

Sam Houston State University » Department of Mass Communication
MCOM 5310 Critical Approaches to Media » Spring 2018
Online Course via Blackboard

Instructor: Robin Johnson, Ph.D.
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the growing body of critical and theoretical discourse defining the field of digital media studies. Students examine the major historical, cultural, sociopolitical, economic, structural, and philosophical trends in this field.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate different theoretical perspectives on the role and power of media in society
- Chart the role of media in influencing social values, political beliefs, identities and behaviors
- Develop skills in analyzing media texts
- Critically examine the ways in which the dynamics of class, gender, sexualities and race influence both the production and reception of media
- Engage verbally and through writing with critical debates in the field of media
- Explore the role of media in their lives

REQUIRED BOOKS

Media and Cultural Studies KeyWorks, edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner, Blackwell Publishing, 2006 (revised or 2nd edition acceptable). This book is available as an electronic version through the library.

Representation, edited by Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans and Sean Nixon (2nd edition), Sage, 2013.

Any supplemental readings will be available through the course's online Blackboard site

ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS AND CLASS STRUCTURE

The class is structured around the assigned readings.

Each week will be either virtual meetings for discussion or critical analysis exercises and activities.

For discussion, students need to be prepared to discuss the readings and are encouraged to include examples from culture (such as television or movie clips, news stories, books, etc.) that might relate to the readings in some way.

When not meeting for discussion, students will turn in critical analysis exercises and activities linked to the assigned readings for that week.

Exams: There will be essay exams given during the mid-term and finals week.

Course Guidelines

Attendance Policy – SHSU Student Handbook of University Policies states that regular and punctual class attendance is expected of each student at Sam Houston State University and that it is expected that each faculty member will keep a record of student attendance. A student will not be penalized for three absences or six tardies (defined as entering class after roll has been taken) when examinations or other assigned work has not been missed.

Additionally:

- Exceptions are for documented illnesses or family emergencies or for students attending SHSU activities in an official capacity. Documentation for illness or emergency should be presented upon the student's return to the classroom. Documentation for activities should be presented prior to the absence and contain the signature of the SHSU employee sponsor.
- Each semester hour of credit entails at least two additional hours of work outside the classroom per week: so for this 3 credit course, you should expect to do at least an additional 6 hours of work a week beyond class time. This is on average; some weeks may require more, others less.

Grading scale

A	90% and above
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	59% & below

E-mail – You must be able to receive e-mail via your “@shsu.edu” account. You will be responsible for any messages you miss if you do not use this university-assigned address. Class announcements may also be posted on Blackboard.

Deadlines – Failure to make assigned deadlines will negatively affect grades, and persistent deadline failures will result in failing the course.

Academic Dishonesty – All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain 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. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

[Dean of Student's Office](#)

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. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/documents/861001.pdf

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

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>

Visitors in the Classroom – Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

Class Schedule (Subject to Change)

Class Day	Topic	Readings	Assignments & Exams
Week 1 Jan 17	Introduction to the course	No readings assigned	
Week 2 Jan 22	Culture, Ideology and Hegemony, Part 1	<p>"The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas," Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels</p> <p>"History of the Subaltern Classes; The Concept of 'Ideology'; Cultural Themes: Ideological Material," Antonio Gramsci</p> <p>"Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," Louis Althusser</p>	
Week 3 Jan 29	Culture, Ideology and Hegemony, Part 2	<p>"The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno</p> <p>"The Public Sphere," Jurgen Habermas</p>	
Week 4 Feb 5	Social Life and Cultural Studies	<p>"Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," Raymond Williams</p> <p>"From Culture to Hegemony; Subculture: The Unnatural Break," Dick Hebdige</p> <p>"Encoding/Decoding," Stuart Hall</p>	

Week 5 Feb 12	Political Economy, Part 1	<p>"Contribution to a Political Economy of Mass Communication," Nicholas Garnham</p> <p>"Not Yet the Post-Imperialist Era," Herbert Schiller</p>	
Week 6 Feb 19	Political Economy, Part 2	<p>"On the Audience Commodity and its Work," Dallas Smythe</p> <p>"Gendering the Commodity Audience," Eileen Meehan</p> <p>"Introduction; The Aristocracy of Culture," Pierre Bourdieu</p>	
Week 7 Feb 26	Representation, Part 1	"Introduction" and Chapter 1, "The Work of Representation," Stuart Hall	
Week 8 Mar 5			Midterm Essay Exam
Week 9 Mar 19	Representation, Part 2	Chapter 2, "Recording Reality: Documenting Film and Television," Frances Bonner	

Week 10 Mar 26	Representation, Part 3	Chapter 4, "The Spectacle of the 'Other,'" Stuart Hall	
Week 11 Apr 2	Representation, Part 4	Chapter 5, "Exhibiting Masculinity," Sean Nixon	
Week 12 Apr 9	Representation, Part 5	Chapter 6, "Genre and Gender: The Case of the Soap Opera," Christine Gledhill with Vicky Ball	
Week 13 Apr 16	Postmodernism, New Media & Globalization	"Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," Frederic Jameson "Postmodern Virtualities," Mark Poster "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," Arjun Appadurai	
Week 14 Apr 23	Academic Research and Writing Workshop		
Week 15 Apr 30	Academic Research and Writing Workshop		
Finals Week May 7			Final Essay Exam Due