E59.1019
Media and Identity

Course Description
This course draws upon diverse literatures to map the terrain of constructed identities. At issue is how distinctive identities (such as gender, sexuality, social class, occupation, race and nationality) are constructed and represented. We will engage with and expand on the following questions: How is identity formed, maintained, and represented? How can we better understand identity through an historical perspective? How do individuals use traditional and new media to reflect their identities? How does popular culture inform our personal displays of identity?

You will explore issues of identity as they intersect with media. Specifically, you will be evaluated based on your ability to demonstrate comprehension of the reading assignments by using the readings as a foundation to develop scholarly written and oral analysis regarding media representation and the construction of identity.

The course is divided into 4 sections:
1. **Media Effects and Visual Culture**: explores media and mass culture theories and offers an introduction to a critical analysis of visual culture; investigates the relationship between media and social behavior
2. **Forms of Media**: examines the historical, social, and cultural significance of specific media, including radio, print, telephones, photography, film, and television
3. **Case Studies in Media**: looks at how media informs and constructs notions of race, gender, sexuality, and the body.
4. **Computers and the Internet**: focuses on issues of on-line gaming, virtual worlds, and “second lives;” virtual social networking; and the effects of mixed media

Required Readings/Books [All books are available at NYU book store and throughout the city/online]:
- Course packet, available for purchase at East Side Copy (15 E. 13th St., between 5th and University Pl.) Course packet # 29 & # 32
- Articles, etc. posted on Blackboard

Recommended Books:

Course Requirements

**Student assessment/Grades:**
1. Attendance and Participation 15%
2. Media Presentation 10%
3. Journal 35%
4. Final Project & Presentation  40%

**Schedule of Classes**
(subject to change; various articles will be added, based on the weeks’ themes; some readings will be moved to “recommended” and/or specific excerpts from the text will be assigned)

Wed. Sept. 8  **Overview and introduction**

Mon. Sept. 13  **Media Effects and Visual Culture**


Mon. Sept. 27  **Forms of Media: Radio & Telephones:**


**Wed. Sept. 29** *Forms of Media: Newspaper and Print:*

*Journal #1 Due*
Mon. Oct. 4  
**Forms of Media: Photography:**

Wed. Oct. 6* 

*Final project proposals due*

Mon. Oct. 11  
**NO CLASS (Columbus Day)**

Wed. Oct 13  
**Forms of Media: Film:**


Wed. Oct. 18  
**Forms of Media: Television:**

Mon. Oct. 20  

Wed. Oct. 25  
**Case Studies in Media and Race:**
Means Coleman, Robert R. “Black Sitcom Portrayals.” *Gender, Race, and Class in Media* p.79-88.


Excerpts from “Twilight: Los Angeles”

**Mon. Oct. 27**

Film Screening: *Bamboozled.* (Part 1)

**Wed. Nov. 1***

Film Screening: *Bamboozled.* (Part 2)

*Journal #2 Due*

**Mon. Nov. 3**

**Case Studies in Media, Gender, and Sexuality:**
Mirzoeff, Nicholas. (*An Introduction to Visual Culture.* “Virtual Identity.” p.107-111

Ouellette, Laurie. “Inventing the Cosmo Girl: class Identity and Girl-Style American Dreams.” *Gender, Race, and Class in Media.* p.116-127
Crane, Diana. “Gender and Hegemony in Fashion Magazines.” *Gender, Race, and Class in Media.* p.314-332.

**Wed. Nov. 8**


*Film Screening:* Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity

**Mon. Nov. 10***


*Film Screening:* *The Celluloid Closet*

*Final project thesis statement/outline due*

**Wed. Nov 15**

**Case Studies in Media, Beauty, and the Body:**
Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *An Introduction to Visual Culture.* “Net Life”; “Virtual Bodies” p.111-114; 116-123.
Mon. Nov 17

Computers and the Internet: Gaming and Second Lives:


Slate: Virtual Hooker

Film screening: *Avatar* (excerpts)

Wed. Nov 22


Mon. Nov 24*

Computers and the Internet: Virtual Social Networking
Baym, Nancy K. “‘I Think of Them as Friends’: Interpersonal Relationships in the Online Community.” *Gender, Race, and Class in Media.* p.488-496.


*Journal #3 Due*

Wed. Nov 29

No Class – (Film: *We Live In Public* replaces this class)

Mon. Dec 1

Computers and the Internet: Mixed Media, Hybridized Identities
Nakamura, Lisa. “‘Where Do You Want To Go Today?’: Cybernetic Tourism, the Internet, and Transnationality. *Gender, Race, and Class in Media.* p.684-687.
Seiter, Ellen. “Television and the Internet.” *Gender, Race, and Class in Media.* p.688-695

Film screening: *Surrogates* (excerpts)

Wed. Dec 6

Final Presentations

Wed. Dec. 8*

Final Presentations **Final paper due**

Mon. Dec. 13

Final Presentations

Wed. Dec. 15

Final Presentations (Last day of Classes)
DETAILED INFORMATION REGARDING ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING

You must complete ALL of these assignments in order to pass the class. Failure to complete one of them will result not only in an F for that assignment, but a failing grade in the course.

No late assignments accepted, except in extraordinary circumstances. No emailed assignments (no exceptions); hard copies only. There are no make-up presentations.

I Active and Meaningful Participation 15%
Knowledge in the university environment is acquired through independent reading and writing followed by classroom discussion that is structured and moderated by the instructor. Your active participation is vital to this process. Active participation includes listening, building on what others say, asking questions, advancing reasoned arguments, identifying theories that are relevant to the discussion, and working collaboratively with others. Keeping up with the reading assignments is essential to your success in this course.

Regular and prompt attendance is required. You cannot participate if you do not attend class. Missing class and/or a record of lateness will negatively affect your grade. An absence will be excused only in case of a medical emergency (or other extraordinary circumstance) which is justified with appropriate documentation. If you miss more than 3 class meetings, you will fail the course (an absence is counted when a student misses more than half an hour of a class). Two late arrivals to/early departures from class will count as an absence (students are marked late once attendance is taken). Lateness is extremely disruptive and should be kept to a minimum.

In-Class Expectations: Be present: on-time, awake, cell phones OFF (not on silent/vibrate), no computers (except for presentations), readings in-hand, notes/questions prepared, necessary materials printed, stomach full (no meals in class)

Teacher/Student Interaction: Please keep email correspondence to a minimum and allow up to 48 hrs for a response. Before emailing, answer these questions: 1) Can I answer it myself? 2) Can a peer help? 3) Can it wait until class? If the answer is “No” to all three, then please send an email. Office hours and before/after class are optimal times for communication. If you are regularly unable to attend office hours due to a class or work conflict, please discuss setting up an alternative meeting time or a scheduled phone conversation.

II. Media Presentation:

Due: TBA

Grading: 10%

Objective: This assignment is designed to develop analytical thinking, associative learning and effective communication skills.

Process: As assigned, students will individually present to the class an example of mediated communication that relates to the topic of the day. Presentations should be around 15 minutes long. Do not summarize the readings. Students may select to present any form of mediated communication (e.g. video clip, audio-recording, art, advertisement, publication, video game, web page, etc) as long as it is discussed in terms of the day’s reading assignments/week’s themes. Students will be graded on the thoughtfulness, creativity, and clarity of their presentation, as well as their ability to engage the class with questions and spark discussion. If additional A/V is need for your presentation, inform the instructor at least 3 days prior.

III. Journal

Due: 3 times throughout the semester, as indicated above
Grading: 35% (An average of the 3 grades will be taken, with expectations of growth throughout the semester)

Objective: To foster lively and thoughtful discussions based on the student’s ongoing reflections on the readings and their practical, media-related applications.

Process: Read assigned texts. Create an on-line blog where you can reflect on the week’s theme and readings in relationship to specific media examples – and as the weeks progress, relate your commentary back to previous weeks and themes. You may also incorporate your observations and experiences gathered for your final project.

Format: BE CREATIVE. Aside from the fact that it will be a live blog, you may experiment freely with the structure and format. You may elect to write daily or weekly entries, or you may weave together the weeks into a larger essay – or perhaps you’ll develop an entirely different structure.

A few notes:
- You may use any blog server -- Word Press and Blogspot are fine, or another of your choosing.
- Each of the 3 graded sections should be around 1000 words.
- Visuals, resource links, and multimedia such a video are encouraged
- Creative titles are encouraged
- DO NOT SUMMARIZE THE READINGS – I’m looking for your questions, thoughts, reflections based on the readings – and most importantly, an application of the readings to specific media examples. However, you should demonstrate a working knowledge of the texts (beyond what’s discussed in lecture, I want to see you delve deeper here).
- Textual citations (with proper MLA formatting) must be incorporated.
- Outside sources are encouraged
- Proofread! (Just because it’s a blog does not mean that spelling/punctuation/grammar are not important.)

IV. Final project

Due:
- Oct 6: Proposal
- Nov 10: Thesis Statement and Outline
- Dec. 8: Final Paper
- Dec. 1, 6, 8 & 15: Final Presentations

Grade:
- proposal/outline: 5%
- 10 page paper: 30%
- final presentation: 5%

Objective: To apply the concepts and theories presented in-class to a specific issue that relates to media and identity, via in-depth scholarly research, cultural criticism, and direct media engagement.

Description: Your final project (I am purposefully calling it a project instead of a mere paper) will be a semester-long study of a virtual, immersive world and/or a multi-player on-line game (see hand-out for suggestions). This study will be guided by your independent study of Tom Boellstorff’s *Coming of Age in Second Life*. We will not read the book in class, but rather you will read it independently and use it — along with the other texts from the syllabus and outside sources gathered from your research — and use it to analyze your on-line experience.

Process: A. Proposal
A virtual world will be chosen by the student and approved by the instructor. Proposals should consist of a 1 page description of the chosen virtual world and the questions related to media and identity that it raises

B. Thesis Statement and Paper Outline
Develop a statement that clearly articulates your paper’s topic and the angle with which you’re approaching/analyzing your on-line experience. Outline each section of the paper in approximately 3 pages total. Include preliminary visuals/media in the outline.

C. Final Paper
The paper includes 10 pages of text, plus additional media images and excerpts.

A. Final Presentation
The final presentation should be a multi-media PowerPoint presentation that recaps and summarizes the project, including any findings or conclusions drawn from the research. It should also incorporate relevant media and visuals (particularly those that cannot be experienced in the final paper). It should NOT be an oral reading of the final paper.

Policy on Extensions
Assignments are due on the dates stipulated on the syllabus or in class. Late assignments will not be accepted. Absences are not an acceptable excuse for not having done the required work. In case of extenuating circumstances that will prevent you from meeting a deadline, you should discuss the matter with the instructor before the due date of the assignment.

Academic Honesty
Any breach of university policy on academic honesty, including plagiarism, submitting the same work for two courses, or other academic fraud or dishonesty is taken seriously. Plagiarism will normally result in failure in the course, not just the paper itself. Consult the Statement on Academic Integrity on Blackboard for guidelines.

Evaluation Standards
A = Outstanding. “A” students demonstrate commitment to class in attendance, participation, and preparation; this means virtually perfect attendance, reading assignments fully, and showing interest during class time. They ask questions, are able to connect past learning with the present, show initiative, and aren’t afraid to be creative. Written work demonstrates comprehensive and solid understanding of the material, and presents thoughtful interpretations, well-focused and original insights, and well-reasoned commentary and analysis. Students also demonstrate skillful use of source materials, illuminating examples and illustrations, fluent expression, and few grammatical errors. [A = 94-100 points; A- = 90-93]

B = Good. “B” students may miss class from time to time, but are generally prepared and try to participate. Their commitment to class may vary: at times they may seem bored or distracted, at other times engaged and involved. They have interest in the subject and have the ability to master scholarly material. Written work demonstrates an accurate understanding of the material, presents a reasonable degree of insight and broad levels of analysis. Work reflects competence, but stays at a general or predictable level of understanding. Source materials, examples, illustrations, are used appropriately and articulation/writing is clear. Papers have been carefully proofread. [B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83]

C = Fair. “C” students miss class too frequently and show little interest in course readings and class discussion. They are not visibly committed to class and body language often expresses boredom. Written work is superficial, incomplete, or expresses some significant errors or weaknesses. Source materials may be used inadequately or inappropriately, and arguments lack concrete, specific examples and illustrations. Writing/articulation is vague, hard to follow, or cluttered with technical errors. [C+ = 77-79; C = 74-76; C- = 70-73]
**D** = **A student in difficulty.** “D” students miss class frequently, participate rarely, show disinterest, and have generally misunderstood much of we have done, said, and/or read (if they prepared or read anything to begin with). Written work demonstrates serious errors in understanding, fails to express the most rudimentary aspects of the material, and may contain little logical development in its arguments. Sources may be used inappropriately or not at all, and writing/articulation appears deficient.

[D+ = 67-69; D = 64-66]

**F** = **Failed.** Work not submitted. This is also the grade for plagiarized work or work that breaches Steinhardt policy on academic honesty. [F = 63 and below]