New York University
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication

Seminar in Media, Culture, and Communication
E58.2001.003
Fall 2007
Wednesdays 2.00 – 4.45pm
48 Cooper Square, Room 116

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description
This core seminar is required of all MA students. The course examines theoretical approaches that are central to the study of media, culture, and communication. It will provide students with a historical and critical framework for understanding the literature and research tradition within the field of media studies with an emphasis on media and communication as institutional actors, technological artifacts, systems or representations, and meaningful cultural objects.

Required Texts
Books:
Available the NYU Bookstore and most on-line booksellers.

Excerpts from Books:
These books are available at the NYU bookstore and most on-line booksellers. However since we will only be reading excerpts from them, they are optional to purchase. PDF’s will be made available on Blackboard:
• Plato, Phaedrus
• Aristotle, The Art of Rhetoric
• Elihu Katz & Paul Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications
• Jacques Ellul, Propaganda
Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face to Face Behavior*
- Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*
- Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*
- James Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*
- Raymond Williams, *Television, Technology and Cultural Norm*
- Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*
- Bill McKibben, *The Age of Missing Information*

**Articles / Excerpts from books:**
Many required readings will be available on Blackboard.

**Expectations and Grading**

- **Class Participation:** 10%.
  - Timely, active and intelligent participation in class discussions.

- **Short Essays:** 7% each x 12 =84%.
  - Weekly short essays based on careful and critical reading of the assigned texts; addressing the following questions:
    - What is the central thesis of this work?
    - On what assumptions or points is the thesis of the work built, in what logical order?
    - What are the major terms or concepts central to this work, and how does the writer define these terms?
    - What are the methods of argument and kinds of evidence used to develop and support the thesis of the work?
    - In your judgment, what are the limitations, shortcomings, errors, or weaknesses in the work?
    - In your judgment, what are the major contributions and strengths of this work to the understanding of media, culture, and communication?
    - What relationships do you see between this work and other works you have read in this course (and in other courses), and why?
    - What interesting questions or problems or potential applications to research, professional or personal development does this work suggest to you and why?
  - Due Dates: See Schedule. You may email papers by 1pm on due dates.

- **Final Paper:** 6%.
  - A short paper identifying the area within the program you would like to pursue in your studies by drawing on some of the theorists you have read this semester. What concepts, constructs, questions, theories, thinkers, etc. would you like to study and why?
o Length: 1,000 words. Typed, double-spaced.
o Due: December 19 @4pm.

Grading Policies
• Students with special needs, either with physical and/or learning disabilities, or religious observances, must come talk to me at the beginning of the semester in order to assure any special needs: extra time for exams or papers; different settings for exams; access to materials, etc. Moreover, any student who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility and/or learning disability, or is Deaf or Hard of Hearing should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212 998-4980, 240 Greene Street, www.nyu.edu/csd
• Grades will not be curved.
• Late papers and assignments will be graded down by -5 for every day late (24 hours from 2pm, including weekends and holidays). Papers and assignments will not be considered once they are more than 4 days late (including weekends and holidays) and will automatically result in an F (0%).
• Prompt and regular attendance is required. After two absences, your grade will be lowered. 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.)
• You are expected to abide by NYU’s and Steinhardt’s standards of Academic Integrity. Cheating or plagiarizing the work of another will result in an automatic “F” on the assignment. Additionally, departmental and university policy permits harsher actions, if warranted.

Grading Scale and Standards
A = Excellent. Outstanding work in all respects. Work demonstrates comprehensive understanding and presents thoughtful and creative interpretations, well-focused and original insights, well-reasoned commentary and analysis.

B = Good. Work demonstrates complete and accurate understanding of course materials, presents a reasonable degree of insight and broad level of analysis. Work reflects competence but stays at a general or predictable level of understanding.

C = Adequate. Work demonstrates adequate understanding but remains superficial, incomplete, vague or expresses some important errors or weaknesses. Work may lack concrete, specific examples and illustrations; writing may be vague or hard to follow.

D = Unsatisfactory. Work demonstrates a lack of understanding and fails to express basic aspects of the course. Participation was inadequate or superficial.

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.
Schedule
The syllabus is a roadmap at best. While it is intended that the course will follow the schedule, modifications along the way are inevitable. Please refer to the Blackboard site for up-to-date schedule and PDF’s of readings that are not entire books.

Readings are to be completed BEFORE class. Please come to class prepared to discuss the readings.

Readings are listed in suggested order.

September 5 Introduction

September 12 History and Theories of Communication
• John Durham Peters, Speaking Into the Air (entire book)

Essay 1 Due

September 19 Media and Social Theory
• John Thompson, The Media and Modernity (entire book)

September 26 Language and Rhetoric: Language as Medium, Rhetorical Studies
• Plato, Phaedrus (excerpts)
• Aristotle, The Art of Rhetoric (excerpts)

Essay 2 Due

September 28 Graduate Conference
Recommended to attend.

October 3 Politics and Persuasion
• Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence (excerpts)
• Jacques Ellul, Propaganda (excerpts)
• C. Wright Mills, “The Cultural Apparatus” and “Mass Media and Public Opinion” from People, Power, Politics.

Essay 3 Due
October 10

Critical Studies of Culture and Society
- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Class Struggle”
- Karl Marx “The Values of Commodities” and “The Fetishism of Commodities”
- David Harvey “Modernity and Modernism” from *The Condition of Post-Modernity*
- Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus”
- John Thompson “The Concept of Ideology” from *Ideology and Modern Culture.*

Essay 4 Due

October 17

Social Interaction and Communication as Culture
- Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual* (excerpts)
- Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge* (excerpts)

Essay 5 Due

October 24

Post-modernism
- Dick Hebdige “Staking out the Posts” from *Hiding in the Light*
- David Harvey “Postmodernism” from *The Condition of Post-Modernity*
- Paul Rabinow & Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader* (excerpts)
- Frederic Jameson “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”
- Jean Baudrillard, “Simulacra and Simulations: Disneyland”

Essay 6 Due

October 31

Cultural Studies
- Stuart Hall, “Encoding / Decoding” (October 31 - continued on next page)
October 31 - Continued

- Lawrence Grossberg, “Identity and Cultural Studies: Is That All There is?”
- Raymond Williams, “Culture” & “Structures of Feeling” in *Marxism and Literature*

**Essay 7 Due**

November 7

**Technology and Determinism**

- Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”

**Essay 8 Due**

November 14

**Technology Revisited**

- Raymond Williams, *Television, Technology and Cultural Form* (excerpts)
- Horkheimer and Adorno, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (excerpts)

**Essay 9 Due**

November 28

**The Image**

- Susan Sontag “In Plato’s Cave”

**Essay 10 Due**

December 5

**Political Economy**

- Herbet Schiller, “The Corporation and the Production of Culture” in *Culture Inc.*
- Sut Jhally, “The Political Economy of Culture”
- Vincent Mosco, “The Political Economy of Communication” in *The Political Economy of Culture* (December 5 - continued on next page)
December 5 - Continued


Essay 11 Due

December 12

Globalization and Postcolonialism

- Arjun Appadurai, Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization (excerpts)
- Edward Said, Orientalism (excerpts)

Essay 12 Due

December 19

Final Paper Due by 4pm