



Cauleen Smith, from *Human_3.0 Reading List*

MS 9601: PhD Interdisciplinary Foundations of Media Theory

Western University • FIMS • Fall 2018

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Course Description

This seminar aims to orient students to doctoral work in Media Studies by introducing a selection of predominant theorists, key concepts, and methodological approaches. In keeping with the interdisciplinary character of Media Studies, the works come from several critical traditions. The course is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of the history of media theory. Instead, it provides students with the opportunity to engage a selection of key texts, particularly those reflecting the field's analytical foundations.

The course readings are organized as a critical history of ideas. Theory is a way of seeing, an optic that can help to bring a specific subject matter into view. Theories are also modes of explanation and interpretation that actively construct connections and privilege particular cultural practices and social structures. Sometimes these ideas and modes of thought can help to reveal otherwise unrecognized aspects of human relations. But theory can also become a system of thought that limits conceptual possibilities. It is important to attend to the boundaries of our ways of seeing.

Course aims

This course aims to 1) Help you become familiar with some of the theoretical frames, key concepts, and foundational debates that helped to define the field of Media Studies; 2) Learn to identify the ways different theories and theoretical approaches can both illuminate *and* obscure our view of human affairs; 3) Develop a capacity to ask clear, compelling, and creative research questions.

Class rules

There are relatively few: 1) Respect yourself and your colleagues; 2) Read all of the assigned readings; 3) Thoughtfully prepare, and actively participate in every class. As you read, try to imagine the author's research question; 4) Full attendance is expected.

Citational Practices

When you work with a concept, idea, or phrasing drawn from another author, it is imperative to acknowledge the direct borrowing of words with quotation marks, parenthetical citations, or explanatory footnotes. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a scholastic offence:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Support Services

Western offers a variety of counselling services and several mental health resources for students, faculty and staff. If you, or a friend or colleague are feeling overwhelmed, confused or unsure of your mental health state, please seek help as soon as possible:

http://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html.

Schedule

September	12	Introductions: <i>Where are we? Why are we here?</i>
	19	The Frankfurt School (Adorno chs. 3-4, Benjamin)
	26	States of Mind (Freud, Adorno ch. 5)
October	3	Lived Experience (Fanon, Baldwin) Watch in class: <i>I am Not Your Negro</i> , dir. Raoul Peck
	10	<i>Fall reading week – no class</i>
	17	Culture & Ideology (Williams, Althusser)
	24	The Subject and Power (Foucault, Macey)
	31	The Birmingham School (Hall, Gilroy) Watch in class: <i>The Stuart Hall Project</i> (2013) dir. John Akomfrah
November	7	Public Spheres (Habermas, Fraser, Warner)
	14	Gender & Voice (Butler, Beard)
	21	Queering (Sedgwick, Bechdel) <i>*Voice assignment due</i>
	28	Colonialisms (Said, Mbembe, Coulthard, Palmater)
December	5	Decolonization: <i>Who's Land is it Anyway?</i> (McFarlane & Schabus)
	12	Final paper workshop <i>*Paper abstracts due</i>

Required Books

- Adorno, Theodor. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991)
- Baldwin, James. *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Vintage, 1992)
- Beard, Mary. *Women and Power: A Manifesto* (New York: Norton, 2017)
- Bechdel, Alison. *Are You My Mother?* (Mariner Books, 2007)
- Macey, David. *Critical Lives: Michel Foucault* (London: Reaktion 2004)
- McFarlane, Peter & Nicole Schabus, eds. *Who's Land is It Anyway? A Manual for Decolonization*, Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC, 2017.

Required Readings (all available on the OWL site)

- Althusser, Louis, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)" In *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 121–176.
- Benjamin, Walter, "The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility" (1936) In *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Edited by Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, Thomas Y. Levin (Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 19-55.
- Butler, Judith, excerpt from *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. vii-34, 142-149.
- Coulthard, Glen, excerpt from *Red Skins White Masks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014)
- Fanon, Frantz, "The Fact of Blackness" in *Black Skin White Masks*, (New York: Grove Press, 1967), pp. 109-140
- Foucault, Michel "Right of Death and Power Over Life" from *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).
- . "Panopticism" in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1995) pp. 195-228.
- Fraser, Nancy, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy", *Social Text*, No. 25/26 (1990): 56-80
- Freud, Sigmund, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" (1921) In *Mass Psychology and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 2004)
- Gilroy, Paul, excerpt from *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999)
- Habermas, Jürgen, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article," In *Critical theory and Society. A Reader*, Eds. Stephen E. Bronner and Douglas Kellner, (New York: Routledge), 136–142
- Hall, Stuart 1980. "Encoding, Decoding." In *Culture, Media, Language*, edited by Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andre Lowe, and Paul Willis (London: Hutchinson, 1980)
- . "Gramsci's relevance for the study of race and ethnicity" In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996)
- Mbembe, Achille, "Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive" public lecture delivered at the University of the Witwatersrand

Palmater, Pamela, "Genocide, Indian Policy and the Legislated Elimination of Indians in Canada." *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 3:3 (2014): 27-54.

Said, Edward, "Introduction" to *Orientalism* and "Travelling Theory" in *Edward Said Reader* (New York: Vintage, 2000)

Sedgwick, Eve, "Introduction: Axiomatic," *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990)

Warner, Michael "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject" In Calhoun, C., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 377–401,

Williams, Raymond, excerpt from *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978)

Assignments

1. Questions: 250 words each; weight: 4 x 5%

On four separate weeks, prepare a question based on the assigned reading for that week. Provide context for your question, signaling how your thinking about the question evolved. Your questions should be straightforward, jargon-free, and open-ended. Make reference to the text. You might wish to focus on a particular passage and parse it in a Talmudic fashion, i.e. actively wrestling with the text, seeking the meaning and truth of the words. This approach to reading aims at critique, which privileges the ability to question freely and without inhibition. There is no need to rely on outside materials for this assignment.

2. Keyword: 750 words weight 20%

This is a modified version of the standard doctoral seminar "presentation." At least once during the semester, you are required to present your thoughts about one of the assigned reading. The presentation must focus on a **keyword or key passage** from one of the week's assigned readings. The idea of this task is to work closely with the text, unfolding and reflecting upon the significance of the keyword (or key passage) that you have chosen. You might wish to choose a term that you believe to be the crux of the author's argument. Or you might choose to focus on something more obscure in order to speculate on the significance of the outlying idea. Depending on your choice, you may wish to use the term as a way to try to paraphrase or summarize the author's argument. Or you may wish to deconstruct the logic at work in the passage. You may wish to link your discussion of the keyword to other readings from our course, but there is no requirement to rely on outside materials for this assignment. Bring enough copies of your discussion for each student in the class.

3. Voice assignment: 1000 words; weight 20%

Mary Beard opens her book *Women & Power* by analyzing a scene from *Odyssey*—one of the very first instances in which a man tells a woman to "shut up." Using Beard's method as your guide, identify a scene in which a particular subject's voice—or lack of voice—comes to matter. This scene could be a passage from one of our readings; it could be plucked from the news headlines; or it could be a scene from a film. The scene

could be problematic or it could be celebratory. Write a short discussion paper parsing this scene and its treatment of the central subject's voice.

4. Proposal + Essay: 500 + 3000 words; weight: 5% + 35%

Choosing a topic takes time. Good essays almost always begin with good questions. Spend time thinking about the kinds of questions that animate your reading and writing. A good question possesses, inspires, perplexes, and thrills the mind and heart. Use this question as the basis for your proposal for the final essay.

The proposal (500 words): this should include your research question and its context, a description of the texts or body of works that you will engage in your investigation of your question, the thinkers with whom you will be in dialogue, and the lens you plan to use in your analysis. On the last week of class, we will workshop the proposals, so bring a copy for each person in the class.

The ubiquitous term paper: this should be an original and exciting piece of writing that makes direct use of class materials. You may wish to engage one or more of an author's works, or you may use our course materials as inspiration for original research. I am keen to read essays that are: theoretically athletic and conceptually fresh and show some adventure in the craft of writing. A sense of the intellectual stakes of your argument and/or the larger historical context of your topic is important. A musical quality in the prose is most welcome.