Introduction to Media Criticism
Syllabus Spring 2011

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Office hours: Tuesday 4.30-6.00 pm, by appointment
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Course description:
An introduction to theoretical approaches and practices used to analyze the content, structure, and context of media in society. Students will explore factors shaping modern media texts, including: politics, economics, technology, and cultural traditions. The dominant critical perspectives that contribute to our understanding of media will be read, discussed, and employed. The course has three broad objectives: Develop a critical awareness of media environments, develop a familiarity with concepts, themes and theoretical approaches of media criticism, and the terms associated with these approaches, and develop an ability to adopt and adapt these frameworks in your own analyses of mediated communication.

The student active class participation is vital to this process. Active participation includes listening, building on what others say, asking questions, advancing reasoned arguments, identifying theories that are relevant to the discussion, and working collaboratively with others. Missing class and/or a record of lateness will negatively affect the final grade. An absence will be excused only in case of a medical emergency (or other extraordinary circumstance) which is justified with appropriate documentation.

Grading policy
Class Participation/Attendance  20 %
Midterm Exam  25 %
Paper presentation  25 %
Final Exam  30 %

Schedule of classes

Week 1
25 January - Overview of the course

27 January - Mass Media and Society: Living in Mediocrity?
Reading: Boyd- Barrett and Chris Newbold. Approaches to Media. A Reader (pp 20- 42)

Week 2
1 February - Functions and Disfunctions of Mediated Communication
Reading: James Curran Mass Media and Democracy. In James Curran, Michael Gurevitch
Mass Media and Society. (pp. 81 – 112)

3 February – Mediation and Constraints Shaping Media Contents
Reading: Pamela Shoemaker, Stephen Reese. Mediating the Message (pp. 1- 9, 11- 25)

Week 3
8 February – From Print to Electronic communication
Reading: Asa Briggs, Peter Burke. *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet.* (pp. 13-60)

10 February – **Living in Media System: Comparing Media Landscapes**
*Reading:* Daniel Hallin, Paolo Mancini. *Comparing Media Systems. Three Models of Media and Politics.* (pp. 21-45)

**Week 4**
15 February – **Media and Politics.**

17 February – **Media Regulation: Comparing U.S and Europe**
*Reading:* Denis McQuail. *Mass Media in the Public Interest. Towards a Framework of Norms for Media Performance.* In *James Curran, Michael Gurevitch Mass Media and Society.* (pp. 66-81)

**Week 5**
22 February – **Media Representation and Stereotyping**
*Reading:* Michael Pickering. *The Politics of Representation.* (pp. 1-21)

24 February – **Codes of Communication and its Constraints**
*Reading:* John Fiske. *Introduction to Communication Studies.* (pp. 39-63)

**Week 6**
1 March – **Semiotic Analysis and Its Application**
*Reading:* John Fiske. *Introduction to Communication Studies.* (pp. 39-63)

3 March – **Media Monopoly and Constraints of Ownership**
*Reading:* Noam Chomski. *Manufacturing Consent. Critical Political Economy of Media.* (pp. 1-36)

**Week 7**
8 March – **Advertisement and Its Impact on Communication**
*Reading:* Naomi Klein. *No Logo.* (pp. 165-194)

10 March – **Midterm exam**

**Week 8**
15 March – **Measuring the Audiences and Market Driven Journalism**
*Reading:* Peter Golding and Graham Murdock. *Culture, Communication and Political Economy.* In *James Curran, Michael Gurevitch Mass Media and Society.* (pp. 66-81)

17 March - **Feministic Critics of Media Production: Gendered News**
*Reading:* Stuart Allan. *News Culture.* (pp. 119-142)

**Week 9 – Spring Break**

**Week 10**
29 March - **Amusing Ourselves to Death? Communication and Entertainment.**
Reading: Neil Postman. *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (pp. 85-100)

31 March - **Uses and Gratification: Media as Tool for Escapism.**
*Reading*: Shearon A. Lowery and Melvin L. DeFleur. *Milestones in Mass Communication Research. Media Effects* (pp. 93-112)

**Week 11**
5 April – **Media, Popular Culture and Midcult.**
*Reading*: give out article

7 April - **Media and Construction of Fashion and Life Style**
*Reading*: Fan Carter: Teenage magazines, lifestyle and consumer culture. In David Bell and Joanne Hollows: *Ordinary Lifestyles* (pp. 173-186)

**Week 12**
12 April - **Media and Ideology: Marxian theory and Frankfurt school**
*Reading*: Teun A. van Dijk. *Ideology* (pp. 135-139, 179-185)

14 April - **Propaganda and Persuasion**
*Reading*: Stiff: *Persuasive Communication* (pp. 3-22)

**Week 13**
19 April - **Invisible Actors: Constraints of Public Relations and Spindoctors**
*Reading*: William Dinan and David Miller. *Thinker, Faker, Spinner, Spy* (pp. 11-20, 33-50)

21 April - **Negative Effects of Mass Media: Media and Violence**
*Reading*: Shearon A. Lowery a Melvin L. DeFleur. *Milestones in Mass Communication Research. Media Effects* (pp. 21-43)

**Week 14**
26 April - **Media Narratives: Reality versus fiction**
*Reading*: Arthur Asa Berger. *Narratives in Popular Culture, Media and Everyday Life* (pp. 19-38)

28 April - **Technological Determinism and “The Global Village”**
*Reading*: Marshall McLuhan. Lewis H. Lapman. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.* (pp. 7-22)

**Week 15**
3 May – **Communication in Network Society**
*Reading*: Jan van Dijk. *The Network Society.* (pp. 1-16, 42-60)

5 May - **Convergence and Future of Communication**
*Reading*: Asa Briggs, Peter Burke. *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet.* (pp. 237-274)

**Week 16**
10 May- **Final Exam**