**Department of Sociology**

**Postgraduate Feedback Sheet**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Pike, Max | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 66 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Max, Your essay showed a sophisticated understanding of research practice in media cultures. It was quite impressive. You picked up tricky aspects of the essay questions, and sustained some substantial thinking in response to them. Well done on that.  You argue, rightly in my view, the 'making sense' quote needs to be understood in different ways, and that the term 'practice' deserves particular attention. You were unusual in picking up on these subtleties, especially around the concept of practice. Your essay also sensitively connects different sources and ideas together in exploring these points.  Did you make use of the experience of doing the group research project in your response to the question? This was the main weakness of the essay. Your theoretical discussion was great, but the practice of the research project slipped away to one side.  Written exposition, organisation and structuring of argument were all very good. Occasionally, sentences lack a subject. |

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**Marker:**  Adrian Mackenzie **Moderator:**

**Date: 22 may 2017** **Date:**

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**Postgraduate Feedback Sheet**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Sui, Boyu | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 56 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Bo-Yu, your essay shows that you have engaged with some of the complexity of research practice in MCS. It shows awareness and emerging understanding of the purposes and practicalities of some of the main research methods. It offers some solid description of examples of fake news encountered during the group research project. I liked the emphasis on the visuality of fake news.  The main arguments in the essay concern fake news itself. They offer some interesting insights into fake news. There were some good connections to theoretical perspectives. The essay was less effective in thinking through the experience of the group research project. The concluding section does reflect on how you do the project again, but there you seem to disconnect from the understandings of media culture research practice discussed in the course.  You draw on a range of academic sources and approaches. Some of these were very relevant. It would have been good to bring in more from the core and recommended readings for this course.  Writing at the level of grammar and syntax was mostly satisfactory. I found the writing at the level of organization and structure less effective. Some references were missing from the reference list (e.g. Docherty, 2015). |

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**Postgraduate Feedback Sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Yao, Xi | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 60 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Xi, this is a well-written essay and raises some really interesting issues. It offers a fairly sophisticated analysis of fake news, and of contemporary media cultures more generally. I was quite impressed by that. You make use of some key insights from the course, and extend them through some of your own work.  Although many of your observations about the topic of fake news were incisive and helpful in understanding the fake news, the focus of the essay was not strongly aligned with an analysis of what media and cultural studies can do in its research practice. Your essay definitely shows that you have been doing some research, but doesn't reflect on the strengths, diversity and limits of that mode of doing research.  The use of academic sources was fine. I would really like to have seen material drawn more directly from your experience and thoughts about doing the group research project. For instance, how does your understanding of Couldry's notion of 'inside culture' actually impact what you think MCS can do? You might have drawn more widely on the readings from visitors to the course in some parts of the discussion. Could see them in the bibliography but they didn't figure in the discussion.  Writing, expression and referencing were all working well in this essay. Keep that up. |

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**Postgraduate Feedback Sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Bohan, Tom | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 67 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Tom, this was a quite thoughtful and individual essay. It showed a good deal of sophistication about research practice in MCS. I liked the point of departure in Williams' work and his account of media as unevenly shared consciousness. You make use of 'willed reality,' a very interesting term. I'd have welcomed some further exposition of how understand it.  The main argument tends to focus on the topic of fake news. That draws attention away from the actual topic of the essay -- research practice in MCS. It includes many very interesting suggestions about contemporary media cultures, some of which could be definitely be the topic of further research.  Did you reflect on the experience of doing the group research project? It's hard to locate this in the actual essay. I was hoping the essay would address the problems and difficulties of researching a topic such as fake news from 'inside culture,' in Couldry's sense of that term. That would have entailed consideration of the some of the ways in which different methods frame the topic, and how in practice one might overcome them. The group research project was the material to work with on this point.  The writing, documentation and referencing were all presented at a good standard. |

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**Postgraduate Feedback Sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Jia, Xintong | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 63 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Xintong, this essay demonstrated a good grasp of some central issues in MCS research practice. It was pleasing to see that you had thought through the idea of MCS as 'inside culture.' This comes through in a variety of ways in the essay, as you discuss concepts of culture, media and experience. Well done on that engagement.  The argument of the essay revolved around how MCS engages with power relations (economic and political) in media. This is certainly a central issue. You also explore the idea of culture in interesting and relevant ways.  The main difficulty in the essay is the lack of engagement with the process of doing the group research project. I hoped you would discuss some of the problems of research media cultures through the experience of doing the group research project. In your essay, there is little mention of that experience. It would have been great if your essay had drawn on that experience in discussing MCS research practice.  Written expression in the essay was generally effective in communicating your thinking. There were some ambiguities due to grammar, but for the most part I could understand what you were saying. The flow of the essay and its structure could be improved. Although you set out what you planned to do in the essay in the introduction, the actual body of the essay seemed to lack structure. It jumped between topics. |

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**Postgraduate Feedback Sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Khli-In, Apisara | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 68 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Apisara, Your essay engaged with the topic very substantially. It was great to see you grapple with the idea of doing research 'inside culture.' That can be a challenge to understand and work with.  The essay drew effectively on the group research project. You definitely made use of the group experience to address the question, rather simply writing about fake news as a topic. That was good to see. There was a slight tendency to generalize about media and media practices, especially in the introductory section. But your account of how different methods and techniques worked in practice was focused and concrete. And you make an excellent case for multiple methods. I agree with the point about the relevance of discourse analysis to the fake news topic, but your account of this approach remained a little general.  You make good use of Couldry's work, and related readings. Some discussion of readings from the guests in the course might have broadened the essay discussion.  Writing and documentations in the essay were very good. |

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**Postgraduate Feedback Sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Sarma, Kausiki | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 72 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Kausiki, it was a real pleasure to read your essay. It shows awareness of the plurality as well as central problems of MCS. Well done on rapidly orienting yourself to the key features of MCS, and developing a nuanced understanding of important connections between media, cultural, power, identity and experience.  The body of the essay discusses a range of topics and approaches that figure prominently in discussions of method in MCS. I liked the way you moved through different perspectives, developing a critical analysis of limitations and potentials of different ways of researching culture. The account of visualities was particularly good.  Your essay draws on a well-rounded collection of academic sources. These were skillfully synthesised. I would like to have seen more material drawn from your experience of carrying out the group research project. This after all was an occasion to think about what it actually means to be work with the premise of being 'inside culture' as a methodological axiom. You might have drawn more widely on the readings from visitors to the course in some parts of the discussion. Could see them in the bibliography but they didn't figure in the discussion.  The standard of written expression was very high. |

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**Postgraduate Feedback Sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Chen, Yanhui | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 60 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Yan-Hui, your essay opens with a very interesting philosophical reflection on world. I liked that. It helped show what you understand by 'making sense' and gave me a sense of how you understand media.  The main argument of the essay revolved around the idea that there is continual dynamism of meaning making associated with media. This must be right. It does not, however, address one of the key concerns of MCS, its interest in what it means to live in media cultures, where meaning-making is very unevenly distributed.  I thought the essay showed a good understanding of some MCS research methods. You drew on the group research project, and the 'moon landing' hoax quite effectively in describing your use of some of these methods.  The writing in the essay was generally good. Your writing would be better grounded in the academic literature if you made more use of references, quotes and citations of reading you have done for the course. You might draw on core or secondary readings. |

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|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Dale, Alexandria | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 68 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Alex, your essay, it seemed to me, really grasped some of the core method-related problems associated with MCS. It shows a questioning and exploratory approach to those problems, and crafts a well-thought out response to the question by drawing on a range of relevant materials.  You quickly home in on that key phrase 'making sense.' That is the linchpin of this question. It connects what MCS does with what media cultures do. Your account of that term emphasises sense more than 'making.' It might have been good to re-balance that a bit, since the making includes a vast range of practices, not limited to what researchers do. A fan also makes sense. A news editor makes sense. An advertising campaign makes sense, etc. Although your discussion of the 'a world that works through media' gave a potent account of media culture, it didn't make the connection between doing MCS and media culture itself. MCS is inside media culture -- that's one of Couldry's key insights.  Theoretical and practical reflections come together fluidly in the essay. You managed, unusually, to bring some of the experience of doing the research into the discussion. It remained a little tangential to the main argument. The focus on the local fake news was, it has to be said, extremely helpful. It brought things home. I'd like to have seen a wider range of methods discussed, and wider reference to readings in the course, including some from our visiting speakers.  Writing was good overall. |

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**Postgraduate Feedback Sheet**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Hale, Thomas | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 58 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Tom, the essay begins with a comprehensive and lucid overview of the essay. The main strength of the discussion that follows lies in its description and analysis of various aspects of the 'fake news' events of 2016. It situates them in various historical and media-cultural contexts. Much of this discussion is interesting and show capacity to analyse contemporary media-cultures using MCS approaches.  But the essay, I'm really sorry to say, does not directly engage with the topic. The main challenge of this question was to address MCS as a research practice situated inside media culture. The quote from Couldry was the most visible anchoring point for that. The question also implied you needed to discuss different methods and how they helped MCS to make sense of media cultures as a heterogeneous bundle of sense-making practices.  You were also meant to draw on your experience of doing the group research project, alongside the readings from the visitors or required reading list. In my evaluation of the essay, I've tried to make allowance for this misalignment with the essay topic, but its hard to give you full credit for an off-topic essay.  Writing style and use of academic references was all working quite well. |

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**Postgraduate Feedback Sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Zhang, Yuning | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 61 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Yu-Ning, it was great that your essay engaged so directly and substantially with Couldry's work on 'inside culture.' That was very helpful in focusing the essay. You seemed to grasp the point about the orientation of MCS to questions of power, differences and identity. It was great that you began to locate some of these ideas against a slightly broader background of cultural studies.  The essay constructs an ambitious argument about concerning individual experience and its construction. It perhaps relies a little too exclusively on Couldry's work for this, although that is certainly an important viewpoint to work with. I liked your attempt to put individual experience at the centre of the research practice, but it would have been extremely helpful to exemplify or explore that point drawing on the experience of the group research project.  You make good use of some core readings in the course. It would have been nice to weave in some of the other readings from the course (e.g. from the visiting guests?).  Writing in the essay is mostly working quite well. I was confused by the phrasing at a couple of points. |

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**Postgraduate Feedback Sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Ai, Yiran | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 70 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Yiran, well done on finding the quote the essay question derived from. You get credit for exploring that quote in context, and developing an understanding of it in a sustained way.  The main argument of the essay addresses what it means to make sense of the world through media. It names this as its focus, which was excellent, but it tends to wander in navigating the slightly tricky quote in the essay question. You make some very relevant observations along the way, I was happy to see. The second part of the essay turns to the group research project. Here the discussion adopted a more descriptive approach. I was hoping to read more about your experience of research fake news in the project. Some tensions around the role of the research inside media culture passed by in the discussion with remark. (e.g. Stokes seems to recommend distance from participation, but many methods we discussed pivot on participation.)  The essay stood out for its MCS scholarship. You found recent relevant work and smoothly introduced it for discussion. I was impressed by that.  The writing in the essay was high quality overall. |

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**Postgraduate Feedback Sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Ordonez, Jessica | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 66 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Jess, this was a really engaging and at times exciting essay. You demonstrate considerable sophistication in your understanding of MCS research practice in all its plurality and tensions. The essay weaves together different materials from the course quite skillfully, connecting work on cities, street art, cinema and online media.  The main argument of your essay concerns the role of mainstream methods such as semiotics and ethnography in MCS. I liked your effort to engage with the central question of the position and relevance of MCS as a research practice. This was the core of the question, and it poses many difficulties, not the least of which is the fact that MCS seems to just borrow methods off-the-shelf from other disciplines (literary studies, anthropology, etc.) The engagement was, however, slightly blurred in its focus. Some of it addressed general questions of what media do, or are. Others parts drew -- as you were asked to -- more directly on the experience of the group research project. I valued the latter more highly!  The range of materials combined in the essay was fine. I'd have welcome more reference to the group research project and your experience of being 'inside culture' as you did it.  Your writing style is good overall. You have a slight tendency to construct passive sentences. That reduces the impact of what you are saying. Passive voice is sometimes useful, but it puts your voice offstage. |

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**Postgraduate Feedback Sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Simpson, Oliver | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 68 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Oliver, the essay showed some real sophistication in thinking about MCS research practice. It showed a capacity to contrast and evaluate different forms of research, and to frame their differences at a high level of abstraction. I liked the fact that you drew directly on the experience of the group research project to construct these framings.  Unusually, you thought about the trickiness of research 'post-truth' media. You make a key point about the need for research practice to bracket the true-false opposition in order to be effective. In that sense, discourse analysis would be highly appropriate. You grasp well the implications of questions of power for MCS research. You perhaps generalize too quickly around the 'democratization' of news production.  Your essay shows good understanding of the potentials of different methods. It tends to be slightly blurry in its account of textual analysis -- this term itself covers a gamut of approaches, and it would have been good to delineate these a little further. I would have welcomed a little more direct attention to the 'making sense' quote.  Your writing is good overall. Passive voice proliferated at certain points. |

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**Postgraduate Feedback Sheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Liu, Lisha | | |
| Module: | SOCL923 Critical Methods in MCS | | |
| Mark (number): | 58 | Late Penalty: |  |

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| **Marker Comments**  Li-Sha, this was a well-organized and thoughtful response to the question. You show a developing sense of ethnography and its relevance to MCS. The essay was not so strong its engagement with other forms of research practice in MCS. You did not discuss textual analysis, visualities, discourse analysis and more recent 'live methods' in any great depth.  You showed understanding of media culture as a contested terrain for social groups and ideologies. It would have been great if you discussed how that understanding affects or steers research practice in MCS. How would ethnography be relevant given that view of media culture, for instance? I was also wondering whether you thought the idea of studying culture from the inside, or of being inside culture as a researcher differs from the idea of studying culture as a phenomena to be known objectively. I liked your concluding reflections on the relation between world and media.  One important aspect of the essay was missing: the critical reflection on your group research project.  Your essay drawn on a wide range of references, including some from well beyond this course. I was please to see you engaging substantially with the idea of digital ethnography. |

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