

COMM 229-03 FOUNDATIONS OF MEDIA STUDIES

Bridgewater State University

Spring 2015

Instructor: Tanya D. Zuk

Classroom: MKC-131

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Meeting Time: M, W, F 12:20-1:10 pm

Office Hours: W 9-10:30 & by appointment

Phone: 470-333-2417

TEXTBOOK: Branston, Gill and Stafford, Roy. *The Media Student's Handbook*, 5th ed. Routledge Publisher. London and New York, 2010.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the evolving field of media studies. A number of key theories and ideas will be explained to help the student understand the media in theory and practice. One of these is exploring the “narrative” and its application to institutions, the media business, audiences and ideologies. We will also examine how we use media in our research and how new technologies are transforming traditional media and impacting on our use of those media. Textbook readings will be supplemented with films, the internet, You Tube, writing (response and research papers) and classroom oral presentations on the subject matter covered in the book and in class discussion. The goal is to deepen the student’s understanding of the media and how it impacts on our everyday experience.

OBJECTIVES

1. Foster a broad understanding of the field of media studies.
2. Hone critical thinking skills through a range of textual engagements.
3. Increase awareness o the theoretical and philosophical discourses in the study and production of media,
4. Encourage an stimulating and positive learning environment.

OUTCOMES

1. Understand the broad contours of media as a field of study.
2. Increase the ability to critically think about primary and secondary media texts.
3. Become more comfortable mapping your own thoughts, understanding and experiences with wider theoretical and philosophical discourses surrounding media production and study.
4. Work in an environment using new media technologies.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING VALUES

Response Papers (20%) – these papers will consist of answers to questions from the book. They are meant to stimulate critical thinking about the subject matter in the

chapters. (1) Length – approximately 2 pages. (2) Must be typed. (3) Should reflect good writing skills such as grammar, clarity, spelling, sentence structure.

Oral Presentations (25%) – you will be asked to research two articles on a topic of your choice. The topic must relate to something we’ve discussed in class or something from the book that interests you. The two articles do not have to be related to each other. You will then write a 1-3 page summary of each article, and attach the summary to a copy of the article. *NOTE: If you use an article from a peer-reviewed journal, all you need to hand in is the abstract, not the entire article.*

Your written summary should consist of the following key points: (1) Who is the author and what is his or her credentials; (2) What is the thesis of the article; (3) What evidence does the author use to support the thesis; (4) What is the conclusion and (5) What is your opinion of the conclusion – do you agree or disagree?

You will then organize your summaries in the form of a powerpoint presentation for class, make sure to incorporate visuals and examples related to your articles. You will be graded on how well you present the information in the article using the above criteria.

Quizzes (15%) – quizzes will consist of subject matter from the book.

Compare/Contrast Paper (10%) – this is a paper that you will write to compare and contrast two movies of the same genre.

Final Exam (20%) – the final will be comprehensive and consist of a variety of question types including: true/false; fill in the blank; multiple select; matching; short answer; and essay questions.

Participation (10%) – includes your class participation in discussions and offering your opinions and insight when called upon by me; or better yet, offering your input when a question is posed for the entire class.

ATTENDANCE

1. I allow only three absences for the whole semester. The only exception to this is serious illness or a death in your family. I will require some type of documentation to verify the absence so that it will not be counted against you. For every unexcused absence over three, your grade will be dropped one grade (for example, a B- would drop to a C+).
2. Please come to class on time. Coming late sometimes is unavoidable, however, if I see a consistent pattern of coming to late for class I will speak to you about it once, and if it persists and becomes habitual, you will lose points at the end of the

semester for your final grade. Being late to class disrupts my lecture and thus the overall learning environment, so do your best to avoid it.

COURSE POLICIES

- It is in the best interests of you as an individual and us as a classroom to create a positive, inclusive, classroom environment. One of my greatest challenges as an instructor is to provide an engaging, entertaining, and intellectual classroom experience. I need your collaboration to create the best educational experience for all involved. By participating in class discussion, being respectful of others opinions, and preparing for class you help not only yourself but your fellow students as well.
- With this in mind, **please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices**. They disrupt the learning environment. If there's an emergency situation and you have to leave your cell phone on, put it on vibrate. If I see you using a cell phone, I will remind you once – if you do it again, I will ask you to leave class and you will have to write a paper telling me why using cell phones in class are disruptive to the learning environment.
- Participation is critical to the educational experience and to this course. This includes (1) class discussion (2) completing reading assignments according to the syllabus, and (3) handing in written work on time. At the end of the course, when I'm calculating final grades, your level of participation will factor into your final grade.
- We will be using several aspects of Blackboard in this class. This syllabus, announcements, assignments, and readings will be posted on our course site. Up to date grades are also posted on Blackboard. Get familiar with using Blackboard, if you have any questions don't hesitate to ask!
- All assignments will be turned in using Blackboard's "digital dropbox" or Late submissions will be accepted via Blackboard, with each day late being worth a letter grade.
- If you wish to appeal a grade: within a week of getting your assignment back you must hand in, along with the assignment you want re-graded, a typed paper explaining why you believe your grade was incorrect. I will respond in writing within a week.
- Revision Policy If during the semester you feel that you could have done better in any given assignment (not including discussion) you may revise and resubmit that assignment for a better grade. You may only revise an assignment once for up to a one letter grade improvement. Please hand in your original **and** your revision when taking advantage of this opportunity.

- The BSC Writing Studio offers free consultations to provide students feedback on their writing (or to brainstorm ideas to write about later). Writers come to the studio regarding many types of work. The Writing Studio is located on the ground floor of Maxwell Library, and can be reached by phone at (508) 5312053 or at <http://www.bridgew.edu/WritingStudio>.
- If you need special arrangements for a documented disability, please contact the Academic Achievement Center, located on the ground floor of the Maxwell Library. If you would like to share pertinent medical information, request special arrangements for class seating, or need special assistance in the event of a building evacuation, please contact me in the first week of class. http://www.bridgew.edu/AAC/Disability_Resources.cfm
- DO NOT PLAGIARIZE because your chances of getting caught are actually very good. Ironically, the Internet makes it much easier for us to catch cheating – type in a key word or phrase on Google using advanced search and bingo, the plagiarized content shows up. Also, in most cases, I can tell the difference between a paper that is written by a professional or graduate student and a paper that is written by an undergraduate student. Finally, we also have a software program offered by the college that allows us to check if a paper is plagiarized. Plagiarism (cheating) is a serious offense and if you get caught, at a minimum, you will fail the assignment. There may be additional penalties if I, or the department decides to take further action.
- Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade scale, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor. All readings, screenings, and papers should be done before that day's meeting in preparation for class.

SCHEDULE

Readings are due on the date they appear. Please make sure to look ahead in the schedule and prepare for class appropriately. **Due assignments are in bold.**

	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Week 1		(1/21) Intro to Course	(1/23) Chp. 14, Audience to Users
Week 2	(1/26) Participatory Culture	(1/28) SNOW DAY: <i>Digital Nation</i> Screening	(1/30) Fan Activism
Week 3	(2/2) SNOW DAY	(2/4) Chp. 1, Approaches to Media Texts	(2/6) Semiotics & Film Language
Week 4	(2/9) Chp. 8, New Media Quiz on Bb	(2/11) Social Media & Big Data	(2/13) Chp. 9, Future of TV
Week 5	(2/16) NO CLASS First Response Paper Due	(2/18) FCC & <i>Family Guy</i>	(2/20) NO CLASS - Online: Videogames Mini-Lecture
Week 6	(2/23) First Oral Presentations	(2/25) First Oral Presentations	(2/27) First Oral Presentations
Week 7	(3/2) First Oral Presentations	(3/4) First Oral Presentations	(3/6) NO CLASS Chp. 10, Regulation & Net Neutrality (<i>Reading & Lecture on Bb</i>) Quiz on Bb
Spring Break	NO CLASS	THIS WEEK	(3/9-3/13)
Week 8	(3/16) Chp. 12, News and its Future	(3/18) Democracy and the News	(3/20) Chp. 7, Media as Business
Week 9	(3/23) Non-traditional & Indie Distribution	(3/25) Chp. 13, Documentary and 'reality' debates	(3/27) Documentary Discussion
Week 10	(3/30) Chp. 11, Debating Advertising... Quiz on Bb	(4/1) Advertising Exercise	(4/3) NO CLASS Second Response Paper Due
Week 11	(4/6) Second Oral Presentation	(4/8) Second Oral Presentation	(4/10) Second Oral Presentation
Week 12	(4/13) Second Oral Presentation	(4/15) Second Oral Presentation	(4/17) Chp. 6, Ideologies and Discourses
Week 13	(4/20) NO CLASS	(4/22) Chp. 3, Genres and other Classifications	(4/24) Hybrid Genres
Week 14	(4/27) Chp. 2, Narratives	(4/29) Flexi-Narratives	(5/1) Chp. 4, Representations
Week 15	(5/4) Case Study Compare/Contrast Paper	(5/6) Final Exam on Bb	