

WINTER 2016 MMJC 9200G

**DOING DEMOCRACY
RIGHT
OR
DOING RIGHT BY
DEMOCRACY:
ETHICS, CRITICAL THEORY
AND THE PUBLIC RIGHT TO
KNOW**

PROFESSOR: Tim Blackmore

OFFICE: NCB 441 (look up, waay up)

OFFICE HOURS (THEY'RE OPEN!): Tuesday 12-1,
Wednesday 12:30-2:30 p.m.

EMAIL: tblackmo@uwo.ca (best way to get me, or come to
office hours)



ABOUT THIS COURSE

Using theoretical frameworks borrowed from ethics, cultural studies and political economy, this course explores concepts of democracy and responsibility in story-telling practices and products. Because both journalists and communicators must gather, evaluate and disseminate information vital to a functioning democracy, it is essential that both groups understand what it means to operate in the public sphere. (FIMS web)

The central idea of this course is that we all consider together how information is proposed, created, remade, framed, mediated, abused, interpreted and recast. If you, as an information handler, interpreter and provider, are familiar with a variety of ways in which information can be formed and reformed, then you will be equipped to problem solve as flexibly as one can be—whether the problem is to persuade, coerce, communicate without “bias,” educate or or or.

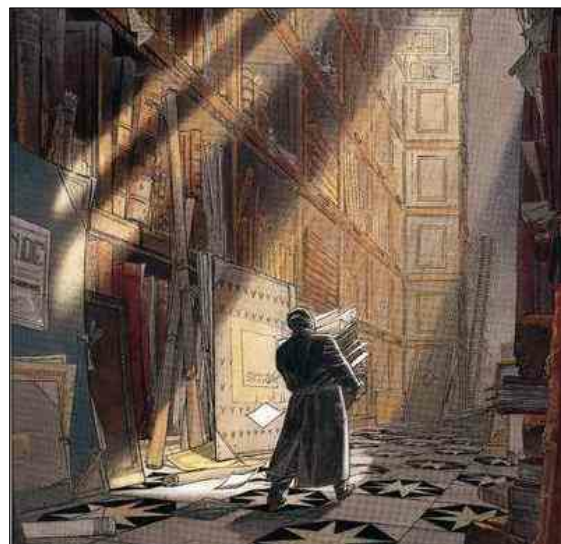
While this course examines different approaches to data, intelligence and story, it is your voice I am most concerned comes through with strength and persuasion. Some of these thinkers will help you, some may initially be puzzling but make sense later, but all are kindling for your own ideas and views. It's your voice, your take, your politics that will be the most formative (and informative) for us as a class. Throughout I will support your voice, your ideas as they take shape while we work together.

AND THE CONTEXT

I know that graduate school can be somewhat, er, “busy.”¹ With that in mind and knowing that you have other courses and foci, I’ve kept the readings very light (this isn’t hyperbole, or even hyperbole and a half). That means I expect everyone to have done the readings before each class. This is a seminar not a lecture, so it will only work if all of us work.

YOU WILL NEED

Durham, Meenakshi Gigi and Douglas Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies Keywords*, 2nd Edition. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.



Art by Schuiten

EVALUATION (PLEASE PRINT OUT AND HAND IN ASSIGNMENTS—THANKS!)

4 LOGS: written in your very own loose, informal style, of about 500 words each. 30%
1 APPLICATION: of a theory to a text (900 words), to be discussed in class (more later). 20%
FINAL PAPER: 35% which includes a 200-word abstract that must be printed out and handed to me a minimum of three weeks before the paper is due. (2500-4000 words)
PARTICIPATION: 15%

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Please come and chat! Are you worried that someone will know more than you? Someone will certainly know more than *all of us*! Why bother being here if it isn’t to figure this stuff out with some other interested people? So relax, this isn’t a competition. Participation runs like this: **80%:** thoughtful commentary, discussion, picking up on and pushing ideas to interesting destinations, full attendance; **70%:** moderate discussion, good attendance; **60%:** some discussion, steady attendance; **50%:** attendance; **F:** Who are you? (I’ve seen it happen.)

ELECTRONICS POLICY

Please turn your phones off during class. It’s rude for everyone to get your phone call. Laptops—mostly going to be on social media, shopping, dating? Err...can it wait until class is over? No? Really? Really really? If you have to make or take a call, please step out for it. Need to send an email? Just excuse yourself and go do what you need and want to do, but laptop use only for “Hey look at this example on the interwebs” kind of thing. While we’re here let’s actually be here. Many thanks.

LATE POLICY

5% per day missed, including weekends. Late papers must be submitted to the FIMS office (not under my door), and time stamped. Material received after 4:30 p.m. Friday will be time stamped as Monday and penalized accordingly (10% penalty). The mark keeps dropping until it hits zero. Extension? tell me in writing one week ahead. The best thing to do is just to tell me what the problem is: I’ll listen much more sympathetically that way, I promise.

¹ Hectic, absurdly hellish, obscenely hyper—descriptors and mileage may vary by week and stress level.

ABOUT THOSE LOGS...Logs are all about relaxation and thought. I will send out thoughts and ideas, places you might start, use them or toss them, think about the text, then just start writing. Let your writing go for about 500 words (it can be more). Your direction is fine—the log suggestions aren't to be answered or "proven."

A LOG IS NOT AN ESSAY. No formal structure is needed. I don't correct grammar or spelling, although I would like to see clean documents. Get used to rereading the final paper so you've checked it over for spelling and obvious problems.



ART BY RONIT BIGAL

THE WHOLE THING ABOUT LOGS is not to conserve time or engage in word or sound bites, but to let time out, let the clock wind down, let the language and thoughts flow, let the connections make connections. People often note "I'm on a tangent now," but as far as I'm concerned, in logs there are no tangents. Follow the tangents, and then the tangents that spring from them.

BUT DON'T BE ALL NERVOUS about trying to give me what you think I want; it's such a game to figure out what the professor wants, eh? How tiresome! Let's see if we can avoid that. Remember that the logs will only ever have two readers: you, and me. So you can address me directly, write to me as if you were writing a letter: "Well Tim, I saw ____ and it made me think of ____ that reminded me of...."

IN THE LOGS, IT'S YOU. There's no proving anything here. In the logs, you decide what's right and wrong. It doesn't matter what I think about it, or whether

I agree. These aren't my logs, they're yours. Instead, it's about you getting out your voice, getting hold of the way you write, the way you think, and then going as deeply as possible with those thoughts, following them to their underground labyrinths.

THE HARDEST THING ABOUT LOGS IS the backspace key. You sit there and start writing, and then look at it, wonder if it's okay, and the deleting begins. But why? Write a couple of pages, be generous! Words are cheap (they say—whoever "they" are). So spend some. Don't look back and don't delete. And if you can't keep your hand off the delete key, then write by hand. Some people love the process of writing with pen on rich paper.

THE LOGS AREN'T INDIVIDUALLY WORTH A GRADE. Somewhere in the term I collect all the logs and grade them. **PLEASE KEEP ALL THOSE LOGS I HAND BACK!** What I'm looking for is not a particular thing—it'll be the whole arc you've drawn from the first logs, which may be tentative and worried, to the last, more comfortably written logs.

WEEK	PLEASE READ...	WHAT'S DUE
1		
2 WHAT PUBLIC? FRAMING THE PROBLEM I	Habermas (75-80), Herman & Chomsky (204-231)	Rolling start on Theory Application
3 FRAMING II: IS THERE NO HOPE?	Schiller (231-241)	LOG 1
4 TOOLKIT I: SEEING HOW TO SEE	Barthes (95-100), Debord (107-110)	
5 MAPS TO THE STAI(I)RS	Jameson (407-433)	LOG 2
6 SURFACE EXISTENCE	Baudrillard (388-407)	
READING WEEK IDEAL FOR NAPPING		
7 TOOLKIT II: READER POWER	Hall (137-145), hooks (308-318)	LOG 3
8 TOOLKIT III: ALTERNATE MODES	Mohanty (347-365)	
9 GLOBAL INSECURITY	Appadurai (511-524)	LOG 4 Paper proposal due
10 TOOLKIT IV: OTHER PUBLICS	Poster (442-452), Sreberny (524-539)	
11 NEW WWWORLD(S)	Lieverouw (471-491), boyd & Ellison (491-504)	
12 TOOLKIT V: USER POWER	Khan & Kellner (597-613)	PAPER
13 CLICK "DONE"		

