

COMM 4455: Critical Issues in Mass Communications

Mon/Wed 3:30 pm - 4:45 pm: HU 312

Instructor: Deon Kay

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Office Hours: **MON/WED** 10:30-1:30 **TUES/THURS** 11-1 online **OR** *by appointment*

REQUIRED TEXT

Media and Cultural Studies Keywords. Durham, Meenakshi Gigi, and Kellner, Douglas M., editors. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

Additional readings will be posted on CourseDen or provided in hardcopy.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This class examines the role and function of **mediated** popular culture in shaping and reflecting social and cultural identities. It looks at the ways that cultural meanings emerge in the intersection between images, art, media industries, texts, and audiences.

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

By the end of the course the student should be able to:

- Recognize the roles of media and popular culture as sites for complex identity negotiation.
- Increase media literacy skills.
- Understand, interpret, and criticize the meanings of mass media and popular culture.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION: You do not get credit for showing up for class, and there are no direct penalties for missing classes. There are many indirect effects though, namely missing pop-quizzes, in-class exercises, screenings, and just general learning. I assume that you want to be here and run my classes accordingly.

Documented, excused absences will not count against your grade for the class.

I have never had a student miss several classes and do well - good work and active attendance are directly linked to each other.

CONDUCT: The classroom will be a safe space for diversity and students must remain aware and accepting of each other. Comments of intolerance, including prejudice or bullying, will not be tolerated, nor will sexual harassment. See the student code of conduct for more information.

MATURE CONTENT: Some examples used in this course may be explicit and therefore offensive to some. If you anticipate having an issue with this at any point in this semester, please speak with me privately.

PLAGIARISM: It is assumed that all work will be created by you, and you only. Work that has been plagiarized in any way will be given a zero and reported to the university for further action. In extreme cases an immediate failing grade for the class will be given.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS: I do not accept late assignments.

OTHER CLASS POLICIES:

- Class starts at 3:30pm - When we do group work, groups will be assigned at 3:30pm. You will not be able to join a group once work has begun.
- If you are not in class to receive a quiz at 3:30pm you cannot complete it.
- Cell phones have NO PLACE in the classroom whatsoever. Turn them off before you walk into the room. If I see you using a cell phone I will stop class and wait until you are done. Respect the classroom as a place for intellectual development and discussion - every student plays a part in fostering this environment. *If there is something pressing you need to deal with, inform me at the start of class, and leave the room to deal with the matter.*

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: I will gladly make the necessary accommodations to ensure students with special needs can complete the class and get the most out of it. Please don't "wing it" and then tell me at the end of the semester. Come see me in private with your paperwork and we can discuss your particular needs.

EMAIL POLICY: The University considers students' MyUWG e-mail account to be an official means of communication between the University and the student. It is the student's responsibility to check his or her email frequently for class, department, and University information. I frequently email documents, deadlines and syllabus modifications - not checking your email is no excuse for not completing work on time.

CREDIT HOUR POLICY: The University of West Georgia grants one semester hour of credit for work equivalent to a minimum of one hour (50 minutes) of in class or other direct faculty instruction AND two hours of student work outside of class per week. As a guide, multiply this by 3 (credit hours). So for every one hour in class you should be spending 2 hours on your work. For a 3 credit hour class, this is SIX additional hours per week.

COMMON LANGUAGE FOR COURSE SYLLABI (please review)

https://www.westga.edu/academics/assets/docs/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf

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ASSIGNMENTS

Abstracts_____	40%
Tests/Pop-Quizzes of <i>Terms & Concepts</i> _____	30%
Online group work/research_____	30%

ABSTRACTS (40%):

There are TEN abstract assignments during the semester, each worth 4% of your final grade. An *abstract* is a brief summary/synopsis of the assigned reading, in your own words. Yours should be presented in THREE parts:

FIRST - you should create a summary of the assigned reading that is around 200 words in length (at least two substantial paragraphs).

SECOND - include a section where you address any Questions and/or Concerns. So (briefly) critique the assigned reading -- "not easy to read" or "not interesting" are not valid issues to take with these articles. Your issues, questions and concerns need to engage with the intellectual matter of the writing - what the author is saying about the world. You may discuss what you liked or disliked about it. What was challenging? How might the information in the article be used to analyze contemporary issues in mass media?

THIRD - create 2 hypothetical test questions: 1 that is a knowledge based (multiple choice/true false), and 1 that is more open ended, and analytical (How, Why).

- Abstracts will be due in a courseden dropbox which will close at 3:15pm. 3:16 will be considered late and late abstracts will not be accepted under any circumstances.
- Abstracts will ALSO be due in a designated group discussion forum (see *Online Group Work* below)
- I will provide examples of abstracts during the first weeks of class.
- Abstracts are to be completed using the template provided in *courseden*.

TESTS/QUIZZES (30%)

There will be two scheduled exams during the semester that will test you on the principles and theories that we will read and speak about, along with application of these theories as they relate to images and documents from Mass Culture.

There will also be unscheduled pop quizzes designed to measure your engagement and understanding of the material. These will be administered *ad hoc*. You need to be in class on time to participate for credit.

ONLINE GROUP WORK/RESEARCH (30%)

Once the numbers for the class stabilize you will be assigned to research group. This is where you will post your abstracts, reviews and comment on a group member's abstract, and answer the questions posted at the end of the abstracts. As a study guide, these group forums will be made public for other class members to review. More detail will be provided soon.

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WEEK	DATE	AGENDA	DUE TODAY!!
1	Wed 8/9	Introductions	
	Fri 8/11	Open Drop ends at 4:00 pm	
2	Mon 8/14	LECTURE Open Add ends at 4:00 pm	
	Wed 8/16	LECTURE	
3	Mon 8/21	<i>The Medium is the Message</i> -Marshall McLuhan, pg 107	ABSTRACT DUE 3:15pm
	Wed 8/23	ONLINE WORK DAY	
4	Mon 8/28	<i>Visual pleasure and narrative cinema</i> - Laura Mulvey, pg 267	ABSTRACT DUE 3:15pm
	Wed 8/30	ONLINE WORK DAY	
5	Mon 9/4	In-Class work/lecture	
	Wed 9/6	In-Class work/lecture	
6	Mon 9/11	<i>The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception</i> - Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, pg 41	ABSTRACT DUE 3:15pm
	Wed 9/13	ONLINE WORK DAY	
7	Mon 9/18	<i>A Propaganda Model</i> - Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, pg 257	ABSTRACT DUE 3:15pm
	Wed 9/20	ONLINE WORK DAY	
8	Mon 9/25	Lecture/Review	
	Wed 9/27	MIDTERM	
	Fri 9/29	Last day to Withdraw with a grade of W	
9	Mon 10/2	<i>Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses</i> - Louis Althusser, pg 79	ABSTRACT DUE 3:15pm
	Wed 10/4	ONLINE WORK DAY	
	10/5 +10/6	Fall Break - No classes, offices open	

10	Mon 10/9	Lecture/Screening	
	Wed 10/11	Lecture/Screening	
11	Mon 10/16	<i>The Precession of Simulacra</i> - Jean Baudrillard, pg 453	ABSTRACT DUE 3:15pm
	Wed 10/18	ONLINE WORK DAY	
12	Mon 10/23	<i>The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism</i> - Frederick Jameson, pg482	ABSTRACT DUE 3:15pm
	Wed 10/25	ONLINE WORK DAY	
13	Mon 10/30	(i) <i>History of the Subaltern Classes</i> ; (ii) <i>The Concept of "Ideology"</i> ; (iii) <i>Cultural Themes: Ideological Material</i> - Antonio Gramsci, pg 13	ABSTRACT DUE 3:15pm
	Wed 11/1	ONLINE WORK DAY	
14	Mon 11/6	Guided Free read - TBA	ABSTRACT DUE 3:15pm
	Wed 11/8	ONLINE WORK DAY	
15	Mon 11/13	Lecture/Screening	
	Wed 11/15	Lecture/Screening	
16		Thanksgiving Recess	
17	Mon 11/27	Guided Free read - TBA	ABSTRACT DUE 3:15pm
	Wed 11/29	ONLINE WORK DAY	
18	Wed 12/6	FINAL EXAM 2:00-4:00 pm	