Seminar in Media, Culture and Communication  
E58.200  
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication, New York University  
Section 001: Tuesday, 2.00 – 4.10 p.m. (Silver 514)  
Section 002: Tuesday, 4.55 – 7.05 p.m. (Silver 506)  
Instructor: Martin Scherzinger

This course examines a broad range of theoretical approaches central to the study of media, culture, and communication. The course is organized around four broad and interrelated themes: (1) Media and Communication; (2) Power and Cultural Production; (3) Media and Technology; and (4) The International Frame. We will seek to understand the complex linkages between the social structures of media industries (technological, political, economic), the meaningful cultural objects they produce and distribute (texts, sounds and images), and the interpretations and uses people make of these objects. Students will learn the differences among the major theoretical and methodological approaches, be able to explain the advantages and disadvantages of each, and put them into practice for their own analysis, research, and professional practice.

Readings  
There are some books that are essential to this course. While it is not mandatory to purchase them, you will need them as references throughout the course, and may want them for your library. All are in print and available through major booksellers, including the NYU bookstore.


All the assigned book excerpts and articles listed on the course schedule will be made available through the New York University Blackboard system.

I will also occasionally upload audio and video examples. These will also be found on the Blackboard site under “Course Documents” (in the folder named “Audio/Video Examples”). Any CDs or videos that are placed on reserve will be in the Avery Fisher Center for Music and Media (on the second floor of the Bobst Library).

N.B. The syllabus is an outline only. Modifications are inevitable.

Assignments

Weekly Assignments  
For most weeks you will be asked to post a short response paper or a fragment of your research to the Blackboard “Discussion Board.” Your submission will usually be due by 6.00 p.m. the Sunday evening before our next class meeting. This deadline is not negotiable. Remember, this seminar is being conceived of as a collaborative endeavor—your participation, contributions, and insights are essential. Please respect the other members of this seminar by posting your work by the Sunday evening deadline.

To post to the Discussion Board:  
Click on the button labeled “Communication” on the left-hand side of the Blackboard homepage for this course.
Click on “Discussion Board.”
Click on the appropriate topic.
Click on “Add New Thread” button at the top left of the page.

Attach your response to the message (there is not enough space in the box for detailed responses or large files. Note: I believe that you do need to add a subject and at least a character in the box labeled “Message” in order for your thread to be uploaded). Further information on the weekly assignments will be given in class.

**Sound/Video/Web Examples**
You will frequently be expected to upload a sound, video or web example that illustrates some of the major themes covered in the reading for that particular week. There will be folders for this purpose on the Discussion Board. Also, insofar as it's possible, you should bring these examples with you to class.

**Research Papers**
In addition to the in-class assignments, two research papers on a class topic are required for this course. We will discuss options for these papers during the semester. These papers should range between seven to fifteen 1.5 spaced pages, and will be proofread by two of your colleagues before being handed in to me. The papers will be due by classes 6 and 12 respectively. You may circulate them earlier if you wish.

**Evaluation Standards and Policies**

**A=Excellent.** Outstanding work in all respects. Demonstrates comprehensive and solid understanding of course material, and presents thoughtful interpretations, well focussed and original insights, and well reasoned commentary and analysis. Includes skilful use of source materials, illuminating examples and illustrations, fluent expression, and contains no grammatical or typographical errors.

**B=Good.** This work demonstrates a complete and accurate understanding of course 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 and examples are used appropriately and articulation/writing is clear. Paper has been carefully proofread.

**C=Adequate/fair.** This work demonstrates understanding that hits in the ballpark but which remains 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 or articulation may appear vague, hard to follow, or loaded with typos and other technical errors.

**D=Unsatisfactory.** This work demonstrates a serious lack or error in understanding, and fails to express the most rudimentary aspects of the course. Sources may be used entirely inappropriately or not at all, and writing is deficient.

**F=Failed.** Work not submitted or attempted.

**Grading Rubric**

weekly written online responses (10 times 5 % each – you will be assessed on your ten best entries)
oral presentation (10 %)
two essay papers (2 times 10%)
class participation (20%)
COURSE SCHEDULE
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Class 1: Philosophy, Sociology, & History of Communication

Plato, *Phaedrus*, p.43 (line 259e1) to p. 69 (line 278b5)
John Thompson, *Media and Modernity* (excerpts)**

Further Reading
Everett Rogers, *A History of Communication: A Biographical Approach*
Daniel Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan*

Class 2: Rhetoric, Influence, & Information

Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence*, (only 1-47)
Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda*, (only 3-32 and 61-87)
Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: The Human Use of Human Beings* (excerpt)**

Further Reading
Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*
Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, “A Propaganda Model”

Class 3: Mediation & Reproducibility

Georg Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, (opening arguments until “Perception”)
Friedrich A. Kittler, *Grammaphone, Film, Typewriter*, “Introduction”

Further Reading
Class 4: Immediacy, Presence & Spectacle

Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, “The Commodity as Spectacle”
Carolyn Abatte, *Critical Inquiry*, “Music: Drastic or Gnostic?”

Further Reading
Donna Jean Haraway, “The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others”
Matthew Lombard and Theresa Ditton, “At the Heart of It All: The Concept of Presence”

Class 5: Public Sphere & Imagined Communities

Jurgen Habermas “The Public Sphere”
Craig Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 1-50
Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (excerpt)*
Howard Rheingold, *Virtual Communities**
humdog, “pandora’s vox: on community in cyberspace”**

Further Reading
Peter Dahlgren “The Public Sphere and the Net”**
Julian Dibbel, “A Rape in Cyberspace; or How an Evil Clown, a Haitian Trickster Spirit, Two Wizards, and a Cast of Dozens Turned a Database into a Society”**
Andrew Whelan, *Cybersounds*, “Do U Produce?: Subcultural Capital and Amateur Musicianship in Peer-to-Peer Networks”

POWER AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Class 6: Ideology, Hegemony & Political Economy

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Class Struggle”
Karl Marx “The Values of Commodities” and “The Fetishism of Commodities”
Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus”
Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, “Hegemony” and “Culture”
Joachai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, (91 ff.)*
Tiziana Terranova, AOL piece**

**Further Reading**
Marshall Berman, *Adventures in Marxism*, “All that is Solid Melts into Air: Marx, Modernism and Modernization”
John Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, “The Concept of Ideology”
David Forgacs, “National-Popular: Genealogy of a Concept”
Nicholas Garnham, “Contribution to a Political Economy of Mass-Communication”
Sut Jhally, “The Political Economy of Culture”
Nicholas Garnham, “Political Economy and Cultural Studies: Reconciliation or Divorce?” and Lawrence Grossberg “Cultural Studies vs. Political Economy: Is Anybody Else Bored with this Debate?” *Colloquy*, March 1995
Herbert Schiller, *Culture, Inc.*, “The Corporation and the Production of Culture”**

**Class 7: Power, Knowledge & Practice**

Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish* (excerpts)**
Michel Foucault *Power/Knowledge* (excerpts)**

**Further Reading**
Dreyfus book on Foucault**
Paul Edwards, *Closed World*, (Chapter 1)**
Suzanne Cusick, “Music as Torture/Music as Weapon”

**Class 8: Communication as Culture**

Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, “Thick Description” (required) and “Deep Play” (optional)
Pierre Bourdieu *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (excerpt)
Stuart Hall, “Encoding / Decoding”
Michel de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life* (excerpt)**
Jacques Ranciere, *Aesthetics of Politics* (excerpt)*

**Further Reading**
James Carey, "Mass Communication Research and Cultural Studies: An American View”
Raymond Williams, *Television, Technology and Cultural Form*, “The Technology and the Society”
Durkheim, Emile. *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (ch 1)
Rothenbuhler (excerpt on the Olympic games)**
Dayan & Katz, Media Rituals (excerpt on Princess Di Wedding)**
Klaus Bruhn Jensen and Karl Erik Rosengren “Five Traditions in Search of the Audience”
Simon During, Cultural Studies Reader, (Ch. 1)
Goffman presentation of self in every day life**

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

Class 9: Medium as Message, Technologies as Actors

Martin Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology (excerpt)**
Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message” (excerpt)*
Lev Manovich, Language of New Media, “What is New Media?”
Langdon Winner, The Whale and the Reactor, “Do Artifacts Have Politics?”
Bruno Latour, We Have Never Been Modern (excerpt)**

Further Reading
Marshall McLuhan Gutenberg Galaxy
Harold Innis, The Bias of Communication
Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy
Joshua Meyrowitz, No Sense of Place
Friedrich Kittler, Discourse Networks
Ruth Cowan, Consumption Junction
Bruno Latour, Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory
Pinch & Bijker, Social Construction of Technology
Boczkowski, Digitizing the News
Reeves and Nass, The Media Equation
Hansen, New Philosophy for New Media

Class 10: Visual Cultures, Screens & Space

Nicholas Mirzoeff, “On Visuality”
Susan Buck-Morss, “Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin’s Artwork Essay Reconsidered”
Erica Robles, to be announced**

Further Reading
Susan Sontag, Photography, “In Plato’s Cave” and “The Image-World”
Laura Mulvey “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”
Class 11: Sound Studies, Noise & Music

Lisa Gitelman, “Media, Materiality, and the Measure of the Digital”

Further Reading
Murray Shafer, Auditory Culture Reader “Open Ears”

THE INTERNATIONAL FRAME

Class 12: Post-Modernism, Networks & Rhizome

David Harvey, The Condition of Post-Modernity, “Postmodernism”
Frederic Jameson, “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”
Sherry Turkle, Life on The Screen (excerpt) and The Second Self (excerpt)**
Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Thousand Plateaus (excerpt)*
Slavoj Zizek, Organs without Bodies (excerpt)

Further Reading
Jacques Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, “Differance”
Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Empire
Alexander R. Galloway, Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture
David Harvey, The Condition of Post-Modernity, “Modernism”
Dick Hebdige, Hiding in the Light, “Staking out the Posts”
Jean-Francois Lyotard, “The Postmodern Condition”
Manuel Castells, The Network Society V. 1 (excerpts)
Class 13: The National & Post-Colonial Imagination

Edward Said, *Orientalism* (excerpt)**
Homi Bhabha “DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation”
Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy”
Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments* (excerpt)
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

Further Reading
Jesus Martin-Barbero ‘The Processes: From Nationalisms to Transnationalisms’
Annabelle Sreberny ‘The Global and the Local in International Communications’
Jan Nederveen Pieters ‘Globalization as Hybridization’ Background:
Joseph Straubhaar ‘(Re)Asserting National Television and National Identity Against the Global, Regional, and Local Levels of World Television’
Ernest Renan, Joseph Stalin, various (very!) short readings on definitions of nation/alism
Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (excerpt)

Class 14: Feminism & Queer Theory

Denise Riley, *Am I that Name? Feminism and the Category of ‘Women’ in History* (excerpt)*
Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics and the Ethics of Queer Life* (excerpt)*
Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (excerpt)*
Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (excerpt)*
Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”
bell hooks, “Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance”
Donna Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs”
Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance Novel***

Helpful Additional Background Readings
Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance Novel***
Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”
Hanno Hardt, *Critical Communication Studies: Communication, History and Theory in America*
Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*
Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*
Michael Gurevitch (ed.), *Culture, Society and the Media*
Tim O'Sullivan, John Hartley, Danny Saunders, Martin Montgomery, John Fiske (Eds), *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies*
William Outhwaite & Tom Bottomore (eds.), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Twentieth Century Social Thought*

Cultural Studies Reader

Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Visual Culture Reader*