MEDIA AND CULTURAL ANALYSIS
MCC-UE 14.003
Fall 2012 / MW 2:00-3:15pm / Silver, rm. 621
Laura Portwood-Stacer, PhD

Email: laura.ps@nyu.edu
Office: East Building (239 Greene St), 3rd Floor
Office Hours: MTW 12:45-1:45pm, other days by appointment

Course Description
This course will investigate media through a variety of theories and methods. The focus will be
on some of the dominant critical perspectives that have contributed to our understanding of
media and its role in society. The course will provide the basic vocabulary and concepts used to
analyze different types of media. The purpose throughout the semester will be to explore,
understand, and effectively apply various schools of media criticism through reading, watching,
discussing, and writing a wide range of media texts.

Required Texts
All required readings will be posted as PDFs to the course website.

There is one recommended (not required) book:
Dominic Strinati, An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture, 2nd edition.

We will have in-class screenings of media texts nearly every day. You are responsible for
making these up on your own time if you need to miss class.

Assignments

In-class activities: Throughout the term, we may have pop quizzes, personal written reflections,
and group exercises during class time. There will be no make-ups allowed – you must be in class
at the time of the activity in order to complete it, no exceptions. At the end of the semester I will
average your scores on all of these activities.

Homework assignments: Periodically I will give brief homework assignments. These will not
be writing intensive but will give you a chance to practice applying methods and theories of
media criticism on your own. These assignments will be due during the following class period. If
you are unable to attend class on the due date, you are still responsible for ensuring that I receive
your completed assignment. Likewise, if you miss class on the day an assignment is given out, it
is your responsibility to find out about it from a classmate and to complete it on time. These
assignments will be included in your activity average at the end of the semester.

Attendance: Five percent of your grade will be based on simple attendance of class. You are
allowed 2 unexcused absences, no questions asked. After that, any absences without prior written
approval will result in a one-percent reduction in your attendance grade per absence.
Participation: All students are expected to actively participate in class sessions. This means coming to class prepared by having done all the readings, bringing assigned readings to class, paying attention during all lectures and screenings, asking thoughtful questions, and sharing personal insights when appropriate. Your participation grade is assessed above and beyond your attendance; just showing up to class will not earn you any participation points. Spending class time on your laptop or cell phone engaged in non-class activities will negatively affect your participation grade. You may think I don’t notice, but I do. You are encouraged to check in with me throughout the semester to find out how you are doing on participation, so that you are not surprised when your final grade comes.

Midterm Exam: The midterm will be held in class and will consist of short essay questions based on lectures and assigned readings.

Papers: In each paper, you will apply a method of media criticism to a recent media text of your choice in order to produce a critical essay of 4-6 pages. You will be given a prompt that provides you with method and topic suggestions. You are encouraged to discuss your ideas in advance with me and with your classmates (though any work you submit must be your own – see academic integrity policy below).

Final Essay Exam: The final will be take-home and due at the scheduled final exam time. It will be cumulative in that it will require you to draw on material from throughout the term.

Course Grade Calculation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>50 points</th>
<th>10% of final grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities/homework</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 1</td>
<td>75 points</td>
<td>15% of final grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>20% of final grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 2</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>20% of final grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>20% of final grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>50 points</td>
<td>10% of final grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>25 points</td>
<td>5% of final grade</td>
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Final grades, based on total points earned, out of 500:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Earned</th>
<th>Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>320-334</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>335-349</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>350-369</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>370-384</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>385-399</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400-419</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>420-434</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>435-449</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450-469</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>470-500</td>
<td>A</td>
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</tbody>
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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.

Course Policies
See above for grading policies related to attendance and participation.

Lateness: Late assignments will not generally be accepted, as it places extra burden on me to
keep track of your assignments above and beyond what I do for the other students in the class. It
is also unfair to the other students, who are each making their own sacrifices and commitments
in order to complete work on time. If you have a true hardship in completing an assignment on
time, you must seek written approval from me, in advance of the due date, to extend the due date
for a reduced grade. If you fail to turn in an assignment by the time it is due, and have not
contacted and received approval from me for an extension, you will receive a zero on the
assignment.

Email: I will make every attempt to answer emails promptly. Please allow 24 hours for me to get
back to you. I encourage you to consult this syllabus and any documents distributed in class
before posing redundant questions (particularly if you have been absent from class). You are
much more likely to receive a response from faculty and staff when your correspondence is
professional and courteous. I prefer to be addressed as Prof. or Dr. Portwood-Stacer (Prof. P-S is
fine)!

Accommodations for students with disabilities: 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.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM
I take academic integrity extremely seriously. When you turn in work that is not your own, you
communicate to me that you are not serious about this course and I will adjust your grade to
reflect that. If I suspect that you have submitted dishonest work, you will receive a zero for the
assignment. You may also fail the course and the case may be forwarded to department and
university administrators. If you have any doubts as to whether work you plan to submit violates
the standards of academic integrity, please ask me in advance. It is better to have an honest question cleared up before the fact than to risk failure and disciplinary action.

All students must be familiar with the NYU Steinhardt School definition of plagiarism and the policy on academic integrity. The NYU Steinhardt Statement on Academic Integrity is available at: http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity

The Steinhardt School defines plagiarism as follows:

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.

The Writing Center
http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html
411 Lafayette, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10003
212 998-8866
mailto:writingcenter@nyu.edu

Hours: Monday to Thursday, 10 am to 8 pm; Friday, 11 am to 4 pm

The Writing Center is a place where any NYU student can get help with his or her writing. The Writing Center is a part of NYU's Expository Writing Program in the College of Arts and Science. It is a place where one-on-one teaching and learning occur, as students work closely with professional consultants at every stage of the writing process and on any piece of writing except for exams.

NYU Wellness Exchange
http://www.nyu.edu/999
212-443-9999

The Wellness Exchange is the constellation of the University's expanded and enhanced programs and services designed to address the overall health and mental health needs of our students. Students can access this service through a private hotline, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, which will put them in touch with professionals who can help them address both day-to-day challenges as well as any other crises they may encounter, including depression, sexual assault, anxiety, alcohol and drug dependence, sexually transmitted infections, and eating disorders. The Wellness Exchange is also available for students who just need to talk or to call about a friend.
Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction
9/5: Kellner, "Communications vs. Cultural Studies"

Week 2: Mass Culture and Popular Culture
9/10: MacDonald, “A Theory of Mass Culture”
Suggested: Strinati, “Mass Culture and Popular Culture
9/12: Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”

Week 3: Ideology and Culture
9/17: Adorno & Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry"
Suggested: Strinati, “The Frankfurt School and the Culture Industry”
9/19: Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory"
Hall, "Culture, the Media and the Ideological Effect"
Suggested: Strinati, "Marxism, Political Economy, and Ideology"

Paper 1 Assigned

Week 4: Political Economic Analysis and Ideological Critique
Bignell, “Media Semiotics: TV News”
9/26: White, “Ideological Analysis and Television”
Fowler, “Analytic Tools: Critical Linguistics”

Week 5: Industrial Approaches
10/1: Liebman, “Corporate Soul Mates”
Levine, “Toward a Paradigm for Media Production Research”
10/3: Mittell, “Television Genres as Cultural Categories”

Paper 1 Due

Week 6: Semiotic Analysis
10/8: Sturken & Cartwright, "Practices of Looking" & "Viewers Make Meaning"
Seiter, “Semiotics, Structuralism, and Television”
Suggested: Strinati, “Structuralism, Semiology, and Popular Culture”
10/10: Bignell, “Media Semiotics: Television”
Bignell, “Media Semiotics: Cinema”

Week 7: Psychoanalytic Criticism
10/15: No Class (Fall Recess)
10/17: Flitteman-Lewis, “Psychoanalysis, Film, and Television”
Mulvey “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

Week 8: Exam Week
10/22: Midterm Exam
10/24: Homework assignment on "the gaze"
Week 9: Feminist Analyses
10/29: D’Acci, “Television, Representation and Gender”
        Brunsdon, D’Acci, and Spigel, “Feminist Television Criticism”
        Suggested: Strinati, “Feminism and Popular Culture”
10/31: Arthurs, “Sex and the City and Consumer Culture: Remediating Postfeminist Drama”
        Portwood-Stacer, “Me, Only Better”

Week 10: Race and Representation
11/5: Dyer, “Stereotyping”
        Corea, “Racism and the American Way of Media”
11/7: Diawara, “Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance”
        Paper 2 assigned

Week 11: Intersectionality
11/12: Rivero, “Erasing Blackness”
        Crenshaw, “Whose Story Is It, Anyway?”

Week 12: Media and the Construction of Identity
11/19 Paper 2 Outline due in class
        Castiglia & Reed, “Ah, Yes, I Remember It Well’: Memory and Queer Culture in Will and Grace"

Week 13: Postcolonial Critique; Postmodernism
11/26: Said, "Communities of Interpretation"
        Shohat and Stam, “The Imperial Imaginary”
        Paper 2 final draft due in class
11/28: Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society”
        Suggested: Strinati, “Postmodernism, Contemporary Popular Culture, and Recent Theoretical Developments”

Week 14: Postcolonialism + Postmodernism, continued
12/3: No readings – Catch up on last week's readings
12/5: No readings – Catch up on last week's readings

Week 15: Audience Studies
12/10: Allen, “Audience-Oriented Criticism and Television”
        Lembo, “Components of a Viewing Culture”
        Final Exam distributed
12/12: Review day

Final Exam due electronically by 2pm on Monday 12/17