

**COM105A**  
**INTRODUCTION TO MEDIA STUDIES**

Second Semester 2008-2009  
SS280  
Tuesdays and Thursdays | 9:00 to 10:30 AM

**Instructor:** Andrew Albert J. Ty [eldritch1313@yahoo.com](mailto:eldritch1313@yahoo.com)  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays | 10:30 to 11:30 and 1:30 to 3:30 BY APPOINTMENT

**1 COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course presents a sampling of the wide array of issues and interventions considered part of media studies. Especially emphasized are the intersections between media and cultural studies; based on the assumption that media and culture are virtually inextricable in the experience of life today, the course consequently asserts a generally critical stance toward the current state of the world as inflected by the strategies and tactics of mediated culture.

The student will examine various issues and concepts associated with culture, ideology, and hegemony, social life and cultural studies, political economy, the politics of representation, the postmodern turn and new media, and globalization and social movements. This ensures a grasp of media and cultural studies as a discipline that is itself interdisciplinary, demonstrating this as a necessary approach in any attempt to navigate through the landscape of a contemporary existence where textuality and technology commingle with culture and communication.

**2 COURSE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the course, the student should have gained an insight into the unity and diversity characteristic of the field of media and cultural studies. He or she must be able to think critically and argue cogently about ideas learned in class, recognizing their validity when applied to key cultural issues and phenomena that arise in considerations of the contemporary mediasphere. A proficiency in the written word as a rhetorical form for expressing these ideas is essential.

**3 GENERAL FORMAT AND METHODOLOGY**

The language of instruction for this course is English. Lectures, discussions, and assignments will be in English, following the standard conventions of its use in a formal and academic setting.

Unless specified otherwise, each class period (one-and-a-half-hours in duration and held twice a week) will center on a lecture/discussion about the topic at hand. Especially vital to our learning experience is a spirit of critical and insightful discourse.

The term “lecture/discussion” is meant to indicate how, even in instances when I am doing most of the talking, you are not just invited but highly encouraged to actively engage with the subject matter by offering insights and opinions, raising questions and issues.

**ASSUMPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS**

Since this course is an elective, I am assuming a genuine interest in the subject matter to be your primary motive in registering for the course. Any other reason—to avoid scheduling conflicts with other courses, an easy-A reputation, etc.—will be considered less significant, if at all.

(Some of you are “required” to take this course, but the above remarks still apply. You have been “required” by your respective Department, after all, because of the particular interest in communication studies that you have declared.)

As a corollary to this, I expect you to be open-minded in class. You do not have to agree with every single idea, but you should be able to engage with them in serious and thoughtful manner, so as to place the ideas within a context that will prove their worth and value. Personal taste is an important consideration but should never be allowed to get in the way of learning.

I am assuming your proficiency in the English language in the spoken and the written forms. The recurrence of major lapses in the rules and conventions of standard English usage—grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, argumentation and flow, etc.—will count against you.

While I will ask you to make assessments and declarations in your class recitation and written assignments, I also place a high value on the power of questions to spark discussion and insight. At the very least, it will help you think things through in this course. Practically speaking, this means that asking questions in class will be considered part of recitation.

I assume a critical and discerning research capability, especially when using the Internet. You are not just expected to know how to surf the World Wide Web but to be able to surf it well. Any resource must be properly assessed as reliable and significant; Web sites like Wikipedia are to be considered only as starting points for your research and not main sources themselves. The same goes for general dictionaries and encyclopedias, online or off-

As part of an educational experiment, we have a course site at the following URL:

<http://eldritch00.wikidot.com/com105a>

You are required to set up a Wikidot account and to learn the basics of using it, in order to be active in developing our course site. Take note that this is a public site and thus retrievable by search engines; keep this consideration in mind so you can do the online requirements well.

While you are encouraged to “play” with the site and use it to help you in the course, any form of disruptive activity will not be taken lightly. This also applies to classroom activities, including basic considerations of common courtesy, *e.g.*, keeping all mobile communication devices in silent mode at all times, paying attention to whoever is speaking, etc.

I will not entertain any last-minute appeals regarding problems with grades and attendance. If you wish to do well in the course, you must be prepared to do so from the very beginning. As soon as you start to encounter problems that will affect your performance, please take the initiative to speak with me about it immediately, so these problems will be nipped in the bud.

## 5 COURSE REQUIREMENTS

You are required not just to attend class on time but to exert an effort to make it a valuable learning experience for you. This entails taking the course requirements seriously.

Attendance is checked at the beginning of class and strictly conforms to University policy. You are marked absent if you do not respond when I call your name.

If you come in late—not more than fifteen minutes after attendance check—you are responsible for informing me that you are actually present for the day. Failure to do this will cause you to accumulate absences, of which you are allowed a maximum of six. If you arrive so late as to leave me no choice but to already mark you absent, you are still encouraged to attend class to avoid missing too much of the day’s lecture/discussion.

Class participation is essential for a thorough comprehension of the ideas discussed throughout the course. If you have already been marked absent for the day, you may still earn points for participation if you are physically present to share insights and opinions. You will also be given credit for asking relevant questions in class.

In addition, class participation also includes your online efforts in developing the Wikidot site for the course. You are expected to participate throughout the semester and not just for the online WebWork project I will be assigning. Participation can take the form of forum or message board activity, but will depend more on the creation and editing of pages to share relevant URLs, offer commentary, embed media, raise questions for discussion, etc.

Course readings may be assigned or suggested by me or chosen by you. I will provide resources in class and on our Wikidot site. I expect you to find helpful readings too, resources to be shared with the rest of the class. Be discerning and critical with what you turn up online.

Essays form a bulk of the course requirements, and you will be assessed by how you think about issues and phenomena in media and cultural studies. “How you think” necessarily includes not just your grasp of key ideas and insights but the way you communicate them using standard rules and conventions of English grammar and usage.

Be mindful of the possibility that instead of an essay proper, I may assign a take-home exam instead. This will most likely take the form of questions for you to think about and answer in short paragraphs. Both of these requirements have much in common, actually.

## 6 GRADING SYSTEM AND BREAKDOWN OF REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation	20%	A	92-100
WebWork	25%	B+	87-91
Midterm Essay	25%	B	83-86
Final Essay	30%	C+	79-82
TOTAL	100%	C	75-78
		D	70-74
		F	69 and below

**COURSE OUTLINE AND TIMEFRAME**

Take note of the following significant dates and **deadlines**:

20 January 2009:	<b>Midterm Essay</b>	(for everyone)
19 February 2009:	Last Day of Class	(for March graduates only)
26 February 2009:	<b>Final Essay</b>	(for March graduates only)
19 March 2009:	Last Day of Class	(for everyone else)
26 March 2009:	<b>Final Essay</b>	(for everyone else)

Week 1: <b>11 November 2008</b> <b>13 November 2008</b>	<i>Culture, Ideology, and Hegemony</i> Marx and Engels / Gramsci
Week 2: <b>18 November 2008</b> <b>20 November 2008</b>	<i>Culture, Ideology, and Hegemony</i> Benjamin / Horkheimer and Adorno
Week 3: <b>25 November 2008</b> <b>27 November 2008</b>	<i>Culture, Ideology, and Hegemony</i> Habermas / Althusser
Week 4: <b>02 December 2008</b> <b>04 December 2008</b>	<i>Social Life and Cultural Studies</i> Barthes / McLuhan / Debord
Week 5: <b>09 December 2008</b> <b>11 December 2008</b>	<i>Social Life and Cultural Studies</i> Dorfman and Mattelart / Williams
Week 6: <b>16 December 2008</b> <b>18 December 2008</b>	<i>Social Life and Cultural Studies</i> Hebdige / Hall / Ang
<i>CHRISTMAS BREAK</i>	
Week 7: <b>06 January 2009</b> <b>08 January 2009</b>	<i>Political Economy</i> Garnham / Smythe
Week 8: <b>13 January 2009</b> <b>15 January 2009</b>	<i>Political Economy</i> Herman and Chomsky / Schiller
Week 9: <b>20 January 2009</b> <b>22 January 2009</b>	<i>Political Economy</i> Meehan / Bourdieu
Week 10: <b>27 January 2009</b> <b>29 January 2009</b>	<i>The Politics of Representation</i> Mulvey / Dyer
Week 11: <b>03 February 2009</b> <b>05 February 2009</b>	<i>The Politics of Representation</i> hooks / Gilroy

<p>Week 12:  <b>10 February 2009</b>  <b>12 February 2009</b></p>	<p><i>The Politics of Representation</i>  Mohanti / Canclini</p>
<p>Week 13:  <b>17 February 2009</b>  <b>19 February 2009</b></p>	<p><i>The Postmodern Turn and New Media</i>  Baudrillard / Jameson</p>
<p>Week 14:  <b>24 February 2009</b>  <b>26 February 2009</b></p>	<p><i>The Postmodern Turn and New Media</i>  McRobbie / Poster / Jenkins</p>
<p>Week 15:  <b>03 March 2009</b>  <b>05 March 2009</b></p>	<p><i>Globalization and Social Movements</i>  Appadurai / Sreberny</p>
<p>Week 16:  <b>10 March 2009</b>  <b>12 March 2009</b></p>	<p><i>Globalization and Social Movements</i>  Martin-Barbero / Pieterse</p>
<p>Week 17:  <b>17 March 2009</b>  <b>19 March 2009</b></p>	<p><i>Globalization and Social Movements</i>  Straubhaar / Kahn and Kellner</p>

These readings are all taken from the revised edition of *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*, an anthology edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner and released in this second edition in 2006 by Blackwell Publishing. Here are the full titles of each selection:

### **Part I: Culture, Ideology and Hegemony**

- 1) The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas (*Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*)
- 2) (i) History of the Subaltern Classes; (ii) The Concept of "Ideology"; (iii) Cultural Themes: Ideological Material (*Antonio Gramsci*)
- 3) The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (*Walter Benjamin*)
- 4) The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception (*Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno*)
- 5) The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (*Jürgen Habermas*)
- 6) Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation) (*Louis Althusser*)

### **Part II: Social Life and Cultural Studies**

- 7) (i) Operation Margarine; (ii) Myth Today (*Roland Barthes*)
- 8) The Medium is the Message (*Marshall McLuhan*)
- 9) The Commodity as Spectacle (*Guy Debord*)
- 10) Introduction: Instructions on How to Become a General in the Disneyland Club (*Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart*)
- 11) Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory (*Raymond Williams*)
- 12) (i) From Culture to Hegemony; (ii) Subculture: The Unnatural Break (*Dick Hebdige*)
- 13) Encoding / Decoding (*Stuart Hall*)
- 14) On the Politics of Empirical Audience Research (*Ien Ang*)

### **Part III: Political Economy**

- 15) Contribution to a Political Economy of Mass-Communication (*Nicholas Garnham*)
- 16) On the Audience Commodity and its Work (*Dallas W. Smythe*)
- 17) A Propaganda Model (*Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky*)
- 18) Not Yet the Post-Imperialist Era (*Herbert I. Schiller*)
- 19) Gendering the Commodity Audience: Critical Media Research, Feminism, and Political Economy (*Eileen R. Meehan*)
- 20) Introduction; (ii) The Aristocracy of Culture (*Pierre Bourdieu*)
- 21) On Television (*Pierre Bourdieu*)

### **Part IV: The Politics of Representation**

- 22) Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (*Laura Mulvey*)
- 23) Stereotyping (*Richard Dyer*)
- 24) Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance (*bell hooks*)
- 25) British Cultural Studies and the Pitfalls of Identity (*Paul Gilroy*)
- 26) Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses (*Chandra Talpade Mohanty*)
- 27) Hybrid Cultures, Oblique Powers (*Néstor García Canclini*)

### **Part V: The Postmodern Turn and New Media**

- 28) The Precession of Simulacra (*Jean Baudrillard*)
- 29) Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (*Fredric Jameson*)
- 30) Feminism, Postmodernism and the "Real Me" (*Angela McRobbie*)
- 31) Postmodern Virtualities (*Mark Poster*)
- 32) Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars?: Digital Cinema, Media Convergence, and Participatory Culture (*Henry Jenkins*)

### **Part VI: Globalization and Social Movements**

- 33) Disjuncture and the Difference in the Global Culture Economy (*Arjun Appadurai*)
- 34) The Global and the Local in International Communications (*Annabelle Sreberny*)
- 35) The Process: From Nationalisms to Transnationalisms (*Jésus Martín-Barbero*)
- 36) Globalization as Hybridization (*Jen Nederveen Pieterse*)
- 37) (Re)Asserting National Television and National Identity Against the Global, Regional, and Local Levels of World Television (*Joseph Straubhaar*)
- 38) Oppositional Politics and the Internet: A Critical / Reconstructive Approach (*Richard Kahn and Douglas M. Kellner*)