

Concordia University
Department of Communication Studies
Fall 2007

MEDIA & CULTURAL HISTORY
COMS 373/2 01

CJ 4.246, Wednesday 8:45-11:30

Instructor: Andrea Zeffiro

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Office hours: Wednesday 12:00 – 14:00 & by appointment

Course Description & Objectives:

This course begins with the question; “What is media and cultural history and how do we ‘do’ it?” The course offers an introduction to historical debates and current research within media and cultural history. Through an examination of specific periods and issues, we will investigate the development of media forms and cultural practices, in order to critically interrogate the production of historical narratives and the role of the researcher/writer in this process.

The emphasis of the course is three-fold: theory-method-practice.

- We will explore key debates and theoretical concepts that define the field.
- We will explore ways of ‘doing’ media and cultural history.
- Students will be asked to put into practice theory and method by engaging in the production of media and cultural history.

Evaluation & Grade Structure:

Class participation		10%
Assignments (4 x 10%)		40%
Assignment #1	Oct 3	10%
Assignment #2	Oct 17	10%
Assignment #3	Nov 14	10%
Assignment #4	Nov 28	10%
Project Proposal	Oct 31	10%
Final Project	Dec 12	40%
Total		100%

Assignments (4x10%):

The assignments are designed to put into practice theories and methods explored in course readings and discussed in lecture.

The topics of the assignments are as follows (detailed information to follow in the first few weeks of class):

- 1)A Cultural History of an Everyday Technology
- 2)A Cultural Historical Reading of a Favourite Television Episode
- 3)A Cultural Historical Reading of Hip-Hop Lyrics
- 4)A Cultural Historical Reading of a Public Space

It is expected that assignments are roughly 750 words (3-4 pages double spaced).

Project Proposal (10%):

The project proposal should detail in 250-300 words what it is that you tend to do for your final project. The proposal should include a preliminary bibliography (at least 5 sources). If you are having difficulties choosing a topic, I am more than happy to brainstorm ideas with you.

Final project (40%):

The final project is a research paper based on a topic of your choice. Please treat the deadline as if it were a scheduled examination. Papers submitted after the deadline will result in a grade of 0.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 2: September 12

Media and Cultural History: An Introduction

Eley, Geoffrey. (1995). "What is Cultural History?" *New German Critique* 65
Spring/Summer. pp 19-36

Brugger, N. (2002). "Theoretical Reflections on Media and Media History." *Media History: Theories, Methods, Analysis*. Eds. N. Brugger & S. Kolstrup. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press; Oxford: Lavis Marketing. pp 33, 44-66

Recommended:

Richardson, L. (2000). "Writing: A Method of Inquiry." *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. Ed. N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. pp 923-948

WEEK 3: September 19

Communication as Culture/Communicating Culture: Writing Cultural History

Williams, R. (1977). "Culture." *Marxism & Literature*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press. pp 11-20

Carey, J. (1989). "A Cultural Approach to Communications." *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media & Society*. Boston: Unwin Hyman. pp 13-23 & pp 30-36

Barnard, M. (1996). "Fashion, Clothing, Communication and Culture." *Fashion as Communication*. London & New York: Routledge. pp 25-45

WEEK 4: September 26

Situated Knowledges: Toward a Critical Theory of Cultural History

Gertz, C.. (1973). "Thick description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books. pp 3-30

Biersack, A. (1989) "Local Knowledge, Local History: Gertz & Beyond." *The New Cultural History*. Ed. L. Hunt. University of California Press, Berkeley. pp 72-96

Lincoln, Y., & N. Denzin. "The Seventh Moment: Out of the Past." *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. Ed. N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. pp1047-1065

WEEK 5: October 3

Theoretical Reflections on Media History: A Pre-Modern Case Study

Williams, R. (1977). "From Medium to Social Practice." *Marxism & Literature*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press. pp 158-164

McLuhan, M (1964; 1994). "Telegraph." *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge & London: The MIT Press. pp 246-257

Flichy, P.(1996). "Market Controlled Communication: The Electric Telegraph." *Dynamics of Modern Communication: The Shaping and Impact of New Communication Technologies*. Sage: London. pp 41-56

NOTE: ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE

WEEK 6: October 10

Theoretical Reflections on Media History: A Modern Case Study

McLuhan, M (1964; 1994). "Television: The Timid Giant." *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge & London: The MIT Press. pp 308-337

Williams, R. (1975). "The technology and the society." *Television*. New York: Schocken Books. pp 9-31

Parini, J.(2002). "The Cultural Work of the Sopranos." *A Sitdown with the Sopranos: Watching Italian American Culture on TV's Most Talked-About Series*. Ed. R. Barrecapp. New York: Palgrave/St. Martin's Press. pp 75-87

Greven, D. (2004). "The Museum of Unnatural History: Male Freaks & Sex and the City." *Reading Sex and the City*. Ed. K. Akass & J. McCabe. London: New York: I. B. Tauris. pp 33-47

**In class screening*

WEEK 7: October 17

'New' Media and Cultural History

Williams, R. (1977). "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent." *Marxism & Literature*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press. pp 121-127.

Gitelman, L. (2006). "New Media Publics." *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. pp 25-59.

Miles, A. (2005). "Blogs: Distributed Documentaries of the Everyday." *Metro Magazine*. Issue 143. Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM). pp 66 - 70.

NOTE: ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE

WEEK 8: October 24

Cultural History as a Method of Inquiry: A Modern Case Study

Chapman, J. (2005) "The Business and Ideology of Mass Culture, 1918-1939." *Comparative Media History: An Introduction: 1789 to the Present*. Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity. pp 143-145, pp 153-154 & pp 173-179

Kracauer, S. (1970). "Introduction" & "The Stabilized Period" *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. pp 3 -11, pp 61-76

Budd, M. (1990). "The Cabinet of Doctor Caligary: Production, Reception, History." *Close Viewings: An Anthology of New Film Criticism*. Tallahassee: Florida State University Press. pp 333-352.

* *In class screening*

WEEK 9: October 31

Cultural History as a Method of Inquiry: A 'Post'-Modern Case Study

Lukás, G. (1971). 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat.' *History & Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Trans. R. Livingstone. Cambridge: The MIT Press. pp 83-92

Liotard, J.F. (1993; 2001). "Notes on the Meaning of Post." *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*. Eds. M. Gigi Durham & D. Kellner. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers. pp 47-50

Jameson, F. (1993; 2001). "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*. Eds. M. Gigi Durham & D. Kellner. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers. pp 62-92

Knight, D., & McNight, G. (2003). American Psycho: Horror, Satire, Aesthetics, and Identification. *Dark Thoughts : Philosophic Reflections on Cinematic Horror*. Ed. J. Schneider. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press. pp 212-229

* *In-class screening*

NOTE: PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE

WEEK 10: November 7

(The Bias of) Communication and (Sub) Culture as Capital

Innis, H. (1951). "The Bias of Communication." *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. pp 33-60

Rose, T. (1994). "Voices from the Margins". *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Hanover & London: Wesleyan University Press. pp 1- 21

Ford, R. (1978; 2004). "B-Beats Bombarding Bronx: Mobile DJ Starts Something with Oldie R&B Disks." *That's the Joint! : The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. Eds. M.A. Neal & M. Forman. New York: Routledge. pp 41

Assignment Reading:

Denzin, N. (2000). "The Practices and Politics of Interpretation." *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. Ed. N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks : Sage Publications. pp 827-922

WEEK 11: November 14

(Re)Defining Orality

Ong, W. (1982). "The Orality of Language" & "Oral Memory, the Storyline and Characterization." *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World*. London & New York: Routledge. pp 5-15 & pp 139-155

Rose, T. (1994). "Soul Sonic Forces." *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Hanover & London: Wesleyan University Press. pp 62-96

Castelman, G. (2004). "The Politics of Graffiti." *That's the Joint! : The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. Eds. M.A. Neal & M. Forman. New York: Routledge. pp 21-29

Knelman, J. (2007, August 4). "Graffiti Goes Six-Figure Legit." *The Globe & Mail* pp. R, R7

* *In-class screening*

NOTE: ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE

WEEK 12: November 21

Consuming Culture/Consuming Media/Consuming Space

deCerteau, M. (1984; 1999). "Walking in the City." *The Cultural Studies Reader*. 2nd ed. Ed. S. Daring. London & New York: Routledge. pp 126-133

Morris, M. (1988; 1999). "Things to do with Shopping Centres." *The Cultural Studies Reader*. 2nd ed. Ed. S. Daring. London & New York: Routledge. pp 391-409

Morse, M. (1990). "An Ontology of Everyday Distraction: The Freeway, the Mall, and Television." *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Ed. P. Mellencamp. Bloomington : Indiana University Press. pp 193-221

Assignment Reading:

Hodder, I. (2000). "The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture." *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. Ed. N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks : Sage Publications. pp 703-715

WEEK 13: November 28

Media & Cultural History as Shared Knowledge

Foucault, M. (1970). "Preface", "Classifying" & "The Human Sciences." *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. pp xv-xxiv, pp 125-128 & 344-373

Haraway, Donna. (1989). "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936." *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science*. New York: Routledge. pp 26-58

NOTE: ASSIGNMENT #4 DUE

NOTE: FINAL PAPERS DUE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2007.