

SOCL923 Critical Methods in Media and Cultural Studies 2015

Convenor: Adrian Mackenzie

This was the second year I have run this course which combines 20 minute interviews with guests (Cronin, Fish, Gilloch, McKnight, Suchman, Tyler), practical activities, readings on methodology in media/cultural studies and a group research project. There were 8 MA students, all doing the course for credit. There was 1 post-doctoral auditor as well. Attendance on the course was very good overall, with only one student significantly absent from many sessions.

The format of the classes this year generally consisted of lectures/presentations for the first third of the session, practical work on methods for the next third and a structured interview/conversation with a visitor for the remainder. Throughout the course, students were working each week on a group research project. The final few weeks of the course switched to work on group research projects. Throughout the course, students were given readings in preparation for the class, and follow-up work to do on group research blogs. (The course website documents this work week by week.) They also presented an overview of their project in the final week of the course.

Student feedback (collected via paper questionnaire) was overall positive, highlighting the student's enjoyment of and interest in the 'author-meets-critics' sessions during Weeks 2-8. They asked for more of those, as well as sessions on psychoanalytic methods(!) and more on television.

There were a few comments on the difficulty of readings, including introductory readings. As usual, the background of the students is very diverse, so some students are unfamiliar with even basic cultural studies methods and concepts (the notion of 'text' or 'sign' for instance). The group research project helps them a bit here, but I found the average level of expertise in this cohort to be particularly low. This shows in their group projects and essays.

The room and organisation were all fine.