**E59.1018. Kids in Media Culture**

Department of Media, Culture, and Communication  Professor JoEllen Fisherkeller
Tues/Thurs 4:55-6:10pm; Office hours: T/Th 3:30-4:30, &/or by appt ;7th Fl. East; 212-998-5807; jf4@nyu.edu

**DESCRIPTION OF COURSE**

What roles do popular media play in society and culture, and in particular the experiences, thinking, and values of young people? How should we address the issues raised by the contemporary communication environment, and by the reality of young people's interactions with popular media in social and cultural contexts?

In this course, we will consider these questions. We will focus on debates and issues raised by various media environments that characterize contemporary existence. Most important, we will investigate how young people actually use, value and find meaning in multiple media in different contexts, and we will discuss the social, cultural, and political implications of these situations. Finally, we will explore how we, as workers and citizens, might address -- ideally and practically -- the issues raised by the contemporary communication environment and by the reality of young people's interactions with popular media.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

--To describe the general situation of communication and mass media in culture
--To describe how young people use and understand different mass media in different contexts
--To describe the particular roles different mass media play in the development, socialization, and learning of the young
--To analyze the implications of the above
--To engage in literature and field-based research
--To gain experience in presenting to groups, and responding to groups
--To develop a persuasive argument proposing ways of addressing pertinent issues arising from the readings and discussions in the course.

>>> 3 books are required for this course [Buckingham (2000); Fisherkeller (2002); & Seiter (2005)-- see syllabus details below]. They are available at NYU bookstore, or wherever you can find them [knowing you can search for a deal].

Also, there is a packet of selected readings, unbound (at Advanced Copy, Laguardia between 3rd. and Bleeker). I leave this packet unbound so you can bring individual readings to class (required).

If any recommended readings cannot be located please notify the professor. You are encouraged to locate and introduce us all to sources other than those listed in the syllabus. I will be grateful for any suggestions you can make about materials.

**FORMAT, ASSIGNMENTS AND PROJECTS**

Classes will include combinations of large and small group discussions, presentations, and activities. Students are responsible for reading selections before class, and for participating actively, thoughtfully, and respectively in discussions. Because participation is key to this course, attendance will be taken, and more than 2 excused absences will result in a drop in grade.
1) Discussions will be generated by asking you to submit weekly responses to the Required readings, through class activities, and by bringing your own intellectual and practical experiences to bear in understanding the course concepts and issues. Reading responses will be posted on Blackboard before class, and a paper copy (1-2 pages) will be collected at Tuesday’s class of each week; you should respond to all readings required for that week in one response. Reading responses should demonstrate that you are making thoughtful connections between your own scholarly interests and experiences, and the ideas/issues raised by the reading. Your responses to the readings should not just be a book report or summary, you should also critique, question, comment on, elaborate on, or augment ideas and issues of the readings. Reading response guides will be provided. These weekly responses, and your thoughtful participation in class and on the Blackboard discussion board constitute 40% of your grade.

2) Each person, as a member of a group, will help to prepare a presentation on and discussion of the readings that have been assigned (all required and some recommended) for one week (a schedule of group presentations will be developed in the first few weeks; student presentations do not begin until Week 7). As presenters, your task is to review the major points of all required and some recommended readings for that week, and generate questions for a substantive, analytic, and inquiry-oriented discussion of thematic issues raised by the readings for that week. You will also each hand in an individual, 6-8 page (typewritten, double-spaced) summary and analytic discussion of your own on that weeks’ readings and a specific key issue pertinent to you. Group presentation and individual paper guidelines will be provided. The group presentation and individual paper constitute 30% of your grade.

3) The final paper asks you to synthesize the concepts, readings, and issues of the course in a 15-20 page paper (typewritten, double-spaced). You will analytically review and discuss, in a selective manner, situations and “problems” raised by the course readings and discussion, situations and problems that you consider most relevant and timely, and that need particular people’s attention and awareness. In closing, you will also propose how people (such as yourself) might take action. You should have in mind a particular audience for your paper, and consider that they are the actual readers of your ideas. Ideally, you should actually either publish or present this paper in an appropriate venue, or use it to create other media materials or interventions that speak to a particular group of people who can help make a difference in the world. NOTE: Other media materials may complement/augment this paper as necessary (audio visual materials, computerware, etc.) More specific guidelines will be provided, and a paper topic outline will be due Week 13. The final paper constitutes 30% of your grade.

Successful assignment responses will demonstrate that:
- you can understand the roles communication and media play, or should play, in contemporary society and cultures;
- you can understand how social and cultural contexts play a part in young people’s interactions with media;
- you can analytically examine relationships among the roles different media play in society and cultures, the specific contexts of actual media use, and the meanings young people derive from their situated media experiences;
- you can discuss the social, cultural, and political implications of these relationships.
- you have identified a specific audience and can present a persuasive argument to them

In other words, you should work to analyze and synthesize what you learn from the course so that you can communicate NOT just to me as your teacher. I MEAN THIS. PLEASE THINK FOR YOURSELVES HOW TO COMMUNICATE TO OTHERS IN THE WORLD ABOUT WHAT MATTERS TO YOU, BASED ON WHAT YOU LEARN HERE.

COURSE EVALUATION STANDARDS AND POLICIES –

At the end of the course, you will hand in a portfolio that will include all of the writing that you have produced for the class (your weekly reading responses, your group presentation-based individual paper, and your final synthesis paper). It would be best if you saved the responses and papers you handed in to me that include my comments to hand in again, so that you and I can review our written interactions, to gauge your progress of thinking.

40% of grade: class discussions and activities (15%), reading responses (25%)
30% of grade: group panel presentation (15%) and individual paper (15%)
30% of grade: topic outline (5%) and final paper (25%)

A = excellent. Outstanding work in every respect. The work demonstrates comprehensive and solid understanding of course material, and presents thoughtful approaches, that is, well-focused interpretations, original insights, and well-reasoned commentary and analysis. Includes skillful use of source materials (including appropriate and accurate citations), illuminating examples and illustrations,
and fluent verbal/written expression. "A" work is coherent, fluent, interesting, thorough, and creative. Student attendance is perfect and participation is insightful.

**B = good.** The work demonstrates a complete and accurate understanding of course material, presents a reasonable degree of insight and broad levels of analysis. Work is completed competently, but stays at a general or predictable level of understanding. Source materials, along with examples and illustrations, are used appropriately, articulation/writing is clear. "B" work is reasonable, clear, appropriate and complete. Student attendance is almost perfect and participation is substantial.

**C = adequate.** The work demonstrates understanding that is superficial, incomplete, or expresses some errors or weaknesses. Source materials may be used inadequately or inappropriately, there is a lack of concrete or specific examples and illustrations, and articulation/writing may appear confused, vague, or cursory. Some work is late and/or sloppy, and student has a few non-excused absences; participation is cursory.

**D = unsatisfactory.** The work demonstrates that understanding is seriously lacking or in error, or fails to grasp even the most rudimentary aspects of the course. Source materials and examples are used incomprehensibly or totally inappropriately, and articulation/writing is deficient. Work is consistently late and/or sloppy, and student has several non-excused absences. Participation is minimal.

**F = failed.** Work not submitted, or attempted.

• Pluses and minuses indicate minor adjustments to these marks
• I do not give incompletes unless dire circumstances warrant that. Plan your time and energy.
• Plagiarism will not be tolerated, and will result in failing the course. Consult the University rules and regulations regarding this breach of ethics. In addition, 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.
• You must consult and specify a style manual for your papers. The following is recommended, but you can use another style as long as you specify which you are referring:
OUTLINE OF COURSE TOPICS AND SCHEDULE

Week 1: Overview and Introductions
Young People, Media, and Culture: Debates and Perspectives
What are the issues raised by the situation of young people and media in contemporary times? Why do people care about young people and their encounters with different media? How do social, cultural and historical contexts play a role in young people’s interactions with multiple media forms?

Weeks 2-3: Issues and Realities, in Context
Required:
Week 2, Intro & Chapter 4; Week 3, Chapter 5 & 6. (Chapters 2 and 3 Recommended)
Recommended:

Week 4: Some Historical Studies, in Context
Required:
Recommended:
[By week 5: Construct Schedule for Presentations]

Week 5: Doing Identity Work, In Multiple Contexts
Required:
(Chapters 2 & 4 Recommended)
Recommended:
Week 6: More Identity Work, In Multiple Contexts

**Required:**

**Recommended:**

**Multiple Media, Multiple Literacies: Codes, Information, and Participation**
What cultural and social values are attached to different forms of communication, as they relate to active membership in different meaningful communities? How do young people understand and use these different forms in specific contexts and communities?

Week 7: Kids Make Sense of Text-based Media, in Multiple Contexts

**Student Presentations**
- See blogs, journals, zines, and other print-oriented texts generated by kids themselves

**Required:**
- Dyson, Anne Haas. Chapters 1, 2 & 6 in *The Brothers and Sisters Learn to Write: Popular Literacies in Childhood and School Cultures*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2003. (Other Chapters Recommended)

**Recommended:**
Week 8: Kids Make Sense of Audio/Visual Media, in Multiple Contexts

**Student Presentations**
- See videos, music, and fan websites created by kids themselves that reference audio/visual media

**Required:**
- Fisherkeller, JoEllen. “‘The Writers are Getting Kind of Desperate’: Young Adolescents, Television, and Literacy” *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. Vol. 43, No. 7, pp. 596-606, 2000 (April).

**Recommended:**
- Zaslow, E. (tba)

Weeks 9-11: Kids Make Sense of “Converged Media” – in Context

**Student Presentations**
- See any online media that contain multiple forms (text/audio/visuals) created by kids themselves

**Required:**
- Seiter, Ellen. Chapters 1,2, 3 & 5 in *The Internet Playground: Children’s Access, Entertainment, and Mis-Education*. NY: Peter Lang, 2005 (Chapter 4 Recommend).

[see next page for Recommended]
Recommended (weeks 9-11):
Tripp, Lisa. (tba)
Young People, Everyday Life, and “What to Do: ”Possibilities and Challenges
Given the issues of young people and different media in contemporary culture, and given how young people experience and interpret different media – in different kinds of contexts -- what can we do? Who should take action, how, why – and where?

Weeks 12-15
Discussion of thematic issues, and presentation of proposals concerning the future of media, culture and education for young people and possibilities for future research.

Required:
  Chapters 8-9 on Consumers and Citizens (only) plus Conclusion
  (Chapter 7 on Violence recommended only)
  (Chapters 1, 2, 4 Recommended)

Recommended:
Seiter, Ellen. *The Internet Playground: Children’s Access, Entertainment, and Mis-Education*. NY: Peter Lang, 2005 [See Conclusion and Appendix]

[Also: I highly recommend courses that deal with child/adolescent development, language and literacy development, educational media design, youth media and youth culture, and media activism. I also recommend that you consider doing an internship/independent study that would take you into the field, working with youth media organizations/schools doing media literacy projects.]

Final Paper and complete Portfolio DUE: Wed. May 7, 5pm, in Department Office.
Please organize your portfolio to guide my review. It should include ALL writing you have accomplished for this class (Reading Responses, Short Papers, Extra Credit…). But NO BINDERS OR HEAVY FOLDERS, PLEASE! I have to carry all these things home; keep it light. NO PLASTIC. Don’t waste earthly resources… Printing both sides 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 your portfolio back by mail, please include a self-addressed envelope large enough to hold your materials.