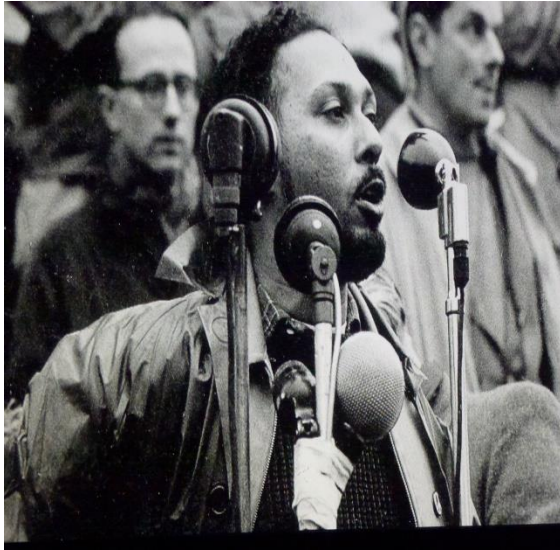


# MS 9601: PhD Interdisciplinary Foundations of Media Theory



Stuart Hall as a young scholar

**Winter 2024, Faculty of Information Media Studies, University of Western Ontario**

**Tuesdays 9:30 am – 12: 20pm, FNB 4070**

**Instructor: Nick Dyer-Witheford**

**Office Hours: By appointment**

**Email: [ncdyerwi@uwo.ca](mailto:ncdyerwi@uwo.ca), subject line “MS 9601”**

## **Objectives**

This seminar orients doctoral students to interdisciplinary theoretical texts important in Media Studies. It does not pretend to be a comprehensive survey of the history of media theory. Rather, it engages a selection of theorists and concepts resonant with our contemporary political and cultural moment. Each week we will commence with discussion of some historically media theory and then work forwards to understand its current application and possible further mutations: in this way we will excavate the foundations for a future media theory from the viewpoint of the present. The aim is to establish a broad intellectual basis for doctoral work and identify schools and traditions of thought particularly relevant to your dissertations.

## **Seminar Rules**

1) Read all of the assigned readings; 2) Thoughtfully prepare and actively participate in every class; 3) Full attendance is expected; 4) Respect yourself and your colleagues; 5) Subject line of emails to instructor must begin with “MS 9601”.

## **Topics and Readings**

Subject to minor alterations in the first week of class. Readings are PDF'd on the seminar OWL site.

*Jan. 9 Introduction:* Jameson, Wark.

*Jan. 16 Techno-Theory:* McLuhan Kroker, Wiener, Haraway.

*Jan. 23 Political Economy:* Marx, Adorno & Horkheimer, Smythe

*Jan. 30 Cultural Studies:* Hall, Althusser, Hebdige, McRobbie

*Feb. 06 Texts, Readings, Play:* Barthes a, b, c; Chute; Patterson

*Feb. 13 Gender and Sexuality.* Mulvey, Butler, Federici, Preciado

*Feb. 20 Reading Week.*

*Feb. 27 Public Spheres.,* Habermas, Warner, Fraser, Davis,

*Mar. 5 Decolonization and Globalism,* Fanon, Dorfman, Coulthard, Crosby and Monaghan

*Mar. 12 Surveillance and Biopower:* , Foucault, Deleuze, Agamben, Zizek, Mbembe

*Mar. 19 Internet Studies:* Terranova, Srnicek, Auerbach

*Mar. 26 The People's Choice.* A theme or themes collectively selected by seminar.

*Apr. 2 Conclusions.* Presentation of Paper Abstracts.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

Seminar participation & 8 written weekly responses (approx. 500 words each) 20%.

Seminar presentation 1: Exposition 20%.

Seminar presentation 2: Expansion 20%.

Paper Proposal (due, Mar. 25, 500 words plus reference list) 5%.

Final Paper (due April 28, 5000 words, plus bibliography) 35%.

See notes below for further detail on assignments.

### **In-class Participation and Weekly Reading Responses**

You are expected to attend all classes, complete all the assigned readings, and come to class ready to participate in discussions. Participation is worth 20% of the total grade broken down into two parts: 10% of the final grade is assessed based on class attendance, preparedness, and contributions to the seminar meetings, and 10% is assessed based on the successful completion of 8 weekly online responses (between 300 - 500 words), to be posted to the weekly Forum board on OWL by Monday 3pm before each class.

The responses should not simply summarize the reading but engage critically with any concept, element or theme of the reading that you find problematic or confusing. You may also extrapolate from the reading, making connections to other work you have read or to contemporary issues or themes in which you have an interest. Or you may choose to pose questions about the readings and raise points for further discussion. Always come to class prepared to discuss and debate the contents of your

responses. The responses will not be graded individually but will contribute to the overall evaluation of participation in the course.

### **Presentations**

In addition to the response papers, each student will give two seminar presentations, assigned on a sign-up basis in the first week of class. One of these—the “*exposition presentation*”—should present a key idea or passage from one of the readings, carefully explaining it and drawing out connections to or contradictions of other of that week’s readings. The other—the “*expansion presentation*”—will also start from core idea or concept in the week’s readings, and explain it clearly, but can also relate it to your own work or that of some other theorist with whose work in can be connected, by comparison, contrast o conflict. In both cases the seminar presentation should include a) a talk of about 20 min. and b) a conducting a discussion with seminar of about 20 min. *Please send me your preferences on January 10, the day after our first class. Indicating the dates, the type of presentation (exposition/expansion) and, if possible, the topic (though it is understood you may need some time to determine this). To make an informed choice , you will need to do some advance work the previous week, surveying the topics and readings.*

### **Paper Proposal**

Start thinking now about the kinds of theoretical questions that animate your reading and writing and will inform your term paper (see below). The proposal, due no later than midnight March 25 (500 words, plus reference list) 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. It should also have a working list of ten scholarly books or articles you will draw on for the project. I will respond to the proposals: the sooner a proposal is submitted, the sooner it receives feedback. On the last week of class, we will workshop the proposals, so bring a copy for each person in the class, and be prepared to talk about your ideas for ten minutes or so.

### **Term paper**

The term paper should be an original and exciting piece of writing *that makes direct use of seminar readings and discussions*. You may wish to choose to explore one body of theory or one theoretician in depth, critically analyze compelling theoretical intersections between two or more authors examined in this course, or conduct an application of one body of theory to a cultural object or set of practices of particular interest. The paper cannot be simply expository but must contain a clear and developed argument. It will be marked rigorously on matters not only of analytical substance, but also of form and writing style. The paper is due by midnight, April 28. Late papers will be penalized 5% per day for up to three days, after which they will no longer be accepted.

### **OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

**Laptops and other electronic devices:** Students are permitted to use laptops in class as long as they are used for note-taking only. Students are not permitted to videotape or audiotape lectures. Please turn off your phone.

**Absenteeism:** Given this course's seminar format, regular attendance is crucial. Appropriate documentation is required for a student to ensure that absences do not affect his/her final grade.

**Support Services:** Please be aware of the following support services that are available to you:

**Office of the Registrar:** [www.registrar.uwo.ca](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca)

**Student Development Centre:** [www.sdc.uwo.ca](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca)

**Writing Support Centre:** [www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing)

**Indigenous Services:** [www.sdc.uwo.ca/Indigenous](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/Indigenous)

**International and Exchange Student Centre:** [www.sdc.uwo.ca/int](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/int)

**Learning Skills Services:** [www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning)

**Psychological Services:** <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych>

**Services for Students with Disabilities:** [www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd)

**Career Centre at Western:** [career.uwo.ca](http://career.uwo.ca)

**Accessible Education Western (AEW).** Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

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

**Scholastic 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](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

**Plagiarism:** Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism

is a major academic offence. It is entirely the student's responsibility to be aware of the nature of plagiarism and penalties it may incur, including expulsion from the university.

*Every assignments must in order to receive a passing grade differ from and significantly surpass what Chat GPT or similar AI can achieve on the topic at hand.*