

Instructor

Chen Zeng

Email: chen.zeng@temple.edu

Office Hours: 2:00-2:50pm on Monday; 2:00-2:50pm on Wednesday; or by appointment

Meeting place: Annenberg 1H

Course Description

This course is an introduction to theoretical approaches and practices used to understand the role of the media in the production and circulation of cultural meanings. To this end, we will read, watch, discuss, and write about a variety of media products including news coverage, films, ads, music videos, sitcoms, etc. We will explore the ways in which media texts are shaped by politics, economics, technology, and cultural traditions, and explore the dominant critical perspectives that underpin media criticism.

Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Develop a critical awareness of your media environment and media-making tools, practices and techniques.
- Learn the major concepts, themes and theoretical approaches of media criticism.
- Understand how these theoretical frameworks have been used to analyze and understand media texts and culture.
- Learn to use these frameworks and their central concepts to perform your own media analyses.

Texts/Reading Material

Material on the reading list will complement and/or parallel class discussions. Students are expected to finish all assigned readings before date of lecture and be ready to participate in class discussions. Theories, concepts, and ideas treated in the readings should be critically applied to shape and frame your papers for this course.

- Ott, B. L., & Mack, R. L. (2014). *Critical media studies: An introduction*. John Wiley & Sons (full text available at <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/templeuniv-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1557284>)
- Other required reading materials will be posted on Canvas in the “Files” section labeled Course Reading Week (1, 2, 3, etc).

Students should keep their eyes open for interesting newspaper and magazine articles, TV shows, videos, radio shows or music that would be useful to discuss. Bring them to class.

Grading and Assignments

Attendance/Participation: 10%

Attendance will be taken daily in class. Students will be excused from attendance to participate in an official Temple activity or to observe religious holidays. In the instance of excused absences, the student must notify the instructor in advance of any conflicts in the schedule, and assignments must be completed prior to the anticipated absence. In the event of an unforeseen emergency, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor promptly and to supply adequate documentation. If a student misses a class, the student is responsible for any information missed. You are allowed **TWO absences** in this course. Each absence after the one “free” day knocks your attendance down by 10%. For example: if you miss two classes only, your attendance is 100%. If you miss three classes (2 free, 1 penalized), then your attendance will be 90%. Any student with 7 or more absences (beyond the free 2) will receive a ZERO for attendance. Cell phone use (including texting) is not permitted in class. Laptops should only be used for note-taking. Use of laptops for email or Internet surfing, unless linked to a class assignment, is not permitted: violation of this policy will negatively affect your participation grade.

Midterm exam: 20%

The Midterm exam will consist of a total of twenty multiple choice and true and false questions.

Student Presentations for Discussion: 20%

In groups of two, students will lead class discussion on an assigned reading (or group of readings) for that week. Students will make a short 10-15 minute presentation on the reading(s), and present a media document (a video clip, artwork, advertisement, video game, music, news coverage, or web page so long as it is in reference to the reading(s)) that further facilitates discussion and application of the reading(s). You need to prepare at least 3 discussion questions. You can have them at the beginning of the presentation to focus your audience’ attention, in the middle to illustrate your point, or at the end.

The questions students write should be substantive, fair and directed.

- Substantive: Deal with the substance of the author’s argument. What claims is he/she making? Based upon what evidence? Is the author’s argument persuasive (see discussion of Fairness)?
- Fair: Our primary goal is to understand what the text does and argues for, and for what purpose. What is it trying to do, and why? What does it help us think about and perceive differently about the mass media? Think about what the author was trying to accomplish.
- Directed: How might you apply this author’s argument today? How can we take what the author discusses and apply it to our understanding of mass media in the present?

Canvas Posts: 10%

To aid our discussion and to improve your writing skills, you will be required to turn in five (5) Canvas posts (250-300 words each) where you will (1) provide a brief, 1-2 paragraph summary of the key theme(s)/argument(s) of the week’s readings; and (2) pose at least two question about the readings and/or topics under discussion. Your summary/question

must be posted on Canvas before Friday's class.

Two critical analysis assignments: 10%

Two times a semester you will write a critical analysis, wherein you apply analytic tools from the readings to a piece of media. Each post should be at least 400-500 words. You are always welcome to comment on other students' posts.

Assignment 1: Semiotic analysis (due date: 2/2)

Assignment 2: Ideological or feminist analysis (due date: 2/23)

Final Paper: 30%

Using the theoretical and methodological expertise that you have gained throughout the class, analyze a media text with two critical lenses (9 to 10 pages). You must cite a minimum of ten scholarly sources. Your paper must be typed, double-spaced, appropriately cited in APA style, proofread, and stapled when you hand it in. Use Times New Roman 12-point font and no more than 1-inch margins.

Grading Scale:

A 93-100	B- 80-82	D+ 67-69
A- 90-92	C+ 77-79	D 63-66
B+ 87-89	C 73-76	D- 60-62
B 83-86	C- 70-72	F 59 and below

Grading Criteria:

A = an earned grade that represents outstanding and exceptional work

B = an earned grade indicating competent, above average work

C = an earned grade for work that is average and/or merely fulfills the basics of the assignment and lacks some important connection to the course material

D = an earned grade given to work that does not fulfill the conditions of the assignment and lacks connection with the course material in multiple ways

F = an earned failing grade for late work, poorly executed work, plagiarism or other failure to adhere to the requirements of academic integrity

Course Policies & Procedures

- Academic Rights and Responsibility: Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link:
http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02.
- Course conduct and sensitivity: The instructor expects students to approach this class in a professional manner. Students are expected to be on time, to come prepared and to participate fully. In addition, media issues and content cannot be thoughtfully and rigorously discussed without an occasional reference to unpopular ideas or to offensive materials. Students and instructors alike are expected to remain sensitive to individual differences. We will make every effort to discuss differences with no anger,

arrogance, or personal attacks, and without perpetuating stereotypes about gender, age, race, religious affiliation, sexual preference, national origin, dialect, or disability.

- **Submission of Assignments and Deadlines:** It is solely the responsibility of the student to ensure all assignments reach the instructor. No dispensations will be granted for lost or misplaced assignments. Assignments must be submitted in hard copy in class **AND** electronically to Blackboard by the due date. There are **NO EXCEPTIONS** to this policy. (Of course, assignments can always be submitted early.) It is strongly recommended that students keep a backup copy of all work they submit in the course.
- **Grade Appeals:** If the student believes he/she have legitimate grounds on which to dispute a grade on a particular assignment, the student may submit a formal written appeal to the instructor within **10 days of receiving the original grade**. The appeal must be in writing, **NOT email**, and the appeal must provide **rational criteria** for why the current grade is inaccurate. Feelings do not constitute rational criteria. Such claims as "I worked really hard on the assignment," "I'm confident in my work," "I feel I deserve a higher grade," or "the grade was unfair" are not valid reasons to appeal a grade. The student must offer some empirical proof that the grade is inaccurate. The formal written appeal must be accompanied by the original graded assignment with the teaching assistant's completed grade sheet attached. (Any emailed grade appeals will be ignored.) Once the student has submitted a formal grade appeal and all supporting evidence, including the graded copy of the assignment in question, the instructor will carefully examine the assignment and provide a new grade utterly independent of any grade given by the teaching assistant. The instructor's grade will be based purely on the quality of the work submitted by the student and no other criteria. Once the instructor has assigned a grade to the assignment, that grade will not be changed under any circumstances. By submitting a formal grade appeal to the instructor, the student agrees to accept and respect the instructor's grade as the final grade on the assignment.
- **Academic Honesty:** Any student who is found violating standards of academic honesty will automatically FAIL the class. This includes any student who is found to be committing an act of plagiarism or who is caught cheating on an exam. All material submitted in the course is expected to be original material written specifically for this class and may not under any circumstances have been recycled from papers submitted in other courses. For students that violate the standard of academic honesty, a charge may be lodged with the University Disciplinary Committee. Reprinted below is Temple University's policy on academic honesty, taken from the Undergraduate Bulletin: Temple University believes strongly in academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism and academic cheating are, therefore, prohibited. Essential to intellectual growth is the development of independent thought and a respect for the thoughts of others. The prohibition against plagiarism and cheating is intended to foster this independence and respect. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's labor, another person's ideas, another person's words, or another person's assistance. Normally, all work done for courses – papers, examinations, homework exercises, laboratory

reports, and oral presentations – is expected to be the individual effort of the student presenting the work.

- Any assistance must be reported to the instructor. If the work has entailed consulting other resources – journals, books, or other media – these resources must be cited in a manner appropriate to the course. It is the instructor's responsibility to indicate the appropriate manner of citation. Everything used from other sources – suggestions for organization of ideas, ideas themselves, or actual language – must be cited. Failure to cite borrowed material constitutes plagiarism. Undocumented use of materials from the World Wide Web is plagiarism. Academic cheating is, generally, the thwarting or breaking of the general rules of academic work or the specific rules of the individual courses. It includes falsifying data; submitting, without the instructor's approval, work in one course which was done for another; helping others to plagiarize or cheat from one's own or another's work; or actually doing the work of another person. The penalty for academic dishonesty can vary from receiving a reprimand and a failing grade for a particular assignment, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or expulsion from the University.
- Access to the instructor: The instructor's office hours are listed at the top of this syllabus. The instructor will also be available to see students by appointment at other times. Students are highly encouraged to come up to the instructor before or after class or drop by during office hours or contact the instructor by e-mail, listed above. The instructor should respond to students' emails in some form by the following business day, assuming that the instructor is not on academic-business travel and that the semester is still in progress.
- Special Needs: Any student with a documented disability who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations should notify the instructor at the beginning of the semester. The student should also contact the Office of Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Class Meeting Schedule & Topics

Week 1	1/17	Introduction and Overview No readings
	1/19	The Power of Media/ Cultural Criticism Approaches Read • Kellner (2011). Cultural Studies, multiculturalism, and media culture • Critical Media Studies (CMS) Ch.1 (p. 1-19) (Not required)
Week 2	1/22	Textual/Semiotic Analysis Read • CMS Ch. 5 Rhetorical analysis (p. 109-130)
	1/24	Read • Seiter (1992). Semiotics, Structuralism, and Television
	1/26	Screening: <i>Brand New You: Makeover Television and the American Dream</i> Read • https://chomsky.info/consent01/
Week 3	1/29	Ideology and Hegemony Read • Marx & Engels (1970). Ruling class and ruling ideas
	1/31	Read • Gramsci. The concept of 'ideology,' & cultural themes: ideological material
	2/2	Read • Horkheimer & Adorno (1944). The culture industry
Week 4	2/5	Genre Theory Read • Foss (2009). Generic criticism
	2/7	Read • Shadoian (2003). Dreams and dead ends: The American gangster film Read • Lam (2016). Gangsters and Genre
	2/9	Read • Hess (2012). Genre films and the status quo (online): https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC01folder/GenreFilms.html
Week 5	2/12	Gender and Sexuality Theory: Feminist Criticism Read • Van Zoonen (1995). Gender, representation and the media
	2/14	Screenings, <i>Miss Representation</i> Read • Arthurs (2003). Sex and the City and consumer culture
	2/16	Read • CMS Chapter 8 Feminist analysis
Week 6	2/19	Race Theory and Ideology Revisited Read • Corea (1993). Racism and the American way of media
	2/21	Read • Croteau & Hoynes (2002). Media and ideology
	2/23	Screening, <i>Color Adjustment</i> Read • Hall (1995). The whites of their eyes
Week 7	2/26	Screening, <i>Color Adjustment II</i>
	2/28	Midterm Review
	3/2	Midterm Exam

Week 8	3/5 3/7 3/9	Spring Break (No classes held)
Week 9	3/12 3/14 3/16	Class Theory and Representation Revisited Read • CMS Chapter 6 on Race & Class (p.147-158) Culture Jamming Read • Lasn (1999). Culture jamming Information Literacy Session Read • Croteau et al. (2012). Social inequality and media representation
Week 10	3/19 3/21 3/23	Framing the News Read • Croteau et al. (2012). Chapter 3 Political influence on media Screening <i>Control Room</i> Read • Powell (2011). Framing Islam: An analysis of US media coverage of terrorism since 9/11 Read • Entman (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm
Week 11	3/26 3/28 3/30	Psychoanalytic Criticism and Audience Studies Berger (2005). Psychoanalytic criticism (p. 95-120) Berger (2005). Psychoanalytic criticism (p. 121-134) Allen (2006). Audience-oriented criticism and television
Week 12	4/2 4/4 4/6	Political Economic Analysis Read • McChesney (2015). p. 15-48 Read • McChesney (2015). p. 49-77 Read • Duffy & Hund (2015). "Having it all" on social media Read • https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/09/fashion-blogging-labor-myths/405817/
Week 13	4/9 4/11 4/13	Globalization and Post Colonial Criticism Read • Mirrlees (2013). Paradigms of global entertainment media Read • McChesney (2001). Global media, neoliberalism, and imperialism Read • Shohat & Stam (1994). The imperial imaginary
Week 14	4/16 4/18 4/20	Wrap-up and final paper workshop
Week 15	4/23 4/25 4/27	Final Project in-class presentation
Week 16	4/30 5/2 5/4	No class held this week ※ Final paper due on 5/4 (5:00pm)