



COMM-590, Critical Media Studies, Fall, 2018

Instructor: Dr. Christopher M. Duerringer

Phone: (562) 985-1647

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs, 7:45-9:15am

Course: COMM-590

Class Days/Times: Tues, 3:30-6:15pm

Office: AS-363

Email: Christopher.Duerringer@csulb.edu

Prerequisites: Consent of Instructor

Term: Fall, 2018

Class Location: PSY-202

Course Description

This course investigates three strands of critical research into the contemporary media system. Investigations into the political economy of media tend to emphasize production as the most significant nodal point for understanding popular culture and the media. Media ecologists draw our attention to the significance of technology in shaping discourse and society more broadly. And scholars in cultural studies have tended privilege audiences and social forces in their attempts to study the production of meaning in our media system. Our class together this semester will attempt to integrate these perspectives the “moments” of production, transmission, and reception as we consider the media texts and practices that mark our experiences with popular culture.

Course Goals/Student Learning Objectives

- To master foundational theories and concepts in the political economy of the media, media ecology, and cultural studies
 - Demonstrated by in-class dialogue, activities, final exam, and end-of-year paper presentation
- To recognize the economic, technological, and political forces that shape the meaning of media texts and practices
 - Measured by response papers, the semester-long project, and the final exam
- To produce a conference-ready piece of scholarship
 - Measured by the quality and coherence of the final project and its presentation

Required Texts/Readings

All readings will be posted to BeachBoard. You are responsible for printing and reading these essays in advance of each class.

Computer Access

Two open access computer labs are available for current CSULB students. Both the Horn Center (located in lower campus) and the Spidell Technology Center (located in Library) are a great resource for students needing to use a computer. Visit the [Open Access Computing Facilities - http://www.csulb.edu/library/guide/computing.html](http://www.csulb.edu/library/guide/computing.html) website for an extensive list of all available software installed in both computer labs.

BeachBoard Access

There is an online component to this course. It is your responsibility to know how to access and interact with the BeachBoard site. Check the BeachBoard site often! This is where course material, weekly readings, and course updates will be posted. You will also submit your essays through the TurnItIn system on BeachBoard. I will not accept any assignments via email. To access this course on [BeachBoard - https://bbcsulb.desire2learn.com/](https://bbcsulb.desire2learn.com/) you will need access to the Internet and a supported Web browser (Firefox is the recommended browser). You log in to [BeachBoard - https://bbcsulb.desire2learn.com/](https://bbcsulb.desire2learn.com/) with your CSULB Campus ID and BeachID password. Bookmark this link for future use, or you can always access it by going to [CSULB - http://www.csulb.edu/](http://www.csulb.edu/)'s homepage and clicking on the BeachBoard link at the top of the page.

Once logged in to BeachBoard, you will see the course listed in the My Courses widget on the right; click on the title to enter the course.



Course Schedule

08/28: Welcome, Orientation, and Overview

- Minow – Television and the Public Interest
- McLuhan – The Medium is the Message
- Kellner – Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture

Unit 1: The Moment of Production

09/4: Media System Ownership

- McChesney – Rich Media, Poor Democracy – 2015 Preface, US Media at the Dawn of the 21st Century

09/11: The Profit Motive and Journalism Practices

- Fallows – Why Americans Hate the Media
- Bagdikian – The Growing Gap
- Cunningham – Rethinking Objectivity
- Richardson – Journalism’s Dark Matter

09/18: Commercialism and Patronage

- Ewen & Ewen – Channels of Desire – Consumption*
- Steinem – Sex, Lies, and Advertising
- Klein – No Logo
- Guerraro – National Plutocrat Radio

09/25: Politics and Media

- Lippmann – The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads
- Lippmann – The Phantom Public*
- Herman & Chomsky – A Propaganda Model*
- Croteau – Challenging the Liberal Media Claim
- **DUE: Project Proposal**

Unit 2: The Moment of Mediation

10/2: Media Ecology

- Strate - A Media Ecology Review*
- McLuhan - Hot and Cold Media*
- Postman – Amusing Ourselves to Death*

10/9: Media Ecology II

- Postman - Amusing Ourselves to Death*
- Stephens – Toward a More Substantive Media Ecology

10/16: Media & Society

- Ott – Television as Lover*
- Norris – Does TV Erode Social Capital?
- Castells – Towards a Sociology of the Network Society*
- Garnham – Information Society as Ideology*

10/23: Mediation & Mediatization

- Hjarvard – The Mediatization of Society*
- Hepp – Mediatization and the ‘molding force’ of the media*
- Couldry – Mediatization or Mediation*



Unit 3: The Moment of Reception/Consumption

10/30: Cultural Studies Origins

- Arnold - Culture & Anarchy
- Leavis - Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture
- Williams - The Analysis of Culture
- Thompson - The Making of the English Working Class

11/06: Marxian Influences

- Adorno & Horkheimer - The Culture Industry*
- Gramsci - Selections from the Prison Notebooks
- Hall - Ideology without Guarantees*
- Laclau & Mouffe - Post-Marxism Without Apologies*
- Slack - Articulation Theory*
- **DUE: Project Outlines**

11/13: No Class Meeting: Veterans Day

11/20: No Class Meeting: Thanksgiving Holiday

11/27: Audiences, Meaning, and a Return to Marx

- Fiske - The Semiotics of Television*
- Hall - Encoding/Decoding*
- Hebdige - Subculture
- Garnham - Contribution to a Political Economy of Mass-Communication*

12/4: Identity, the Body, and Place

- DeCerteau - On the Oppositional Practices of Everyday Life*
- bell hooks - Postmodern Blackness*
- Soja - History : Geography : Modernity*
- McRobbie - Feminism, Postmodernism, and the Real Me*
- **DUE: Final Projects**

12/18: Take Home Final Due (2:45pm-4:45pm)

Course Policies and Requirements

Reading Policy

Almost every professor will tell you that reading is strongly correlated with success in the classroom. This is especially the case in critical and rhetorical coursework. If you are to pass this class, you **must** devote yourself to carefully reading all the assigned material before each class; arrive prepared to actively discuss all readings and examples in class; and be able to write academically about your analysis of readings, discussions, and ongoing controversies. You can expect that I will come to each class prepared and ready to engage you in discussion, that I will encourage you express your ideas, and that I will provide a fun, safe, and positive learning environment.

Writing Policy

All written work for this course must be typed, on white paper, using 12 pt font, Times New Roman, properly cited (APA), and stapled (binder clips are fine, but please no paper clips). All written assignments must be turned in on time: **NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED** without a University approved excuse (religious observance, illness, University-sponsored activity, or compelling circumstances beyond the student's control).



Evaluation Method

Assignment	Points	Weight
Reading Responses (11 @ 5pts each)	55	14.47%
Detailed Outlines (2 @ 25pts each)	50	13.16%
Discussion Leading (2 @ 25pts each)	50	13.16%
Project Proposal	25	6.58%
Semester Project	125	32.89%
Take-Home Final Exam	75	19.74%

Course Grading Scale

Percent Range	Letter Grade
90 - 100%	A
89 - 80%	B
79 - 70%	C
69 - 65%	D
Below 64%	F

Grade Descriptions

- A: Highest Level of Performance! Exceptional work with superior organizational and presentational abilities. Clear understanding and application of complex concepts, audience adaptation, and consistent quality of work.
- B: High Level of Performance! Student clearly understands the material and has met all and often exceeded some of the requirements.
- C: Adequate Performance. All assigned work completed. This is the bare minimum required. It has everything required and little else. If it were a job, you would not be disciplined, but not promoted either.
- D: Less Than Adequate Performance. Came up short. Did not complete all work. Clearly made some attempt, but failed to satisfy some of the requirements.
- F: Failure. Did a minimal amount of work. Final work product is ineffective.

If you would like above-average grades, you must do more than the bare minimum requirements.

Grade Dispute Policy

If you have a warranted disagreement and argument against my grading on a specific assignment, you may approach me to discuss it, following these standards. First, please wait 24 hours before approaching me. Second, please approach me within seven days of receiving your grade. Third, I will ask that you have a written list of reasons supported with evidence warranting a grade change. This list should be clear and concise, and should focus on the work, not issues relating to your personal life, your effort, etc. I will review your written argument in relation to the assignment, and I will consider your case accordingly.

Communication Policy

The fastest way to reach me is via email (Christopher.Duerringer@csulb.edu). Of course, you are always welcome to come to office hours or to make an appointment if those hours don't work for you.

Late work/Make-up Policy

Generally speaking, I will not accept late work. However, the university recognizes religious holidays,



government obligation (jury duty), or university sponsored events as excused absences. If you will be absent due to one of these reasons, you must inform me in writing prior to your absence in order to make up any missed work.

Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Policy

Academic dishonesty includes plagiarizing (using someone else's words or ideas without citation), cheating, and inappropriate collaboration on coursework. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Students who plagiarize or cheat may receive an F on an assignment, an F in the entire course, or face further penalty at the instructor's discretion. If you have any doubt about this policy, please ask. Additionally, the instructor will report each and every case to the Academic Integrity Committee. The Committee may, in turn, choose to enforce its own sanctions, such as expulsion from the University.

Work that you submit is assumed to be original unless your source material is documented appropriately, such as a Works Cited page in correct APA format. Using the ideas or words of another person, even a peer, or a web site, as if it were your own, is plagiarism. Students should read the section on [cheating and plagiarism in the CSULB catalog](#) - http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/catalog/current/academic_information/cheating_plagiarism.html.

University Withdrawal Policy

Class withdrawals during the final 3 weeks of instruction are not permitted except for a very serious and compelling reason such as accident or serious injury that is clearly beyond the student's control and the assignment of an Incomplete grade is inappropriate (see [Grades](#) - http://www.csulb.edu/depts/enrollment/student_academic_records/grading.html). Application for withdrawal from CSULB or from a class must be officially filed by the student with Enrollment Services whether the student has ever attended the class or not; otherwise, the student will receive a grade of "WU" (unauthorized withdrawal) in the course. Please refer to the [CSULB Course Catalog](#) - http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/catalog/current/academic_regulations/withdrawal_policy.html to get familiar with the policy.

Attendance Policy

At the graduate level, unswerving attendance and passionate participation is simply expected. If you wish to succeed in this course, you must attend class diligently. I understand that circumstances may require that you miss a class meeting. If this is the case, it is your responsibility to arrange for a classmate to take notes for you. Please refer to and get familiar with the [CSULB Attendance Policy](#) - http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/catalog/current/academic_information/class_attendance.html.

Technical Assistance

If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or need to report a problem with BeachBoard, please contact the Technology Help Desk using their [online form](#) - http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/academic_technology/thd/contact/ or by phone at (562) 985-4959 or visit them on campus in the Academic Service (AS) building, room 120.

Inform Me of Any Accommodations Needed

Students requesting a reasonable accommodation based on a mental or physical disability should contact Disabled Student Services as soon as possible at 562-985-5401 or dss@csulb.edu for support and assistance.

Classroom Respect

I request that you maintain respect for instructors, guests, and one another in the class regardless of



different opinions, values or other group differences. While studying rhetoric that circulates in our popular culture and politics, it is not uncommon for very different opinions and beliefs to emerge. Our goal is to create a supportive and cooperative learning environment in which these differences can be expressed and explored. Students should give one another equal opportunity for discussion, and practice good speaking and listening skills.

Laptops & Personal Electronic Devices

A growing body of research shows that focus, comprehension, and information processing are all harmed by the use of electronic devices in classroom settings. If I see you using a cell phone in any way, I will ask that you turn the offending appliance off and stow it. If a second offense occurs, you will be asked to leave the room. You will be considered absent for any activity you miss after leaving the room. For each offense beyond the second, your final grade will be lowered by ten percent (10%). This policy applies equally to iPods, tablets, laptops, and all other forms of electronic communication and entertainment.

Worth a read:

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/reading-paper-screens/>

<http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/03/science/whats-lost-as-handwriting-fades.html? r=0>

Class Material Disclaimer

Because this is a discussion-oriented course that involves discussion of culture, identity, and inherently political issues, it is possible that we may cover contentious and potentially inflammatory material. I am stating this up front so that you are aware of the possibility, and so that your continued enrollment in this course, following the reading of the syllabus, indicates that you are aware of this material and you have chosen to stay in this particular section of the class. I do not anticipate any problems, but it is important you are aware of this disclaimer from the beginning. Please talk to me if you have any questions or concerns.

Assignment Descriptions

Response Papers

Each Thursday, beginning on September 4 and continuing through December 4, our class will read important works that exemplify significant areas of theory and application in public and counterpublic sphere theory. On these days, you will be expected to come to class with a response paper, which summarizes your thoughts about the assigned readings for that day. What did you find thought-provoking or useful about them? What did you find most confusing, challenging, or disagreeable? Include direct quotes where appropriate. These brief 2-3 page responses are **due on BeachBoard by 11:59pm on the day preceding class (Monday).**

Article Expert

Twice this semester, you will serve as the class expert on a reading. On these days, you will be expected to have very deeply read and outlined one of our scheduled readings. At least 24 hours before our class, you will email to me your typed outline that delineates the main points of the reading; and five suggested discussion questions for the article. Then, on the day of the class, you will provide a copy of your outline for each member of the class; and you will be prepared to offer smart responses and help foster thoughtful discussion.



Final Project

Because I recognize that not all of our graduate students intend to become published authors or earn a Ph.D., students will have some flexibility in satisfying the requirements for a final project in this course.

After considering their desired future careers, students may choose to craft any of the following:

- A 12-15 page critical essay suitable for a conference, academic journal, or application to doctoral program. This might take several forms:
 - An empirical content analysis of media content, which provides the data for inquiry into the political economy of the media.
 - An inquiry into some emerging media technology, informed by media ecology/mediatization.
 - A textual analysis based in concepts drawn from the cultural studies tradition.
- A 12-15 page thorough and reflective review of literature on a growing area of inquiry suitable for submission to Review of Communication.
- A pair of smartly written smaller papers (including a 2000-word G.I.F.T. **and** a 3000-5000 word think-piece suitable for The American Prospect, Vox, Slate, Jacobin, The Atlantic, etc.) employing materials from our engagement with the political economy of the media, media ecology, and cultural studies.

Final Project Proposal

In this brief (2-3 pages, not including references) paper, you will describe the project you intend to complete. If you will write a critical essay or a review of literature, summarize the central claim(s) you hope to make *or* the research questions you want to pursue, articulate a rationale for the worthiness of such a project, and furnish a list of at least 15 scholarly sources you expect to employ. If you will write a GIFT and think-piece, summarize the point of the teaching exercise; and the venue and major argument you hope to make for your think-piece.

Final Project Outline

Many undergraduates seem to believe that they produce their best work at the last moment. They write in long streams of consciousness and submit right under the deadline. This will not be good enough at the graduate level. Your scholarly writing must be well-researched, deliberately argued, and highly structured if it is to survive peer review at a conference or a journal publication. I will help you along this path by demanding that you submit a complete outline of your project weeks in advance of the final due date. This outline should be detailed enough that it could be used by some other person to produce a final product which is more or less identical to the one you'll submit at the end of the semester.

Option 1: Critical Essay

Your task in this term paper is to summarize, apply, extend, and/or critique concepts and issues related to our engagement with scholarship this semester. Your complete draft should be 12-15 pages, not including references; and contain a minimum of 25 sources, 20 scholarly.

Basic Components of a Typical Critical Essay in Rhetorical Studies

1. Introduction
 - a. Intriguing hook or set-up
 - b. Specification of topic/research questions



- c. Justification for study (why is this worth doing?)
 - d. Preview of theses/claims
 - e. Preview of subsequent essay sections
2. Body
- a. Literature Review(s)
 - i. Informed selection of scholarly sources
 - ii. Description of key concepts and disputes
 - iii. Clear statement of your position with regards to such issues
 - b. Elaboration of “method” or approach—how will you do your analysis? What procedures will you follow?
 - c. “Thick Description” (rich, detailed explanation) of context(s)
 - i. Socio-economic and cultural factors and influences
 - ii. Historical factors or influences
 - iii. Political factors or influences
 - d. “Thick Description” of text(s)
 - e. Analysis of text(s)
3. Conclusion
- a. Review of theses/claims
 - b. Clarification of your contributions—what did your project show us about this artifact, about theory, about rhetoric generally?
 - c. Acknowledgements of specific limitations of your study
 - d. Suggestions for future research

Option 2: Review of Literature

Your task in this term paper is to summarize, synthesize, and evaluate a growing body of literature dealing with a given concept, theory, phenomena. Your complete draft should be 12-15 pages, not including references; and contain a minimum of 25 sources, 20 scholarly.

Literature reviews attempt to provide a service to the reader—they organize and explain the research around a given topic. In our field, *Review of Communication* is the primary venue for the publication of such reviews. Your paper should succeed in doing three things: providing a clear organization of the research; properly and succinctly summarizing the major claims/implications of the research; and critically evaluating the merits and limitations of the research.

Option 3: GIFT & Think-Piece

This project is intended to provide a more useful exercise for students who have no intent to pursue research or a doctoral degree.

GIFT

A Great Idea for Teaching (GIFT) is a brief description of a teaching activity, designed to be shared with others in the discipline at conferences and in NCA’s pedagogy journal *Communication Teacher*. These brief (2000 word maximum) papers should contain the following components: (1) a brief title; (2) the course(s) for which the activity is intended; (3) the objective(s) for the activity; (4) a brief theoretical rationale for conducting the activity; (5) a description/explanation of the activity, including any preparation/preliminary steps and materials needed; (6) a debriefing paragraph, including typical



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results; (7) an appraisal of the activity, including any limitations or variations; and (8) references.

Students should refer to published GIFTS to get a sense of how these papers ought to be constructed.

Think-Piece

Sometimes, although not often enough, scholars attempt to make their work helpful to the public by translating research into the language of the public sphere. We might look to the good works of Neil De Grasse Tyson, Noam Chomsky, Carl Sagan, and Marshall McLuhan as examples of the value of public intellectualism. Your job in this think-piece is to craft an essay, which could be published by a serious mainstream venue (Slate, Vox, American Prospect, Politico, Jacobin, The Hill, etc.). Your 3000-5000 word think-piece should provide a scholarly, rhetorical perspective on some matter pertaining to the mass media, journalism and democracy, popular culture, or emerging technology.

To get a sense of how such an essay might work, consider the following works published by rhetoric scholars in mainstream media:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/george-lakoff/understanding-trump_b_11144938.html

https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/03/09/how-donald-trump-gets-away-with-saying-things-other-candidates-cant/?utm_term=.dc87d3301a5b

<https://www.thenation.com/article/killing-commons/>

<http://washingtonmonthly.com/2016/03/31/why-trumps-promises-of-disaster-might-be-part-of-his-appeal/>

Final Exam

Prior to the final exam period, you will be provided three short-answer question prompts. These comp-like questions are intended to guide you to synthesize and critically reflect upon the material we have covered this semester. As this is a take-home test, you are expected to take advantage of your access to scholarship, and cite sources accordingly.