NYU Los Angeles,
Media Audiences
MCC-UE 9016 LA1
Fall 2019

Instructor Information
● Harris Kornstein
● Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1-2pm: [Office Hours Sign Up]

Course Information
● Media Audiences
● MCC-UE 9016
● Time and Location:

Course Overview and Goals
Communication and media scholars have long concerned themselves with the relationship between various media/technologies and “the audience.” Different intentions and perspectives inform the discourse and research on interactions between media/communication technologies and their audiences — here defined broadly to include users, players, fans, consumers, “produsers,” moderators, workers, testers, etc. This course will examine the history, theories, and methodologies of audience research, always questioning the construction of audiences and media users — constructions that are shaped by commercial, academic, political and cultural interests. Students will examine different approaches to audience research that inform the concerns, questions, methods, findings, and implications of audience/user research.

Guiding Questions:
● What can we learn by studying media audiences, rather than (or in addition to) media texts/objects, production practices, or infrastructures?
● How do media makers think about audiences? Through what other actors or influences are audiences constructed?
● How do audiences respond to, participate in, or make use of media? How do social, political, economic, and other contexts shape their understandings and interactions?
● What methods can we use to research media audiences? What unique insights can be learned from distinct approaches?
Note: This course takes a critical approach to studying audiences, drawing on the fields of media, communication, cultural, and science and technology studies — it is not a marketing course or a quantitative (or qualitative) methods class!

Schedule + Readings

Important:
This syllabus is subject to change with adequate notice (via in class or email announcement); consider this Google Doc to be the “live” and most up-to-date version.

- There are no required books—all materials will be available on NYU Classes or via links. Readings should be completed before the class date for which they’re assigned! Please bring annotated readings to class.

Course Requirements

Assignments

Format of Written Assignments: All written work should be submitted as an editable Google Doc so that I can make comments; I will create folders for each assignment. Please submit in 12-point font, double-spaced, and include your name at the top. For academic writing, you may use your preferred citation style (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.), but please use it consistently.

General Assignments

1. Weekly Discussion Questions
You are required to submit at least three discussion questions about each week’s readings in the NYU Classes forum. Questions should generally be critical and aimed to inspire discussion in class — they should analyze or otherwise interact with the material by interrogating specific passages, placing texts in conversation with one another (or with other week’s readings/discussions), or framing them with relevant case studies or examples. (You may occasionally include a question about something you did not understand or found confusing, though please ensure first that your question can’t easily be answered by consulting a dictionary or other resource!) Questions are due by 11am on the day of class. You do not need to post your own questions during the week of your presentation, but you should read others’ that week before class.

2. Class Presentation
You will sign up for one week to present on the readings (likely with a partner) for about 10-15 minutes. You should put together a short slide-deck presentation (preferably using Google Slides) that helps explicate and analyze the major points or arguments of each of the readings. The deck should be a visual/media aid — don’t just read from it! Please avoid summaries as everyone else will have done the readings, so you should help us further our thinking and set us up for a rich discussion. You may connect the reading to other course materials, case studies, your internship, or current events in the media audience landscape. However, please do not pull in completely random things from the web! If you want to get creative, you can also ask the class to participate in a short activity (you may want to check in with me first). Please upload your slide deck to the Google Drive folder before class.
Media Audiences Case Study Project

In the spirit of practice-based approaches to media research, you will develop a project over the course of the semester that focuses on a particular media audience through several different approaches, and which will have a number of deliverables culminating in a final presentation and a short essay written for a popular audience. You are encouraged to choose a case study related in some way to your internship; further, it may relate to a specific industry or medium, a particular community or audience demographic, and/or even a particular media text, object, or platform (or some combination of the above). We will discuss ideas in class and your topics will be approved by the instructor. The deliverables for this project include:

1. **Project Topic Proposal**: Please submit a one-paragraph proposal for your case study project: *What audience are you studying, why is it important to you, and why is it a compelling case study?*
   a. Length: one paragraph
   b. Due Date: September 17, 2019

2. **Analysis—Popular Press Article**: The term “popular press” refers to articles written for a general audience, rather than an academic, trade, or specialized audience; they typically include newspapers, magazines, and similar digital outlets (i.e., not academic journals). For this, you will locate and analyze an article from a popular press outlet related to your project (you may also use a video, podcast episode, or other form of media so long as it is substantial enough for analysis). Your response paper should draw on course readings and discussions and consider questions like: *Which audiences is the author considering, and which are they leaving out? What sources of data/information does the author draw on? What is the author’s relationship to the topic? What is the author’s presumed audience? What rhetorical or stylistic conventions do they employ to reach that audience? What sorts of analytical frameworks is the author using to present information or make an argument? Are there any inherent biases in the article or publication? What further research might be needed in relation to this topic?*
   a. Length: 500-750 words
   b. Due Date: October 1, 2019

3. **Analysis—Industry/Institutional Report**: For this component, you will locate and analyze a report from an industry or other institutional source, such as a think tank, NGO, foundation, or government agency (e.g. Pew Research Center, Data & Society, Pro Publica, market research whitepapers, etc.). Again, your response paper should draw on course readings and discussions and consider questions like: *How do they define this particular audience and what are the implications? Who is conducting the research: what are their goals, social/political agenda, and professional backgrounds? What methods and data are employed? How is the information presented rhetorically, visually, or using other media? Do the researchers offer particular recommendations or policy proposals?*
   a. Length: 500-750 words
   b. Due Date: October 15, 2019
4. **Analysis—Academic Publication:** Here you will locate and analyze an academic journal article or book chapter relevant to your media audience. Once again, your response paper should draw on course readings and discussions and consider questions like: How does the author conceive of this particular media audience? What is the scope of their analysis? What discipline is the scholar affiliated with, and how does this influence their methodology or theoretical approach? How does this scholarly work differ from popular or industry approaches to a similar topic? How do you think media audiences (or media makers) would respond to their arguments or approach? How might a scholarly approach influence production or audience research?
   a. Length: 500-750 words
   a. Due Date: October 27, 2019

5. **Research Design:** For this component, you will plan and execute a small study related to your media audience. This will take place in two parts (specific guidelines TBD):
   a. **Design:** Create a plan for how you would approach designing a research study: what are your research questions and objectives? What method will you employ: surveys, ethnography, interviews, etc.? Who are your targeted participants? What specific questions or tasks will you ask of them?
   i. Length: TBD
   ii. Due Date: November 12, 2019
   a. **Prototype & Analysis:** While you won’t implement a full study, you will prototype/practice your approach on a small sample (specific benchmarks TBD). Afterwards, you will create a brief write-up analyzing your data and evaluating your design.
   i. Length: TBD
   i. Due Date: November 26, 2019

6. **Presentation:** On the last day of class, you will each present on your case study. Think of this presentation as an overview of what you’ve learned: it should draw on the previous assignments, but offer a sophisticated and synergistic critical analysis that is greater than the sum of its parts. You may want to think about: What makes this audience or case study unique? How do they engage with or respond to particular media texts/objects? How might understanding this audience shift the ways in which media is created for them (or for other audiences)? What theoretical frameworks are most relevant to your case study? What further research would you conduct (and how)? How does your case help us think about media audiences overall? Please also create a slide deck to accompany your presentation.
   a. Length: 5 minutes
   a. Due Date: December 10, 2019

7. **Write—Popular Press Essay:**
As your final deliverable, you will be writing your own popular press article about your case study. Imagine your own audience for this article, and consider the form, genre, and style that would best reach them (e.g, a blog post written for industry executives, a “think piece” for viewers/users, an advocacy essay for people who know little about the topic, etc.). This is not a
typical academic paper or a summary of your presentation: it should also synthesize what you have learned through your case study and the course in some way, but ultimately it is a chance to think about how you would explain what you’ve learned beyond the classroom. Please include a link to your presentation slidedeck (note: you may update your slidedeck based on your presentation feedback).

. Length: 750-1000 words
a. Due Date: December 17, 2019

Grading of Assignments
Grades will be assessed based on the following breakdown:

- Participation and Attendance: 20%
- General Assignments:
  - Weekly Discussion Questions: 10%
  - Class Presentation: 10%
- Case Study:
  - Popular Press Analysis: 10%
  - Academic Publication Analysis: 10%
  - Industry/Institutional Report Analysis: 10%
  - Research Design: 10%
  - Class Presentation: 10%
  - Popular Press Essay: 10%

Letter Grades
Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

**Grade Scale & Expectations:** Please refer to NYU Steinhardt’s Academic Standards documentation for information on how numeric grades are converted to letter grades, as well as for general standards for evaluating work (eg. A-level work is considered “excellent,” B-level is considered “good,” C is “satisfactory,” etc.).

Note that not all “good” assignments will necessarily result in an A-level grade or 100% credit. While I do not grade based on a curve model (in theory, everyone can get an A!), I generally reserve A-level grades for work that demonstrates a deep or nuanced understanding of class material, exceptional creativity, significant effort, and/or other above-average contributions. Work that simply regurgitates material or simply delivers the bare minimum should expect to receive a B or C.

**Late Assignments:** Assignments will be marked down by 10% for each day late; no assignments will be accepted one week after the due date, except in cases where an extension has been granted in advance.

**Feedback:** Students will receive feedback on their work both from other students and from the instructor, much of which will occur during class time. For this reason, most assignments will be
uploaded publicly (individual contribution reports for group assignments will be submitted separately). If you would like additional feedback, please don’t hesitate to come to office hours!

**Participation**

Students should come to class having completed readings (including taking notes and/or making annotations), ready to discuss the material, including how it relates to other course materials, relevant examples, or questions about things they wish to know more about or did not understand.

Additionally, participation is not necessarily based on how much you talk in class, however, this is a class where you will be required — and called on — to share your thoughts, questions, and feedback. Please note it is difficult to evaluate your participation if you rarely say anything. Students who are shy or hesitant to speak up in class are encouraged to a) challenge yourself to be more vocal, and b) find other ways to participate, including by visiting office hours or demonstrating above-average enthusiasm or creativity in assignments.

Please also be respectful in sharing your thoughts and providing feedback to your peers. Remember that not everyone shares the same experiences, assumptions, or goals. This does not mean that we cannot constructively critique each others’ work (or methods, approaches, assumptions, etc.), but when offering feedback, please take into account the thinking, intentions, and hard work of your peers.

*Important*: Students who miss a class for whatever reason should obtain notes from a friend before coming to office hours.

*Excused absences* may include absence due to sickness, medical needs, religious observances, or certain types of personal or family emergencies.

Please be on time. Excessive or repeated lateness may also result in a reduction of your participation grade.

**Course Schedule**

Topics and Assignments

**September 3, 2019**
- Welcome + syllabus overview

**September 10, 2019**

Theoretical Foundations

September 17, 2019
Making Early Audiences — Vaudeville, Phonographs, Cinema

► Assignment Due: Project Topic Proposal

  - Also read supplemental materials in PDF

September 24, 2019
Imagining Audiences — Radio, Television, Digital


October 1, 2019
Theorizing Methods & Metrics

► Assignment Due: Analysis—Popular Press Article

- Sonia Livingstone, “Exciting Moments in Audience Research: Past, Present and Future” in The Social Use of Media : Cultural and Social Scientific Perspectives on Audience


October 8, 2019

Participatory & Youth Media Cultures

  - Listen to the first two segments: “Prologue” and “Finding the Self in Selfie”
  - Everyone please read the “Introduction,” “Project Overview,” and “Project Descriptions” (PDFs on NYU Classes). In class, we will divide up the interior chapters (you will only read one), which are online via the NYU Library.
- For the following, please read the key findings and skim the overall report for format:
  - Victoria Rideout and Michael B Robb, Social Media, Social Life: Teens Reveal Their Experiences (San Francisco, CA: Common Sense Media, 2018).

October 15, 2019

Transnational Media Cultures

► Assignment Due: Analysis—Industry/Institutional Report

- You will read one of the following, we will divide them up in class (others are optional):
October 22, 2019
Users and Non-Users


October 27, 2019
Access & Ability

▶ Assignment Due: Analysis—Academic Publication

- Lawrence Liang, “Piracy, Creativity and Infrastructure: Rethinking Access to Culture” (July 20, 2009). Available at SSRN.

November 5, 2019
Players

November 12, 2019
Moderators & Managers

► Assignment Due: Analysis—Research Design Part A


November 19, 2019
Personalization, Persuasion, and the Power of Big Data


November 26, 2019
Bad Fans & Divided Audiences

► Assignment Due: Analysis—Research Design Part B

- Alice Marwick and Rebecca Lewis, “Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online,” *Data & Society* [report], May 15, 2017
  - Read the Executive Summary and “Who is Manipulating the Media?” sections, the rest is optional.
December 3, 2019
Searching, Sorting, and Segmenting

- “Bonus: Black As F*ck,” *Note To Self / Zig Zag* [podcast], WNYC Studios, Jul 22, 2019. [MP3 to be provided]

December 10, 2019
► Assignment Due: In-Class Presentations

December 17, 2019
► Assignment Due: Analysis—Research Design.

NOTE: There is no final exam.

Course Materials

Academic Resources

- Keywords for American Cultural Studies
- Keywords for Media Studies

Required Materials, Software, and Equipment

*Google Drive:* All readings for the course will be uploaded as PDFs to a shared Google Drive folder. Most assignments will also be submitted via Google Drive. (Please note that this means that, in many cases, students will also be able to access each others’ assignments.) For all materials (including written and media-based assignments), please be sure to save a backup copy on your own computer or hard drive in the event of unexpected technical errors. Please use your NYU login to access readings and post assignments.

*Technology in the Classroom:* Technology can both enhance our learning experiences, and serve as major forms of distraction, not only for the user, but for those in the same vicinity. My preference is to only use laptops or tablets when necessary (eg. for presentations, for interactive assignments, etc.); otherwise, I would prefer that students come to class with readings printed out and annotated by
hand, and with paper notebooks to take notes by hand. Phones, however, should never be used in the classroom; please silence all notifications and refrain from checking your phone. If you are seen using your phone (or any technology for distracting or non-class related purposes), I reserve the right to verbally call you out, reflect such use in your participation grade, or ask you to leave the classroom for the remainder of the session.

Access
All students should feel comfortable participating in and accessing the classroom, materials, technologies, discussions, and assignments. Please feel free to raise any suggestions or accommodations that I or the class as a whole can make to help your learning and experience.

Trigger Warnings: Given the nature of the course, we may engage images, issues, or situations that are sensitive in nature, and which may be triggering to some students. As an instructor, I am committed to maintaining an open and respectful learning environment in which difficult, challenging, or controversial material can be critically analyzed and engaged, while also respecting the safety and experiences of all present. I will do my best to present a warning and/or contextual information if covering potentially triggering content; if you have any personal triggers to material, I invite you contact me directly so that I can best accommodate you.

Communication & Office Hours
My goal is for you to succeed in the class and your studies in general, and most importantly to thrive in learning together and applying the concepts and skills we learn in class to your passions and pursuits. I also aim to be a resource regarding other situations related to academic and student life, and will do my best to be a listening ear and connect you with whatever resources I can. When in doubt, please feel free to reach out to me; and whether it is an absence, a question about an assignment, or a personal issue, it is better to contact me sooner rather than later. That said, I am not online or available 24/7, so please plan ahead and be aware that I may not be able to get back to you immediately.

Email: I do my best to respond to emails within 48 hours. I also try not to type out paragraphs of information that would best be discussed in office hours. Email is best for communicating logistical information and quick questions (including scheduling a time to meet in person).

Office Hours: I ask students to sign up for office hours in advance, using a Google Doc, so I can expect you and make sure that I can accommodate as many students as possible; you can also email me to set up appointments at other times (including via phone or video chat). Please also note that office hours are not an opportunity to recreate missed classes. Whether you were absent or not, office hours work best if you come with specific questions or ideas to discuss.

NYU Student Resources
- MCC Media Lab: mccmedialab.team@nyu.edu
- LGBTQ Student Center
- Center for Multicultural Education & Programs
- Center for Global Spiritual Life
- Moses Center for Students with Disabilities
- Counseling and Wellness
- NYU Bias Response Line, 212-998-2277 or bias.response@nyu.edu
- Writing Center
Resources

- **Access your course materials:** [NYU Classes](nyu.edu/its/classes)
- **Databases, journal articles, and more:** [Bobst Library](library.nyu.edu)
- **Assistance with strengthening your writing:** [NYU Writing Center](nyu.mywconline.com)
- **Obtain 24/7 technology assistance:** [IT Help Desk](nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)

Course Policies

**Attendance Policy**

Study abroad at Global Academic Centres is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centres is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students’ semester grades. The class roster will be marked at the beginning of class and anyone who arrives after this time will be considered absent. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalised by a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to two unexcused absences. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

**Plagiarism Policy**

The academic standards of New York University apply to all coursework at NYU LA. NYU LA policies are in accordance with New York University’s plagiarism policy. The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

It is a serious academic offense to use the work of others (written, printed or in any other form) without acknowledgement. Cases of plagiarism are not dealt with by your instructor. They are referred to the Director, who will determine the appropriate penalty (up to and including failure in the course as a whole) taking into account the codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU’s various schools and colleges.

**Religious Observance**

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their professor and the Academic Programs Coordinator in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

**Inclusion, Diversity, Belonging and Equity**
NYU is committed to building a culture that respects and embraces diversity, inclusion, and equity, believing that these values – in all their facets – are, as President Andrew Hamilton has said, "...not only important to cherish for their own sake, but because they are also vital for advancing knowledge, sparking innovation, and creating sustainable communities." At NYU LA, we are committed to creating a learning environment that:

• fosters intellectual inquiry, research, and artistic practices that respectfully and rigorously take account of a wide range of opinions, perspectives, and experiences; and

• promotes an inclusive community in which diversity is valued and every member feels they have a rightful place, is welcome and respected, and is supported in their endeavours.

**Provisions to Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Centre for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 or mosecsd@nyu.edu as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.