“Introduction to media criticism”
Syllabus Spring 2012

Tomáš Trampota, Ph.D.
trampota@fsv.cuni.cz
Office hours: Monday 4.30-6.00 pm, by appointment
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University Prague, Smetanovo nábřeží 6, Praha 1, first floor, office No 101

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
14 February - Overview of course

16 February - Functions and Disfunctions of Mediated Communication
Reading: James Curran Mass Media and Democracy. In James Curran, Michael Gurevitch Mass Media and Society. (pp. 13–30 of the reader)

Week 2
21 February - Mediation and Constraints Shaping Media Contents
Reading: Pamela Shoemaker, Stephen Reese. Mediating the Message (pp. 45-58 of the reader)

23 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 of the origin, give out)

Week 3
28 February - Living in Media System: Comparing Media Landscapes
Reading: Daniel Hallin, Paolo Mancini. Comparing Media Systems. Three Models of Media and Politics. (pp. 31- 44 of the reader)

1 March - Media and Politics.

Week 4
6 March - 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. 69- 78 of the reader)

8 March – Media Representation and Stereotyping
Reading: Michael Pickering. The Politics of Representation. (pp. 79 – 90 of the reader)

Week 5
13 March - Codes of Communication and its Constraints
Reading: John Fiske. Introduction to Communication Studies. (pp. 91 – 104 of the reader)

15 March - Semiotic Analysis and Its Application
Reading: John Fiske. Introduction to Communication Studies. (pp. 91 – 104 of the reader)

Week 6
20 March - Media Monopoly and Constraints of Ownership

22 March - Advertisement and Its Impact on Communication
Reading: Naomi Klein. No Logo. (pp. 165- 194 of the origin – give out)

Week 7
27 March - Measuring the Audiences and Market Driven Journalism

29 March - Feministic Critics of Media Production: Gendered News
Reading: Stuart Allan. News Culture. (pp. 137 – 150 of the reader)

Weeks 7/8 – MIDTERM EXAMS- YOU SHOULD SCHEDULE YOUR MIDTERM EXAM OR PAPER FOR WEEK SEVEN OR EIGHT.

Week 8
3 April – Midterm exam

5 April - Amusing Ourselves to Death? Communication and Entertainment.
Reading: Neil Postman. Amusing Ourselves to Death (pp. 151 – 160 of the reader)

Week 9 – Spring Break – no classes
Week 10
17 April - Uses and Gratification: Media as Tool for Escapism.
Reading: Shearon A. Lowery and Melvin L. DeFleur. Milestones in Mass Communication Research. Media Effects (pp. 161 – 172 of the reader)

19 April - Media, Popular Culture and Midcult.

Week 11
24 April – Media and Ideology: Marxian theory and Frankfurt school
Reading: Teun A. van Dijk. Ideology (pp. 195 – 202 of the reader)

26 April - Propaganda and Persuasion
Reading: Stiff: Persuasive Communication (pp. 203 – 214 of the reader)

Week 12
1 May – National Holiday – no classes

3 May - Invisible Actors: Constraints of Public Relations and Spindoctors
Reading: William Dinan and David Miller. Thinker, Faker, Spinner, Spy (pp. 215 – 232 of the reader)

Week 13
8 May- National Holiday – no classes

10 May Negative Effects of Mass Media: Media and Violence
Reading: Shearon A. Lowery a Melvin L. DeFleur. Milestones in Mass Communication Research. Media Effects (pp. 233 – 246 of the reader)

Week 14
15 May - Communication in Network Society
Reading: Jan van Dijk. The Network Society. (pp. 195 – 202 of the reader)

17 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 of the origin – give out)

Week 15 --Exam week PLEASE SCHEDULE YOUR FINAL EXAM OR TELL YOUR STUDENTS THAT THEIR PAPERS ARE DUE THIS WEEK.

22 May Final exam