XXXX.XXX
Office hours:      Course hours:
Email: vwp201@nyu.edu*    Location: Building/ Room

Course Description
This interactive and discussion-oriented course provides an introduction to the politics and tactics underlying five broad categories of media activism: media interventions at the levels of representation, labor relations, policy, strategic communication, and “alternative” media making. The course will rely on both a survey of the existing scholarship on media activism, as well as close analyses of actual activist practices within both old and new media. As a class, we will examine a wide-range of digital media as well as local, national, and global media activist institutions.

Course Objectives
By the end of the course, students will:
- Demonstrate understanding about how various political groups, past and present, use media to advance their interests and/or effect social change.
- Be familiar with the historic role of media activism in social movements, with an emphasis on the major texts within the growing subfield.
- Identify how media activism relates to democratic theory and political strategy.
- Formulate comparative analyses regarding strengths and weaknesses associated with specific media activist models.

*A note on email policy: Emails should be reserved for only urgent issues or for setting up appointments.

Course Requirements and Grading
Attendance is required at all scheduled class meetings. I will take attendance at the beginning of every class. Missing two unexcused class meetings will lower your final letter grade by a whole letter. Missing four class meetings means you are failing the course, and requires you to consult with me immediately. Students arriving to class 10 minutes late will not receive credit for attending class that day. Notify me in advance if you are going to miss a class or a deadline. You will need a legitimate excuse (doctor’s note, etc.) to submit to me immediately upon returning to class following absences. Excuses for absences during the course will not be accepted at the end of the semester.
You should come to each class ready to answer questions about the readings. Failure to do so will affect your grade. Your grade is based on a midterm paper, a class presentation, in-class writing assignments, class participation, and a final research paper.

Grade breakdown:
30% Class participation: in-class writing, blog posts, homework assignments, quizzes, and class discussion.
35% Midterm paper (30%) and class presentation (5%) Students will select a type of media activism or activist group to present to class and turn in a 5 page proposal/early draft for a longer research paper.
35% Final research paper: 15-20 pages on a student-selected policy problem using both primary and secondary sources.
* Assignment sheets providing information about formatting and other details will be distributed in class.

Reductions:
- 2 unexcused absences: Reduction of one letter
- 4 unexcused absences: Failure of class
- Failure to turn in an assignment on time: Reduction of half letter from grade for each day

Grading 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

Evaluation Criteria
A = Excellent
This work demonstrates comprehensive and solid understanding of course material and presents thoughtful interpretations, well-focused and original insights and well-reasoned analysis. “A” work includes skillful use of source materials and illuminating examples and illustrations. “A” work is fluent, thorough and shows some creative flair.

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

C = Adequate/Fair
This work demonstrates a basic understanding of course material but remains incomplete, superficial or expresses some important errors or weaknesses. Source material may be used inadequately or somewhat inappropriately. The work may lack concrete, specific examples and illustrations and may be hard to follow or vague.

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

F = Failed
Work was not submitted or completed according to parameters (page length, topical focus, types of sources), or completely failed to express the most basic and elementary aspects of the course. Plus (+) or minus (-) grades indicate your range with the aforementioned grades. Grades will not be curved. If you attend class, do the required work and have a reasonable grasp of the information, you should have no trouble earning at least a C, which indicates satisfactory work. No make-up quizzes will be given. You are expected to abide by the NYU’s and Steinhardt’s standards of Academic Integrity. Cheating or plagiarizing the work of another will result in an automatic “F” on the exam or assignment. Additionally, departmental and university policy permits harsher actions, if warranted.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism
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 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 takehome 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.

The Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development imposes heavy penalties for plagiarism in order to safeguard the degrees that the University grants. Cases of plagiarism are considered among the most serious of offenses.

**Student Resources**

- Students with physical or learning disabilities are required to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 719 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.

  ***Please note:*** Students with special needs, either with physical and/or learning disabilities, or religious observances, should inform me immediately at the beginning of the semester in order to assure any special needs (extra time for papers, etc.). I will do my best to make sure that every accommodation the University makes available will be granted in these cases.

- Writing Center: 269 Mercer Street, Room 233. Schedule an appointment online at www.rich15.com/nyu/ or just walk-in.
COURSE OUTLINE
(I will make minor alterations to the reading assignments throughout the semester, and will add current news stories about contemporary media activism, so please pay close attention as we go along.)

Week 1

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<th>Introduction: What is Media Activism?</th>
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Consider these questions: What is the role of media in a democracy? Whose stories get told in mainstream media? How is media used to maintain power? How is media used to contest power? Historically, how have media been used towards social change?

Week 2

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<th>The Varieties of Media Activism</th>
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Week 3

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<th>The Politics of Media Representation</th>
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Look at the websites and work of FAIR, Media Matters, Guerrilla Girls, Media Research Center, Accuracy in Media and other groups.


Week 4

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<th>The Politics of Media Labor Activism</th>
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**Week 5**

**Media Policy Activism**


**Week 6**

**The Media Reform, Media Justice, Media Democracy Movements**

Look at the website and work of Freepress.net, Reclaim the media, Media Alliance, MAG-net, and the Media Mobilizing Project. Consider the case studies of the media ownership campaign and the movement in support of “Net Neutrality.”

“How Owns the Media? (Media Ownership Distribution Chart).” Freepress.net.


**Week 7 MIDTERM PAPER DUE**

**Strategic Communications and Media Advocacy**

Look at the work of Move On, Bold Progressives, NOW, the Tea Party Movement


### Week 8

**Culture Jamming, Memes, Artivism and Ad Busting**

Look at the work of Ad Busters, The Yes Men, Memefactory


Selections from Kalle Lasn, *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge--And Why We Must*, 2000.


### Week 9

**Hactivism and the Free Software Movement**


### Week 10

**Internet, Online and Cyberactivism**


### Week 11

**LPFM and the Microradio Movement**


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**Week 12**

**Global Media Activism**


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**Week 13**

**Citizen/Community/Public/Independent/Grassroots Journalism and Alternative Media**

Look at the work of Paper Tiger Television, Democracy Now, and Indymedia. See also the Free Press “Save the News” campaign.


Week 14

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<th>DIY Media, Zines, and Video Activism</th>
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Selections from DeeDee Halleck, Hand-held visions: the impossible possibilities of community media, 2002.

FINAL PAPER DUE