

## Sociology 084.01/084.02—Mass Media in American Society

Spring 2007

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In their writings on emerging media(s) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Arthur and Marilousie Kroker note “The real world of digital reality has always been post-alphabetic.” Reading as a form of knowledge acquisition has, for much of the developed world, given way to a myriad of literacies which demand the ability to move fluidly through multiple media including television and cinema, radio and digital music, the internet and world wide web.

The responses from the social sciences and sociology to these emerging technologies of media delivery and consumption have been equally as varied. In an age where movies become primary historical documents, and news programs resemble rock videos, the need for critical response becomes paramount. As a core course in sociology, this class will do the following:

1. Familiarize students with different sociological and theoretical literatures concerning the economic, social and cultural aspects of media analysis.
2. Provide a topical overview of the historical development of media structures in the United States and Western Europe (along with other selected geographical regions), giving attention to the rise of corporate control of media.
3. Provide an introduction into the relationship of representation and power, particularly in the case of race, class, gender and sexuality.

**Readings:** Almost all the readings for this course are available in your three books, which you can purchase at the bookstore. They are: Croteau and Hoynes, *Media Society: Industries, Images, and Audiences*, Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords, revised edition*, and Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez, *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text Reader*. All three texts are also on reserve at the library. The remaining articles may be accessed through the O’Neill library course reserves website. Readings are listed under Instructor, Arend.

### Course Requirements:

**I. Attendance** – I will take roll in the class. You are allowed two absences. Any unexcused absences after this will result in a lowering of your final grade by one-third of a mark. Thus, your third absence would lower your grade from that of an A to an A-, your fourth absence would lower it again from an A- to a B+, and so on. Excused absences, including approved athletic events, medical appointments, and absences cleared by the dean will not lower your grade.

**II. Reading and Group Presentation** – The readings are not extensive, but some of them are difficult. Each student is expected to complete the readings. *This is essential for passing the class.* We will reference the readings closely, both in discussion and in your written assignments. You will be required to present the readings and lead discussion for one class, in teams of three or four. There will be a sign up sheet the second week of class for discussion times. The discussion should not run more than one-half hour, and should address the following:

- a. The major arguments of the day's readings. This should be presented on a hand-out to all class members.
- b. Your analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the readings.
- c. Discussion questions concerning the readings as they related to other class materials and relevant current events. You will begin the discussion with these questions, but you are not required to lead the discussion per se.

**III. Written Requirements** – There are two writing assignments for this course. Everyone is required to complete the first in the same fashion. For the second, you have a choice between two options. (see below) I will give you specific guidelines for each assignment.

Assignment 1. Consumption diary and analysis. Assigned March 13<sup>th</sup>, Due March 29<sup>th</sup>

Assignment 2. Choose **one** (a or b):

- a. Write four 2-3 page critical review essays on the course reading. At least two must be handed in before spring break, all by the end of the course.

**OR**

- b. Design a content rich website on mass media. Can be submitted any time up to April 26<sup>th</sup>. No exceptions on final due date. Topics for websites must be approved by the instructor.

For all writing, you must show me that you have read and engaged with the readings in depth. I want to know what YOU think, but it is as important that you lay down a theoretical base for your arguments. This means citing the readings/theorists that are applicable and arguing for/with/or against their theories in the development of your own arguments and points. A strong paper will be well organized, and it will demonstrate an intimate knowledge of and serious grappling with the issue at hand. In terms of written work:

- a. All papers should be double-spaced.
- b. Margins should be standard, unless previously agreed upon in special circumstances.
- c. The font of all papers will be 12 point, either Times New Roman or Arial. If you want to use other specifications, check with me first.
- d. All assignments should demonstrate knowledge of style, grammar and punctuation appropriate to college level writing.

**IV. Exams** – You will have a midterm and final exam, both in-class. They can consist of matching, true/false, multiple choice, short answer, and/or short essay.

**Grading Summary** In addition to attendance, your grade for this class will be based on the following components:

Class participation & group presentation	10 points
Consumption Diary Analysis	20 points
Critical review essays <b>OR</b> Website	20 points
Midterm	25 points
Final Exam	25 points
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100 points</b>

I assume you will do your own work; any plagiarized work will be referred to the dean and sent through the formal academic integrity violations process. See also the following link for more information: <http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity>

## **COURSE OUTLINE:**

### **Section I: The Origins of Mass Media and Mass Media Studies**

#### 1. The Rise of the Mass Media

Tuesday, January 16: Introduction to course

Thursday, January 18:

Croteau and Hoynes: Chapter 1: "Media and the Social World" from *Media/Society*

#### 2. Mass Media and Technological Change

Tuesday, January 23:

Croteau and Hoynes: Chapter 9: "Media Technology and Social Change" from *Media/Society*

*Recommended: Durham and Kellner, Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*

*McLuhan, Marshall, "The Medium is the Message"*

Films: *The History of Mass Communications, Images in Media*

Thursday, January 25:

Online Reserve

Matheson, David. "The Birth of News Discourse," *Media, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 22: 557-73.

#### 3. The Origins of Media Studies: Marxism and the Production of Mass Ideas

Tuesday, January 30:

Durham and Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*

Kellner and Durham, "Adventures in Media and Cultural Studies," pp ix-xxxviii

Introduction to Part 1 pp. 3-8

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels "The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas"

Croteau and Hoynes: Chapter 5: "Media and Ideology" from *Media/Society*, pages 159-184 only.

Thursday, February 1:

Durham and Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*

Gramsci, Antonio. "History of Subaltern Classes, The Concept of Ideology, Cultural Themes"

Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer. "The Culture Industry"

### **Section II: Political Economy and Mass Media**

#### 1. Media Ownership and Consolidation

Tuesday, February 6:

Croteau and Hoynes: Chapter 2: "The Economics of the Media Industry" from *Media/Society*

Film: *Money for Nothing: Behind the Business of Pop Music*

Thursday, February 8:

Croteau and Hoynes: Chapter 2 continued

Tuesday, February 13:

Croteau and Hoynes: Chapter 3: "Political Influence on Media" from *Media/Society*, pages 77-98. **(February 13<sup>th</sup> reading continued on next page)**

## Tuesday February 13<sup>th</sup> cont.

Online Reserve

Fairchild, Charles. "Deterritorializing Radio." *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 21, pp. 549-561.

Thursday, February 15:

Croteau and Hoynes: Chapter 3: "Political Influence on Media" from *Media/Society*, pages 98-120.

Dines and Humez, *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*

Rich, Frank. "Naked Capitalists"

## 2. Chomsky and Herman's Propaganda Model

Tuesday, February 20:

Durham and Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*

Chomsky, Noam and Edward Herman, "A Propaganda Model"

Film: *The Myth of the Liberal Media: The Propaganda Model of News*

## 3. Audiences, Media Influence, and Politics

Thursday, February 22:

Croteau and Hoynes: Chapter 7: "Media Influence and the Political World" from *Media/Society*

Tuesday, February 27:

Durham and Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*

Symthe, Dallas. "On the Audience: Commodity and Its Work"

Dines and Humez, *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*

Giroux, Henry A. "Kids for Sale"

Thursday, March 1: **IN-CLASS MIDTERM**

**\*\*NO CLASS: Spring break March 6 and 8\*\***

## 4. Consumer Culture and Advertising

Tuesday, March 13:

Dines and Humez, *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*

Schor, Juliet. "The New Politics of Consumption: Why Americans Want So Much More Than They Need"

Jhally, Sut, "Image-Based Culture"

Thursday, March 15:

Croteau and Hoynes: Chapter 5: "Media and Ideology" from *Media/Society*, pages 184-193

Online Reserve

Friedan, Betty "The Sexual Sell" reprinted in Schor and Holt *The Consumer Society Reader*

Goldman and Papson "Advertising in the Age of Accelerated Meaning" reprinted in Schor and Holt *The Consumer Society Reader*

Tuesday, March 20:

Dines and Humez, *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*

Kilbourne, Jean, "The More You Subtract, the More You Add"

Film: *Killing Us Softly 3*

## 5. Media, Agency and the Consumer

Thursday, March 22:

Croteau and Hoynes: Chapter 8: “Active Audiences and the Construction of Meaning” from *Media/Society*

Dines and Humez, *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*

Radway, Janice A. “Women Read the Romance”

*Recommended: Dines and Humez, Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*

Sender, Katherine, “Selling Sexual Subjectivities: Audiences Respond to Gay Window Advertising”

## Section III: Post WWII – Cultural Studies, Postmodernism and Crises in Marxism

### 1. Cultural Studies and the Legacy of Marx

Tuesday, March 27:

Durham and Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*

Introduction to Part II

Debord, Guy “The Commodity as Spectacle”

Review Radner (see Thursday, March 22)

Thursday, March 29: **Consumption Diary Analysis Due**

Durham and Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*

Dorfman, Ariel and Armand Mattelart, “How to Become a General in the Disneyland Club”

Film: *Mickey Mouse Monopoly*

*Recommended: Online Reserve*

Phillips, Jerry and Ian Wojcik-Andrews. “Telling Tales to Children: The Pedagogy of Empire in MGM’s *Kim* and Disney’s *Aladdin*.” *The Lion and the Unicorn* 20.1 (1996) 66-89.

### 2. Postmodernism

Tuesday, April 3:

Durham and Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*

Introduction to Part V

Baudrillard, Jean. “The Precession of Simulacra”

**Thursday, April 5: NO CLASS: Easter Break**

## Section IV: Global Media

Tuesday, April 10:

Croteau and Hoynes: Chapter 10: “Globalization and the Future” from *Media/Society*

Film: Globalization and the Media

Thursday, April 12:

Durham and Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*

Martín-Barbero, Jesús, “The Processes: From Nationalisms to Transnationalisms”

## Section V: Historical Silences – Representations of the “Other”

Tuesday, April 17:

Durham and Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*

Introduction to Part IV

Mulvey, Laura. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

Thursday, April 19:

Dines and Humez, *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*

Wilson II, Clint C. and Félix Gutiérrez, “Advertising and People of Color”

Film: *Ethnic Notions*

Tuesday, April 24:

Durham and Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*

hooks, bell. “Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance”

Online Reserve

Johnson, Kirk A. “Objective News and Other Myths: The Poisoning of Young Black Minds.” *Journal of Negro Education*, Volume 60, Issue 3 (Summer 1991), 328-341.

*Recommended: Online Reserve*

Binder, Amy. “Constructing Racial Rhetoric: Media Descriptions of Harm in Heavy Metal and Rap Music,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 58, Issue 6 (Dec., 1993), 753-767.

Thursday, April 26:

Dines and Humez, *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*

Hart, Kylo-Patrick R. “Representing Gay Men on American Television”

Raymond, Diane. “Popular Culture and Queer Representation: A Critical Perspective”

Tuesday, May 1:

Dines and Humez, *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*

Gamson, Joshua. “Sitting Ducks and Forbidden Fruits”

Thursday, May 3:

**IN-CLASS FINAL EXAM**