

WINTER 2018 MMJC 9200B

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

PROFESSOR: Tim Blackmore

OFFICE: FNB 4019, Class: 9-11:50, FNB 4110

OFFICE HOURS (THEY'RE OPEN!): Wed 12:30-1:30
Thursday 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 is 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. That means I expect everyone to have done the readings before each class. This is a seminar not a lecture, right?

YOU WILL NEED

Durham, Meenakshi Gigi and Douglas Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies Keywords*, 2nd Edition. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. (Please not the wrong version of the .pdf)

EVALUATION

- 4 LOGS:** written in your own loose, informal I-voice style, of about 500 (or more) words each. 30%
- 1 APPLICATION:** theory to a text (900 words), discussed briefly in class (more later). 20%
- 1 DEFINITION:** Your choice from a panoply of terms. 300 words. 15%
- 1 AUTO-SUGGESTION:** 1250 words. 20%
- PARTICIPATION:** 15%

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

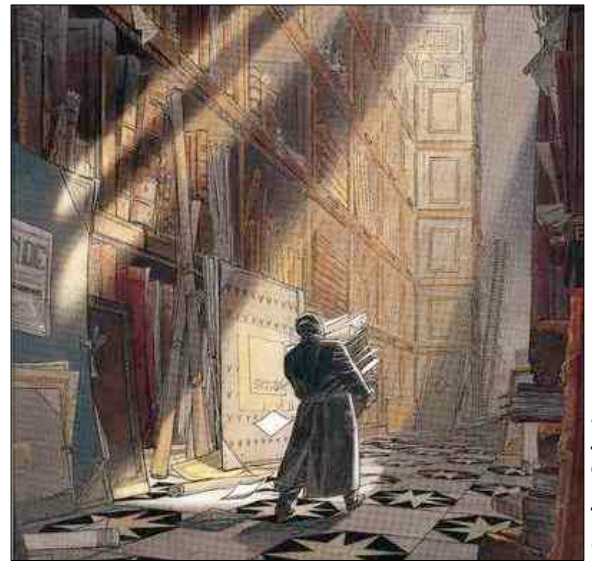
Please come and chat! Are you worried that someone will know more than you? Someone will certainly know more than *all of us*, surely! Why bother being here if it isn’t to figure this stuff out with some other interested people? So relax, this isn’t a competition. Participation runs like this: **80%:** thoughtful commentary, discussion, picking up on and pushing ideas to interesting destinations, lots of 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 take a call, please step out for it and go do what you need to do, but laptop use only for “Hey look at this example on the interwebs” kind of thing. Many thanks.

LATE POLICY, ERRORS POLICY (FOR FORMAL WORK, NOT LOGS)

5% per day missed, including weekends. Late papers must be submitted to the MIT 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. **Typos, grammar problems, formatting mistakes, each is worth 1% of the mark. So proof read, right?**



Art by Schuiten

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

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.

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.

SO NOW YOU'RE GOING TO 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.



Art by Ronit Bialal

WEEK	PLEASE READ...	WHAT'S DUE
1 Jan. 10 ETHICS 1	Professor Romayne Smith-Fullerton, day 1	Readings as assigned (OWL)
2 January 17 ETHICS DAY 2	Professor Romayne Smith-Fullerton, day 2	Readings as assigned (OWL)
3 January 24 WHAT IS A PUBLIC?	Habermas (75-80), Herman & Chomsky (204-231), Schiller (231-241)	Rolling start on Theory Application
4 January 31 TOOLKIT I: SEEING HOW TO SEE	Barthes (95-100), Debord (107-110)	LOG 1
5 February 7 MAPS TO THE STA(I)RS	Jameson (407-433)	
6 February 14 SURFACE EXISTENCE	Baudrillard (388-407)	DUELING THEORISTS
READING WEEK (February 19–23) ideal for napping		
7 February 28 TOOLKIT II: READER POWER	Hall (137-145), hooks (308-318)	LOG 2
8 March 7 TOOLKIT III: ALTERNATE MODES	Mohanty (347-365)	LOG 3
9 March 14 GLOBAL INSECURITY	Appadurai (511-524)	LOG 4 WITH ALL OTHER LOGS
10 March 21 TOOLKIT IV: OTHER PUBLICS	Poster (442-452), Sreberny (524-539)	AUTO-SUGGESTION
11 March 28 NEW WWWORLD(S)	Lieverouw (471-491), boyd & Ellison (491-504)	
12 April 4 TOOLKIT V: USER POWER	Khan & Kellner (597-613)	
13 April 11 CLICK "DONE"		

