Global Media Seminar – Media, Politics, and Culture in France

**Class code**

MCC-UE 9454-001
(10316)

**Instructor Details**

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**Class Details**

Global Media Seminar – Media, Politics, and Culture in France

Tues. – 3:45 – 5:15/Thurs. 4:00 – 5:30

Salle 8/NYUParis

**Prerequisites**

General background in sociology, visual culture, and/or media studies.

**Class Description**

This seminar examines the role of French media in reflecting, refracting, and shaping French political and cultural life. We focus on how growing “mediatisation” and mass communications have served to mold French attitudes, subjectivities, and mentalities in a context-sensitive nexus of power-desire-consumption-reification. Drawing on critical theory, anthropology, semiotics, and sociology, we attempt to explore how the media interpolate French experience in both historical and quotidian terms through processes of anchorage, stereotyping, inter-textual signification, mystification, and the narrativisation and naturalization of ideology. Moreover, recognizing France to be embedded in a larger regime of global mediatisation, this seminar also attempts to comparatively reflect on France’s position in the media-scapes of the hyper-modern. Hence, we also look at how the codes of global media are appropriated and refashioned in the French context while also examining how French media is perceived beyond France itself. From a methodological perspective this seminar transposes the key insights of contemporary media studies on to the French context in hopes of illuminating the French media field as both heterogenous and paradigmatic. We will also read key French media theorists and examine how their arguments function as responses to the national climate. While examining “media” in the normative sense of the term (film, radio, TV, advertising, newspapers, digital media, institutions) we also critically interrogate the circulation of French cultural artefacts, icons, representations, political images, cartoons, and spectacle that form the substrate of French social life.

Format of the Course: Seminar-discussion with film screenings.

**Desired Outcomes**

This seminar is intended to develop critical “reading practices” in relationship to global and French mediaspheres (media being broadly construed as film, radio, TV and also spectacle, scene, technology, and visual fields). It aspires to, moreover, engender rigorous cross-cultural perspectives on media that foreground the dissonances and semblances found in how both American and France “represent” themselves and tarry with the forces of globalization. Eliding conventional art historical paradigms, it stresses empirical approaches to media culture which apprehend the reception and experience of the media.
object and then go on to form critical theoretical approaches on the basis of such empiricism. Intensive in scope, students keep media-logs which recount their encounter which French mediology, culminating in a final research project where their observations are systematized and synthesized into a larger scholarly and scientific framework.

**Assessment Components**

**Class Participation:** this is a discussion course. Much of each class session will consist of moderated discussion of the texts/images, following an introductory, thematic lecture. It is therefore imperative that students read and think about the assigned reading material so as to be able to participate meaningfully in class discussions: 50%

**Mid-Term and Final Papers:** Each student will be asked to write 2 critical responses to a piece of French Media (8-10 pages) and critically analyze it in terms of the issues and theoretical frameworks raised in class. 50%

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

**Assessment Expectations**

**Grade A:** Perfect mastery of materials. Driver of classroom discussion and debate. Nuanced and complex writing and theoretical acumen.

**Grade B:** General understanding of texts and topics. Satisfactory participation in discussion. Papers fulfill general requirements and are well-written and executed.

**Grade C:** Passiveness and/or lack of participation in discussion and debate. Weak grasp of course materials, ideas, and texts. Papers just barely meet requirements.

**Grade D:** Lack of participation and lack of understanding of texts and themes. Papers sub-par and unacceptable.

**Grade F:** Inability to meet basic requirements of course.

**Grade conversion**

None.

**Grading Policy**

Grades are given on the basis of the general requirements of the course (with no make-ups or extra-credit)
### Attendance Policy

No unexcused absences are permitted.

### Late Submission of Work

Late papers will be docked a grade per day (e.g., B+ to B) unless you have received approval ahead of time due to outstanding circumstances.

### Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is punishable with a failing grade. Plagiarism includes failing to cite sources or failing to use quotations marks, buying a paper, copying information from the internet and/or using the words or ideas of study guides. Make sure that you understand what plagiarism is, why it's important, and how to avoid it. See http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/policies/ for starters.

### Required Text(s)

Course Reader.

### Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase as copies are in NYU-L Library)

Miscellaneous articles circulated by instructor.

### Internet Research Guidelines

Internet sources may be used if the meet the general demands of academic rigor (JSTOR, Springer etc.)

### Additional Required Equipment

None

### Session 1

January 21: Introduction and Methodological Issues

1/21 – 1/23

January 23: Contextualizing Media in the French Experience

- Raymond Kuhn, Selections from *The Media in France*
- Phillip Gordon and Sophie Meunier, “Globalization and French Cultural Identity”

### Session 2

January 28: Republican Iconography: In Search of Marianne
Bronwyn Winter, “Marianne Goes Multicultural”
- Media Analysis: Exposé of Nationalist and Republican Iconography in Contemporary Political Propaganda and Media

January 30: Celticism, Celtitude, and Celticity: From Vercingétorix to Astérix and Obélix
- Malcolm Chapman, “Who are the Celts?,” from The Celts: The Construction of a Myth
- Eliza Bourque Dandridge, Selections from Producing Popularity:The Success in France of the Comics Series "Astérix le Gaulois
- Media Analysis: Clips from cartoon and film-series of Astérix and Obélix, and exposé of Celtic imagery in French popular media.

February 4: Les Années Folles, Exoticism, and the Birth of Mass Communications
- Selections from Walter Benjamin, The Arcades Project
- Media Analysis: Images from “the roaring 20s” and Paul Colin, Le Tumulte Noir.

February 6: Mythologies
- Roland Barthes, “Myth Today,” from Mythologies, pp. 1-26
- Selections from Barthes, Mythologies
- Media Analysis: “New Mythologies”

February 11: Colonial Mediatisations
- Mallek Alloula, Selections from The Colonial Harem.
- Rey Chow, “Where Have All the Natives Gone,” in ed. A Blummer, Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question, pp. 324-344
- Media Analysis: Colonial Post-Cards and Contemporary media representations of the colonized subject.

February 13: Film Screening “Breathless”

February 18: New Waves
- Geneviève Sellier, Selections from Masculine Singular: French New Wave Cinema
- Media Analysis: Film Screening – Jean Luc Godard, Breathless, (1960)

February 20: Media, Marketing, and Commodity Fetishism
- Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle
Session 6

February 25: Media and May '68
2/25 – 2/27
- Marc Rohan, Selections from *Paris '68: Graffiti, Posters, Newspapers, and Poems from the Events of May '68*
- Media Analysis: Revolutionary Posters, Press, and Graffiti from May '68

February 27: Media and Malaise
- Zygmunt Bauman, Selections from “Liquid Life”
- Peter Sloterdijk, “On Cynical Reason”
- Benjamin Barber, from “Consumed

Session 7

March 4: Memory, Media, and the Construction of the Past
3/4 – 3/6
- Selections from: Jo McCormack, “The Media: Reporting the War Forty Years On” in *Collective Memory: France and the Algerian War*

March 6: Theorising Television
- Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television*
- Media Analysis: Bourdieu watches the Olympics

Session 8

March 11: The French Reception of American Media
3/11 – 3/13
- Jean Baudrillard, Selections from *America*
- Media Analysis: French attitudes towards and renderings of the American in popular culture (Film, Music, television)

March 13: How to Read a French Newspaper
- Media Analysis: Comparative Analysis of French Newspapers and French and American Newspapers.

Session 9

March 18: Attention Economies
3/18 – 3/20]
- Michael H. Goldhaber, “The Real Nature of the Emerging Attention Economy,” 2012, (PDF to be distributed)

March 20: Mediology
- Régis Debray, “What is Mediology,” pp. 1-4
- Keith Reader, “The Self and Others” and “Régis Debray and the Communications Revolution,” in *French Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, pp. 213 – 231
- Régis Debray, Selections from *Media Manifestos: On the Technological Transmission of Cultural Forms*
- Media Analysis: “Mediological” Critique of the French Media System
March 21: Television and Democracy


Media Analysis: Arte and Presidential Debates (2007)

March 25: Blasphemy, Censorship, and Freedom of Speech

- Saba Mahmood, “Religions Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?,” in Is Critique Secular: Blasphemey, Injury, and Free Speech, pp. 64 -100
- Media Analysis: Danish Cartoons of Mohammed and Caricatures from French newspaper Charlie-Hebdo

March 27: Hip-Hop in France

- Selections from ed. Tony Mitchell, Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA, pp. 57-87
Media Analysis – French hip-hop clips

April 1: Film Screening of La Haine

April 3: Mediatising the Banlieue


April 8: MediaScapes, EthnoScapes, GlobalScapes
- Arjun Appadurai: Disjunction and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy

April 10: The Banalities of Difference: Ali G. and “The Office”

- Selections from Paul Gilroy’s Post-Colonial Melancholia

April 29: Social Media and the Societal Challenges of the Information Society I
- Christine Rosen, “Virtual Friendship and the New Narcissism”
- Roger Scruton, “Hiding Behind the Screen”

May 6: Conclusion and Wrap-Up

5/6

5/13

Final exam

Computers are permitted, but cel. Phones should be kept in your pockets.
Required Co-curricular Activities
None

Suggested Co-curricular Activities
N/A

Your Instructor

Trained as a sociologist and historian of religion, S. Romi Mukherjee’s research broadly engages with the critical study of religion and politics with regular forays into theories of globalization and ethics. A specialist in Durkheimian studies, his work has more recently turned to (neo)-Republican political theory and the reconsideration of freedom as non-domination. He is maître de conférences (Assistant Professor) of Politics and Religion at Sciences Po-Paris and also teaches ancient and modern political philosophy at New York University in Paris. Since 2009, moreover, he has been a researcher in the ethics of science and technology at UNESCO and was previously a research fellow at the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in the Social Sciences in Paris where he worked on several European Union FP7 projects. In addition, he is English co-editor for the Revue de Synthèse. He has published numerous articles, mostly in political theory and religious studies and is the editor of Durkheim and Violence (Blackwell, 2010), The Political Anthropology of the Global (Blackwell, 2011), and Social Memory and Hyper-Modernity (with Eric Brian and Marie Jaisson, Blackwell, 2012). He is currently completing a book entitled The Trials of Marianne: The French Republic and the Sacred.