

Media and Culture

From Mass Communication to Networked Communication

COMM 852

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Department of Communication Studies

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Office Hours: Tuesday 1-3, Thursday 10-11, by appointment

Mission of the Department of Communication Studies

The role and mission of the faculty and students of the Department of Communication Studies is to examine human symbolic activity as it shapes and is shaped by relationships, institutions, and societies. This work concerns the creation, analysis, and critique of messages. The department's research, teaching, and service devote particular attention to understanding the ways in which communication erodes and sustains collaboration within and among local, national, and global communities.

Course Summary and Objectives

Media and Culture: From Mass Communication to Networked Communication explores the intellectual foundations of two paradigms of communication research. The twentieth century witnessed an explosion of interest in the mass media, as radio and television joined print in circulating messages to large audiences. Mass media was theorized to have a democratic function that could help coordinate increasingly complex societies, but has often been used for the undemocratic purposes of propaganda. The twenty first century has coincided with developments in digitally networked communication: blogs, social networking sites, image and video sharing sites, microblogging have all reshaped how people communicate. But how? This course, by giving a broad overview of these two different systems of thinking about communication, will open up lines of inquiry to probe this question. Students should leave the course with a strong sense of the history of mass communication, the features of networked communication, and how different media forms shape culture.

Required Texts

John Durham Peters and Peter Simonson, eds., *Mass Communication and American Social Thought: Key Texts, 1919-1968* (Lanham, MD: Rowman Littlefield, 2004).

Lisabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996/2010).

Course Requirements

20% of your grade will be determined by participation. Participation includes (1) regular in-class offerings to the conversation and (2) weekly “class contributions” to the course blog on Blackboard. Class contributions can include one or more of the following:

- A question that synthesizes that week’s readings
- Putting two or more authors in conversation with each other
- Suggesting pedagogical applications of the readings
- Tie-ins to contemporary political, cultural, or economic events
- Media artifacts (e.g. YouTube video, editorial cartoon) that shed some insight into that week’s topic
- A critique of one of the readings or theoretical assumptions behind multiple readings
- Self-generated poetic or narrative artifact that assists our collective understanding of the readings
- An in-depth response to a classmate’s class contribution

These class contributions are crucial because they will ground the conversation in the second half of each seminar. Each contribution should be submitted by the Monday before class.

15% of your grade will come from your group reports on selected readings in the Peters & Simonson anthology. The class will be divided into four groups, which will generate a detailed handout on the assigned readings (see Schedule of Readings below) and be posted to Blackboard. For each reading, select one short quotation that captures the essence of the reading followed by 3-5 bullet points about the main claims of the article. I anticipate each of these entries to be about a third of a page long. The idea is to lend comprehensiveness to our study of mass communication while also allowing a focus on selected readings. Each group will have ten minutes to orally present the main ideas and common threads at the beginning of class. *Important:* this oral presentation is *not* to be a regurgitation of the handout or, worse, a straight reading of the handout. This is a more macro effort to synthesize the readings and prompt conversation for the balance of the class.

15% of your grade will be determined by a book review that you will write and share with the class. Select a book that is relevant to the course, and write a 4-6 page review (look to book reviews in journals for exemplars.) Ph.D. students must choose an academic book (for example, Peter Simonson’s *Refiguring Mass Communication: A History*) while MCA students can choose an academic book or select popular press books (like Chris Anderson’s *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*). Choose your book with DSP approval during the first month of class and we will assign you a class period to share some of the insights of your review.

50% of your grade will be determined by a final seminar paper, the first sentence of which should begin: The shift from mass communication to networked communication has changed culture by... Length expectation is 10-12 pages plus footnotes/bibliography. Any citational style is fine.

Procedures & Norms

Accommodations. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Plagiarism. The Student Code of Conduct defines plagiarism as “presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgment of the source) and submitting examinations, theses, reports, speeches, drawings, laboratory notes or other academic work in whole or in part as one's own when such work has been prepared by another person or copied from another person.” Obviously, plagiarism for a graduate student is functionally the academic death penalty.

Preparation. While demanding, the reading load is not ridiculous. My general philosophy on reading is that you should read early enough in the week so that you can return to the text(s) later in order to produce your class contribution. Students should be prepared to summarize the main points of each reading and provide a critical response to readings and to class contributions.

Decorum. This is a graduate seminar, and I expect academic expectations of decorum to be modeled with excellence. This inexhaustively means: paying full attention to the lecture and discussion and not becoming unduly distracted by electronic machines, arguing while operating under the principles of charity and civility, and attempting to extend the conversation rather than shut it down.

Attendance. I expect you to attend every class meeting, be on time, and stay throughout the entire period. However, should you have to miss a class, please contact me as soon as possible in person or by email. In the rare case that you miss two or more classes, you must schedule an appointment with me to discuss your progress in the course and your ability to meet course requirements. Students that miss more than 3 classes cannot receive an A in the course. Extensions and alternative accommodations will be granted only in cases where you are able to document extenuating circumstances. All other work will be penalized one letter grade for every 24 hours past the due date.

Schedule of Readings

January 11: Course Introduction

Syllabus review

January 18: Dialogue and Dissemination

Plato, Phaedrus, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedrus.html>.

John Durham Peters, "Introduction: The Problem of Communication," and "Dialogue and Dissemination," in *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

January 25: Mass Communication Research Coalesces, 1919-33

Part I in Peters & Simonson

February 1: Communications Research, 1933-49

Part II, especially Readings 12, 15, 21, 32, 35, 39, 40

Group 1: Readings 12-24 in Peters & Simonson

Group 2: Readings 29-41 in Peters & Simonson

February 8: The Culture Industry

Readings 25-27 in Peters & Simonson

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken, 1968), 217-52.

Max Horkheimer & Theodor Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Self-Deception," in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1969), 120-67.

Theodor Adorno, "The Culture Industry Reconsidered," in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J.M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 1991), 98-106.

Paddy Scannell, "Benjamin Contextualized: On 'The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction,'" in *Canonic Texts in Media Research: Are There Any? Should There Be? How About These?*, ed. Elihu Katz, John Durham Peters, Tamar Liebes, and Avril Orloff (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003), 74-89.

February 15: Mass Communication Theory, 1949-68

Part III, especially Readings 42, 44, 48, 49, 53, 54, 55, 65, 68

Group 3: Readings 42-55 in Peters & Simonson

Group 4: Readings 56-68 in Peters & Simonson

February 22: No class for Western States Communication Association conference

March 1: A Consumer's Republic I

Cohen, Part 1-2

Roderick Hart, "Political Feelings," in *Seducing America: How Television Charms the Modern Voter* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999), 1-21.

March 8: A Consumer's Republic II

Cohen, Part 3-4

Thomas Frank, "Why Johnny Can't Dissent," in *Commodify Your Dissent: Salvos from the Baffler* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 31-45.

March 15: Visuality I

Neil Postman, "The Age of Show Business," *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1985): 83-98.

Stuart Ewen, "...Images Without Bottom...", in *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 13-23.

Kevin DeLuca, "Making Waves," *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism* (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 1999): 1-24.

Jean Burgess & Joshua Green, "How YouTube Matters," *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (Polity, 2009): 1-14.

March 22: No class, spring break

March 29: Visuality II

Sut Jhally, "Image-Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture," in *Gender, Race, and Class: A Text-Reader*, eds. Gail Dines and Jean Humez (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003): 249-57.

Stuart Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media," in *Gender, Race, and Class: A Text-Reader*, eds. Gail Dines and Jean Humez (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003): 89-94.

Jean Kilbourne, "'The More You Subtract, the More You Add': Cutting Girls Down to Size," in *Gender, Race, and Class: A Text-Reader*, eds. Gail Dines and Jean Humez (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003): 258-267.

Kylo-Patrick R. Hart, "Representing Gay Men on American Television," in *Gender, Race, and Class: A Text-Reader*, eds. Gail Dines and Jean Humez (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003): 597-607.

Imani Perry, "Who(se) Am I?": The Identity and Image of Women in Hip-Hop," in *Gender, Race, and Class: A Text-Reader*, eds. Gail Dines and Jean Humez (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003): 136-48.

April 5: The Network Society I

Castells, Prologue & Chapters 1-2

April 12: The Network Society II

Castells, Chapters 5-7 & Conclusion

April 19: The Network Society III

Yochai Benkler, "Introduction," "Peer Production and Sharing," and "Political Freedom Part 2: The Emergence of the Networked Public Sphere," in *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

April 26: Critics of Connectedness

Steven Shaviro, *Connected: Or, What it Means to Live in the Network Society* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 3-34.

Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker, "Part I: Nodes," *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 23-101.

May 3

Paper presentations