

Mass Communication 3362 (Section 1, 3 credits)
Media Criticism
Fall 2017

Classroom: 319 Dan Rather Building
Instructor: Dr. Kiwon Seo
Office: 308B Dan Rather Building
Office Hours: Tue 1 ~ 3/Wed 10 ~ 12 or by appointment

Time: MW 12:30 ~ 1:50
Phone: 936-294-4036
E-mail: keyoneseo@shsu.edu

Email & Blackboard

Please be sure to check your SHSU email and our Blackboard website frequently and regularly for information and instructions that will be distributed to you. Note, I answer emails M-F, 9AM to 5PM, so that do not expect email responses during evening and weekends. Also if you do not receive my response within 24 hours, please let me know in the class or send the email again.

Course Description

This course will investigate media criticism 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 in the criticism of different types of media. The purpose throughout the semester will be to explore, understand, and effectively apply the various schools of media criticism through reading, watching, discussing and writing a wide range of media texts.

Course Objectives

Media Criticism is designed to provide you with an understanding of, and an ability to analyze and evaluate media texts. In this course, you will be exposed to a variety of methods and approaches to criticism, particularly critical approaches to television, film, and ad texts. By the end of this course, you should:

1. Have the knowledge and skills to be a more critical consumer of media.
2. Understand both the foundations of, and current trends in, the field of media studies.
3. Have been exposed to the breadth and depth of approaches to media criticism through numerous specific examples.
4. Be able to conduct your own research and critical interrogations of media texts.

Textbooks

- Required: Sellnow, D. D. (2014). *The rhetorical power of popular culture* (2nd Edition). Sage.
- Supplement (not required): Griffin, E. (2012). *A first look at communication theory* (8th Edition). McGraw-Hill.

Exams

There will be two in-class, noncumulative exams. For each exam, students are responsible for all assigned reading materials regardless of whether or not such material was presented in the lecture. The dates and times for all exams are nonnegotiable. Makeup exams will be allowed only in the case of university-stipulated excused absences. Absence from any exams must be approved by the instructor before the exam dates and written documentation must be submitted. If adequate notification is not done prior to the exam date, a penalty of one full letter grade is applied to the subsequent makeup exam.

Assignments

There will be two assignments, one is an in-class presentation and the other is a term paper. For the in-class presentation, two or three students should work as a group after choosing one communication theory from the supplement textbook – *A first look at communication theory*. Each group should work together to inform and educate the rest of the class about the theory. Because the book is not required, students also should prepare a handout that summarizes the main points of the theory. The handout must be detailed enough for those who do not possess the book to easily identify and understand the main ideas. For the term paper, students should pick up a media text (e.g., a movie, ad, TV show, and etc.), analyze it using one of critical perspectives that will be covered in the class, and submit a report on it. Detailed instructions for assignments will be provided at appropriate points in the course. Depending on the class schedule and students' achievements, the instructor may modify specific due dates.

Grading

Criteria	Points	Your Score	Grade	Scale
Exam 1	250		A	900 to 1000
Exam 2	250		B	800 to 899.9
Term Paper Outline	50		C	700 to 799.9
Term Paper	250		D	600 to 699.9
Presentation (twice)	150		F	599 and below
Class Participation	50			
TOTAL	1000			

Note: Class Participation includes both *attendance* and *contributions to class discussion*.

Course Policies and Expectations

Meet your deadlines: All assignments must be submitted in the class on the established due date. Late papers will be marked down one letter grade per day, after they have been graded. That is, a "C" paper that is two days late will receive an "F." NO paper will be accepted late unless you have notified me *in advance* with a proper, reasonable explanation. No paper will be accepted more than three weekdays after it's due.

Attendance and Tardiness: Every student enrolled in this class is expected to attend to all scheduled class meetings. The Student Handbook states that regular and punctual class attendance is expected of each student at SHSU and that it is expected that each faculty member will keep a record of student attendance. Class attendance will be critical, because it is the only source for obtaining materials covered in the lectures. Excused absences are permitted, but it is the student's

responsibility to provide the instructor with appropriate documentation. Such excuses as, “I wasn’t feeling well,” “I had a big test in another course,” “I had to rush home for a family emergency,” and the like, are not considered appropriate reasons of absence. An incomplete assignment or exam resulting from an unexcused absence will automatically result in a grade of F for the assignment or exam. Because emergencies sometimes arise that make attendance in class impossible, a maximum of three absences is permitted without penalty. After three absences, 25 points for each additional absence will be reduced from your final grade total. Continued absences will affect a student's grade independently of other course work. Excessive absence may result in automatic failure of the course (e.g., more than ten absences will be automatically failure in the class), regardless of grades received on class assignments. If a student is more than 5 minutes late after class starts, this will be marked as a tardy. Three tardies will count as one absence. This policy also applies to students leaving before the end of class without the instructor’s permission.

Email Etiquette: When you send me an email, please follow the guidelines for acceptable email etiquette. Emails that are not written as in the guideline will not be replied.

- Use a proper subject line that summarizes the subject of your message, such as “Final paper” or “Appointment request.”
- Start the body of your email off with a proper greeting, such as “Hello Dr. Seo,” or something similar.
- Follow your greeting with at least one blank line.
- Compose your email in paragraph form (use a line of whitespace between paragraphs). Make sure you adhere to proper sentence structure.
- Capitalize the first letter in each sentence.
- Finally, use a proper closing (doesn’t have to be too formal—save “Sincerely” or “Yours truly” for contacting someone for the first time), and then finish with your first name.

Proper Classroom Demeanor/Rules of Conduct: Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. I expect each class member to be respectful of others. Disrespecting your fellow classmates or your instructor will not be tolerated. If you need to leave early due to reasonable excuses, please notify me in advance. You may take notes on and work on a computer unless—based on the instructor’s evaluation—the computer becomes a distraction during class. Additionally, please do not surf the web, or check your social networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and various e-mails accounts during the class period. I expect you to be respectful of our learning environment by being attentive and engaged, and not selfish. Please turn off or mute your cellular phone before class begins. Please do not take photos of class content, including PowerPoint slides. Students are prohibited from eating in class, using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping, talking with each other at inappropriate times, wearing inappropriate clothing, or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in, minimally, a directive to leave class or being reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with University policy.

University Policies Regarding Academic Classes

Support for Students with Disabilities: It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the

benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail disability@shsu.edu). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential.

NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/811006.pdf>

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic misconduct will not be tolerated in this course. All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach and to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. Students are encouraged to review the university's policy on academic dishonesty and plagiarism.

Plagiarized assignments will not be accepted. For the sake of clarity, the definition of plagiarism is followed: Plagiarism occurs when one person claims credit for another person's work. It is a form of intellectual dishonesty that is treated with great severity by professionals and by the university. Students should be certain they understand the manner of plagiarism: (1) A paper using quotes without quotation marks and attribution is plagiarized. But plagiarism is more than unrecognized quotes; (2) Conclusions that are not the student's own conclusion, information that is not common knowledge and specific facts must be attributed: Tell who said it and cite or footnote it, even if this information is not a direct quote.

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy: Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20..." A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed.

MCOM 3362 – Class Schedule

NOTE: TOPICS TO BE FOLLOWED, SOME ANNOUNCED CHANGES MAY OCCUR THROUGHOUT SEMESTER; AND YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL ANNOUNCED CHANGES!

Week	Date	Lecture Content	Reading and Work Due
1	8/23	Introduction to Course	
2	8/28	What is Popular Culture	Sellnow CH. 1
2	8/30	Communication Traditions	
3	9/4	Labor Day—No Class	
3	9/6	Writing an Essay	Sellnow CH. 1 & Appendix
4	9/11	Presentation—Symbolic Interaction Theory	Griffin CH. 5
4	9/13	Semiotics	
5	9/18	Presentation—Uses and Gratifications Theory	Griffin CH. 28
5	9/20	The Rhetorical Tradition	Sellnow CH. 2
6	9/25	Presentation—Expectancy Violation Theory	Griffin CH. 7
6	9/27	Visual Perspectives	Sellnow CH. 9
7	10/2	Presentation—Cognitive Dissonance Theory	Griffin CH. 17
7	10/4	Narrative Perspectives	Sellnow CH. 3
8	10/9	Exam 1 Review	Term Paper Outline Due
8	10/11	Exam 1	
9	10/16	Screening	
9	10/18	Presentation—Elaboration Likelihood Model	Griffin CH. 16
10	10/23	Presentation—Cultivation Theory	Griffin CH. 29
10	10/25	Neo-Marxist Perspectives	Sellnow CH. 6

11	10/30	Presentation—Media Ecology	Griffin CH. 25
11	11/1	Feminist Perspectives	Sellnow CH. 7
12	11/6	Presentation—Agenda Setting Theory	Griffin CH. 30
12	11/8	Media-Centered Perspectives	Sellnow CH. 10
13	11/13	Presentation—Spiral of Silence Theory	Griffin (previous edition)
13	11/15	Cultural Studies	
14	11/20	Exam 2 Review	Term Paper Due
14	11/22	Thanksgiving Break—No Class	
15	11/27	Study Session	
15	11/29	Exam 2	