

MMC 9207

Critical Textual Analysis

Fall 2022

Tuttleman 309

Mondays, 5:30-8 p.m.

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Course Description: The text is a foundational object in the study of media: it is what we consume as audiences, what our educations and professional routines are organized around producing, and what carries the various meanings of culture that persist over time. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the various methodological approaches that take texts as their central point of inquiry, and to develop your skill and expertise in deploying these methods, with the goal of producing your own conference-ready piece of research by the end of the semester.

Textual approaches to the analysis of media have developed across diverse fields such as anthropology, history, literature, rhetoric and philosophy; mass communication has been one place of their intellectual convergence. Therefore, readings in this class will span Modernist through Post-Modernist movements focusing, not on progress from one approach to another, but on the spiral interplay of those movements, intellectual frameworks, and their uptakes in various disciplines. There is a deep convergence of theory and method here, and as such, a robust interest theory is needed in order to guide the interpretation of media texts.

Learning Goals:

- Understand various approaches to critically analyzing media texts, as well as the epistemological, ontological, axiological, and interpretive commitments of those approaches
- Develop and demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between texts and the study of culture and media
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze and interrogate foundational theoretical, methodological texts and to evaluate empirical studies that use these methods
- Demonstrate the ability to define and evaluate concepts such as validity and interpretation in textual work

- Practice the research skills necessary to conceive and produce a conference-length research paper based upon a rigorous text-based study

Expectations

Informed and thoughtful weekly participation based on assigned readings, regular consultations of suggested readings, and well written, thoughtful writing assignments. Seminars are a collaborative approach to learning; you are expected to explore your knowledge (based on those readings) in ways which complement and expand upon the work you do on your own. Note that few or absent contributions will impact your final grade.

Required Texts (available at TU bookstore, Main Campus).

Alan McKee, *Textual Analysis*, London: SAGE, 2003. (E-book available via TULibrary)

Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Methods*, 4th Edition, London: SAGE, 2016.

Other readings available on Canvas, accessible via the TUPortal.

Assignments

Participation (10%): Successful seminars require you to show up (in whatever form that takes during COVID), having done the reading, and ready to contribute thoughtfully to the discussion (through whatever medium works best).

Weekly writings (20%): Each week, turn in a 1-2 page engagement with the week's reading. This should be critical in scope, pushing beyond summary to weigh particular aspects of the readings. For the weeks where we look at a series of studies, use this as an opportunity to analyze how certain studies are designed and put together, with an eye to how you can improve your own research practice. ***These are not due after Week 8. It is expected that you will begin to use that time to work in earnest on your final project***

Method exercises (30%): Over the course of the semester, you will engage in three short exercises in deploying a given method. These assignments are two part:

- 1) A 5-page analysis of a text, a delineated arena of discourse, or a visual text/object;
- 2) A 2-page reflection on your use of the method and its interpretive demands.

Due dates noted on calendar below.

Final paper (40%): For the final project, you are expected to produce a 15-20 page research paper worthy of conference submission. Your analysis should be anchored around a clearly delineated textual object: an important text, a field of discourse, or a range of textual practices. (Some example paper topics: "iLife: The NeoLiberal Subject and Apple's Advertising Campaigns;" "Safe in the suburbs: Racial discourse, crime, and nightly television news;" and "Loud resistance: Performing cultural politics in the pages of a punk rock zine"). Successful papers will artfully weave theoretical concepts with evidence from the media object under

review to provide a clearly stated thesis, supported by a logically coherent interpretation of the text as evidence. **Due to Dr. Creech, via e-mail, on December 8.**

COURSE POLICIES

Assessment

In all of your written work you must demonstrate a good command of English grammar and spelling, and your work must be original. That means that both the writing and the analysis (the thought) must be your own, not someone else's. Please see "Academic honesty" section below.

A grade of "A" represents outstanding work that fulfills the assignment with excellence in content and execution. A "B" indicates competent work that could be better. A "C" means that the work is within the parameters of the assignment but is lacking in content or execution. A "D" means that the work does not fulfill the assignment and/or is extremely poor in content or execution. A failing grade of "F" means that the assignment was not turned in or that you have been academically dishonest (see below). A "plus" or a "minus" may be used when the quality of an assignment falls between the definitions of two letter grades.

Attendance and missed work

A significant amount of material will be covered in every class, and we will do a lot of analysis and discussion together in class. These are the reasons why you need to be in attendance. I realize that sometimes absences are unpredictable and unavoidable.

If something serious occurs that affects your attendance, tell me. I will accommodate absences. I also want to know if you are not alright and if you need help.

You are expected to turn in assignments on the dates they are due, even if you are not in class. For every day that an assignment is late, you will lose 1/3 of a letter grade (i.e. a B becomes a B-, a B- becomes a C+, etc.) Again, as with attendance, I may make an exception in truly serious circumstances, but that is at my discretion.

You may not rewrite an assignment later in order to improve your grade. You need to do your best work the first time through, by the deadline.

Academic honesty

No academic dishonesty will be tolerated, and if you are caught at it, you will fail the class. Academic dishonesty includes: making up material that you present as factual research; turning in work done for another class as original work done for this class (unless a specific scope of reuse is approved by the instructor); turning in work that someone else did for you; cheating on an examination; and plagiarism.

Plagiarism is copying work created by someone else and presenting it as your own. The university has provided the following explanation:

“Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another individual’s ideas, words, labor, or assistance. All coursework submitted by a student, including papers, examinations, laboratory reports, and oral presentations, is expected to be the individual effort of the student presenting the work. When it is not, that assistance must be reported to the instructor. If the work involves the consultation of other resources such as journals, books, or other media, those resources must be cited in the appropriate style. All other borrowed material, such as suggestions for organization, ideas, or actual language, must also be cited. Failure to cite any borrowed material, including information from the internet, constitutes plagiarism.

“Academic cheating results when the general rules of academic work or the specific rules of individual courses are broken. It includes falsifying data; submitting, without the instructor’s approval, work in one course that was done for another; helping others to plagiarize or cheat from one’s own or another’s work; or undertaking the work of another person.”

Further explanation of plagiarism is provided in this passage adapted from the Temple University “Statement on Academic Honesty for Students in Undergraduate Courses.” The italicized sentences are my own clarification; the rest is from the statement.

“There are many forms of plagiarism: repeating another person’s sentence as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, paraphrasing someone else’s argument as your own, or even presenting someone else’s line of thinking in the development of a thesis as though it were your own. It is perfectly acceptable to use the ideas and words of other people, but we must never submit someone else’s work as if it were our own, without giving appropriate credit to the originator.

“In general, all sources must be identified as clearly, accurately, and thoroughly as possible. When in doubt about whether to identify a source, either cite the source or consult your instructor. Here are some specific guidelines to follow:

a. Quotations. Whenever you use a phrase, sentence, or longer passage written (or spoken) by someone else, you must enclose the words in quotation marks and indicate the exact source of the material.” *The fact that you cite a source does not excuse your using that person’s wording as if it were your own wording. If you use someone else’s wording, you must put quotation marks around it and specify the source. This applies to any work that is not yours, even if the author is not identified (i.e., it applies to language from Wikipedia, other general reference sources, and online commentary).*

“b. Paraphrasing. Avoid closely paraphrasing another’s words. Substituting an occasional synonym, leaving out or adding an occasional modifier, rearranging the grammar slightly, or changing the tenses of verbs simply is sloppy copying. Good paraphrasing indicates that you have absorbed the material and are restating it in a way that

contributes to your overall argument. It is best to either quote the material directly, using quotation marks, or put the ideas completely in your own words. In either case, acknowledgment is necessary. Remember: expressing someone else's ideas in your own way does not make them yours.

c. Facts. In a paper, you will often use facts that you have gotten from a lecture, a written work, or some other source. If the facts are well known, it is usually not necessary to provide a source. (In a paper on American history, for example, it would not ordinarily be necessary to give a source for the statement that the Civil War began in 1861 after the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln.) But if the facts are not widely known or if the facts were developed or presented by a specific source, then you should identify that source.

d. Ideas. If you use an idea or ideas that you learned from a lecture, written work, or some other source, then you should identify the source. You should identify the source for an idea whether or not you agree with the idea. It does not become your original idea just because you agree with it."

Students with Disabilities:

Please bear in mind that COVID-19 may result in a need for new or additional accommodations.

It is Temple University's policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities under the American Disabilities Act (ADA). At the beginning of the semester, any student with a disability should inform the course instructor if accommodations or academic adjustments will be needed. For more information about the ADA and academic accommodations or adjustments, contact the Office of Disability Resources and Services at <http://www.temple.edu/disability> or 215-204-1280. If you have a DRS accommodation letter to share with me, or you would like to discuss your accommodations, please contact me as soon as practical. I will work with you and with DRS to coordinate reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities. All discussions related to your accommodations will be confidential.

Access to the instructor

I am generally available after class and by e-mail, but now that I am in the Dean's Office, a prior appointment is the best way to make sure we have time to talk. I use e-mail constantly, so do not be shy if you have a short question, need clarification, or have a comment that you'd like to expound upon.

Statement on academic rights and responsibilities

Freedom to teach, and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03. 70.02) which can be accessed at policies.temple.edu.

Other challenges

I and others at Temple strive to make school an interesting and rewarding experience for you. We also know that school can be a challenge. I would like to encourage any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, to access available resources. Those include the dean of students, Stephanie Ives (you can walk in to the Howard Gittis Student Center, room 304 at 1755 N. 13th Street, or call (215) 204-7188 or email ivos@temple.edu); and the vice dean for student success at Klein College, Dr. Maggie Place (mplace@temple.edu, 215-204-6967). You're welcome to notify me if you are comfortable doing so.

Students struggling with mental health or substance use issues should immediately seek counseling at Tuttleman Counseling Services. Tuttleman Counseling is located at 1700 N. Broad St. on the 2nd Floor at the corner of Broad St. and Cecil B. Moore Ave. above Barnes and Noble. If you need someone to take you there, feel free to stop by my office and I will happily go with you.

COVID Considerations

The following language is adapted from Temple University's reopening and Fall 2020 syllabus guidelines. Though the world has become more stable since then, this section is a useful guideline for what will happen in case the semester goes online, even for a short period.

TEMPLE AND COVID-19:

Temple University's motto is Perseverance Conquers, and we will meet the challenges of the COVID pandemic with flexibility and resilience. The university has made plans for multiple eventualities. Working together as a community to deliver a meaningful learning experience is a responsibility we all share: we're in this together so we can be together.

In-person activities and instruction for the fall 2020 semester will end Nov. 20, at the start of the fall break. The remaining week of classes, study period and finals will be conducted remotely.

Attendance Protocol and Your Health

If you feel unwell, you should not come to campus, and you will not be penalized for your absence. Instructors are required to ensure that attendance is recorded for each in-person or synchronous class session. The primary reason for documentation of attendance is to facilitate contact tracing, so that if a student or instructor with whom you have had close contact tests positive for COVID-19, the university can contact you. Recording of attendance will also provide an opportunity for outreach from student services and/or academic support units to support students should they become ill. Faculty and students agree to act in good faith and work with mutual flexibility. The expectation is that students will be honest in representing class attendance.

In the event the University transitions to all-online learning

Main course materials will remain available on Canvas, which will be the primary hub for coordinating resources for this class.

Link to Temple University's Technology and software policies: <https://its.temple.edu/tech-policies>

Learning mode: Synchronous discussion via Zoom during regular class time, 5:30-8:00 p.m. EST
Asynchronous options and modes of engagement will be available to those who cannot accommodate our regular class time.

Work in this class will continue to be mostly text and video call based. I will be available for regular, weekly one-on-one consultations about coursework and final project progress.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The readings below are divided into weeks of theory and weeks of practice. We will read about a method, its use, and conceptual forbears, with discussion aimed around understanding the particular tenets of a textual approach. The practice weeks will be spent seeing how other scholars have completed textual projects in communication and media studies, with discussion anchored around pulling apart these studies and understanding lessons we can use in our own work.

The goal here is to explore how theory and method are deeply intertwined, and give examples for our own research practice.

Week 1

Course overview, welcome

Canvas (readings to complete before first meeting):

- James Carey, (1992). "Overcoming resistance to cultural studies," in *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, 2nd Edition, New York: Routledge, pp. 89-111.
- Devon Powers (2022). The problem of popular culture. *Communication Theory*. Online ahead of print. DOI: 10.1093/ct/qtac011

Week 2 — Appreciating textual analysis

- Alan McKee, *Textual Analysis: A Beginner's Guide*. New York: SAGE.

Week 3 — Theory: Methodological touchstones and complications

Canvas:

- Stuart Hall, "Encoding, Decoding"
- Stuart Hall, "Introduction to *Paper Voices*"
- Linda Steiner (2016). "Wrestling with the Angels": Stuart Hall's Theory and Method. *Howard Journal of Communication*. 27(2): 102-111.
- Michelle Phillipov (2013) "In Defense of Textual Analysis: Resisting Methodological Hegemony in Media and Cultural Studies," *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 30(3): 209-223
- Brian Ott and Cameron Walter (2000) Intertextuality: Interpretive practice and textual strategy. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 17(4): 429-446.

Week 4 — Sample analyses: Single Texts and Genres

Canvas:

- Andre Cavalcante (2013). Centering transgender identity via the textual periphery: *TransAmerica* and the "double work" of paratexts. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 30(2): 85-101.
- Elfriede Fursich, (2009). "Packaging culture: The potential and limitations of travel programs on global television," *Communication Quarterly* 50(2): 204-226.

- Casey Kelly (2012). Neocolonialism and the global prison in National Geographic's *Locked Up Abroad*. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 29(4): 331-347.
- Lilie Chouliaraki (2010) "Ordinary witnessing in post-television news: Towards a new moral imagination," *Critical Discourse Studies*, 7:4, 305-319
- Geoffrey Baym (2000), "The promise and the product: A textual-critical analysis of Public Television's *NewsHour*," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 24(3): 312-331.

Week 5 — Theory: Discourse Analysis

Canvas:

- Norman Fairclough, selections from *Media Discourse*
- Michel Foucault, selections from *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*
- Michel Foucault, (1979). "Truth and Power: An Interview with Michel Foucault," *Critique of Anthropology* 4(13): 131-137
- Mark Andrejevic, "Power, knowledge and governance: On Foucault's relevance to journalism studies," *Journalism Studies* 9(4): 605-614.
- Anabela Carvalho (2008). "Media(ted) discourse and society: Rethinking the framework of critical discourse analysis." *Journalism Studies* 9(2): 161-177.

DUE: Method exercise – Deep read analysis of a singular media text

Week 6 — Practice: Discourse Analyses

Canvas:

- Charles Acland (1991). Tall, dark, and lethal: The discourses of sexual transgression in the preppy murder. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 15 (2), 1: 140-158.
- James Hay (2010). Too good to fail: Managing the financial crisis through the moral economy of realty TV. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34(4): 382-402.
- Emily Chivers Yochim & Vesta T. Silva (2013). Everyday expertise, autism, and "good" mothering in the media discourse of Jenny McCarthy. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. 10(4): 406-426.
- Sean Phelan (2019). Neoliberalism, the far-right, and the disparaging of "social justice warriors." *Communication, Culture, and Critique* 12(4): 455-475.
- Nicole S. Cohen (2015) Entrepreneurial journalism and the precarious state of media work. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 114 (3): 513–533.

Week 7 — Theory: Institutions, Policy, and Political Economy

Canvas:

- Norman Fairclough (2013). "Critical discourse analysis and critical policy studies." *Critical Policy Studies* 7(2): 177-197.
- Vivian Schmidt (2008). "Discursive institutionalism: The explanatory power of ideas and discourse," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11: 303-326.
- Thomas Streeter (2013). "Policy, politics, and discourse," *Communication, Culture, & Critique* 6(4): 488-501.

- Thomas F. Corrigan. (2018). "Making Implicit Methods Explicit: Trade Press Analysis in the Political Economy of Communication." *International Journal of Communication* 12: 2751-2772.

Week 8 —Practice: Institutions, Policy, and Political Economy

Canvas:

- Jessica Maddox and Jennifer Malson, (2020). Guidelines without lines, communities without borders: The marketplace of ideas and digital manifest destiny in social media platform policies. *Social Media + Society*. doi.org/10.1177/2056305120926622
- Brooke Duffy and Erin Schwartz (2017). Digital "women's work?": Job recruitment ads and the feminization of social media employment. *New Media & Society* 20(8): 2972-2989.
- Nicole S. Cohen and Greg de Peuter (2018). Interns talk back: Disrupting media narratives about unpaid work. *The Political Economy of Communication* 6(2): 3-24.
- Perry Parks, (2019). The discipline-autonomy paradox: How U.S. journalism textbooks construct reporters' freedom just to tear it down. *Journalism Studies* 20(13): 1903-1919.
- Michael Wayne (2018) Netflix, Amazon, and branded television content in subscription video on-demand portals. *Media, Culture, & Society* 40(5): 725-741.

Last week that weekly writings are due

Week 9 – Theory: Visual Analysis

Chapters 2, 4, 6, 7, and 8 in Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Methods*

DUE: Two-page plan and outline for final project

Week 10 – Practice: Visual Analyses

Canvas:

- Stuart Hall (1981). "The determination of news photographs." In Stanley Cohen and Jock Young, (eds). *The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance, and the Mass Media* London: Constable, pp. 226-243.
- Christine Harold and Kevin Deluca (2005). "Behold the corpse: Violent images and the case of Emmett Till," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 8(2): 263-286.
- Kari Andén-Papadopoulos (2008) The Abu Ghraib torture photographs: News frames, visual culture, and the power of images. *Journalism: Theory, Practice, and Criticism* 9(1): 5-30.
- Erica B. Edwards and Jennifer Esposito, (2018). "Reading the black woman's body via Instagram fame," *Communication, Culture, & Critique* 11(3): 341-358.
- Alice Marwick (2015). "Instafame: Luxury selfies in the attention economy," *Public Culture* 27(1): 137-160.

DUE: Method exercise – Discourse OR Policy analysis

Week 11 — Theory: Materiality, technology, and (digital) objects

Canvas:

- Susan Leigh Starr (1999). The ethnography of infrastructure. *American Behavioral Scientist* 43(3): 377-391.
- Adrienne Shaw (2017). Encoding and decoding affordances: Stuart Hall and interactive media technologies. *Media, Culture, & Society* 39(4): 592-602.
- Andre Brock (2018). Critical technocultural discourse analysis. *New Media & Society* 20(3): 1012-1030.
- James Carey (1983). Technology and ideology: The case of the telegraph. *Prospects* 8(1): 303-325.
- Tarleton Gillespie, (2010). The politics of 'platforms.' *New Media & Society* 12(3): 347-364.

Week 12 —Practice: Materiality, Technology, and (Digital) Objects

Canvas:

- Brian L. Ott, Eric Aoki, & Greg Dickinson (2011). Ways of (not) seeing guns: Presence and absence at the Cody Firearms Museum. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 8(3): 215-239.
- Krishnan Vasudevan & Ngai Keung Chan (2022). Gamification and work games: Examining consent and resistance among Uber drivers. *New Media & Society* 24(4): 866–86.
- Brügger, Niels (2009). Website History and the Website as an Object of Study. *New Media & Society* 11, no. 1–2: 115–32.
- Joshua Reeves & Jeremy Packer (2013) Police media: The governance of territory, speed and communication. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 10(4): 359-384.
- Will Mari (2021) Staying cool: The impact of air conditioning on news work and the modern newsroom, *Journalism Practice*, Online ahead of print.
DOI: [10.1080/17512786.2021.1919544](https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1919544)

Week 13 — Textual approaches in digital spaces

Canvas:

- Ryan W. Milner (2013). Pop polyvocality: Internet memes, public participation, and the Occupy Wall Street movement. *International Journal of Communication* 7(5): 2357-2390.
- Andre Brock (2012). From the Blackhand Side: Twitter as a Cultural Conversation. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 56(4): 529-549.
- Anastasia Kanjere, (2019). "Defending race privilege on the Internet: How whiteness uses innocence discourse online," *Information, Communication & Society* 22(14): 2156-2170.
- Allison Page and Jacquelyn Arcy, (2019). "#MeToo and the Politics of Collective Healing: Emotional Connection as Contestation." *Communication, Culture, & Critique*. Online ahead of Print.

- Kelly Cotter (2021). Practical knowledge of algorithms: The case of BreadTube. *New Media & Society*. Published online ahead of print. DOI: [10.1177/14614448221081802](https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221081802)

DUE: Method exercise – Analysis of a visual text or object

Week 14: Examples of M&C Students' Published Work

- Michael Buozi (2017). Giving voice to the accused: *Serial* and the critical potential of true crime. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 14(3): 254-270.
- Eugene Kukshinov (2021). Discourse of Non-Participation in Russian Political Culture: Analyzing Multiple Sites of Hegemony Production. *Discourse & Communication* 15(2): 163–83.
- Wesley E. Stevens (2021). “Blackfishing on Instagram: Influencing and the Commodification of Black Urban Aesthetics.” *Social Media + Society* 7(3). DOI: [10.1177/20563051211038236](https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051211038236)
- Patrick Walters (2021) Redemption vs. #MeToo: How Journalists Addressed Kobe Bryant’s Rape Case in Crafting His Memory. *Journalism Practice* Online Ahead of print: [10.1080/17512786.2021.2021103](https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.2021103)
- Tracy Tinga, Urszula Pruchniewska, Michael Buozi & Loyce Kute (2018) Gendered discourses of control in global journalism: women’s bodies in CNN’s Zika reporting, *Feminist Media Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/14680777.2018.1426619](https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1426619)

DUE December 8: Final paper due to Dr. Creech via e-mail. Brian.creech@temple.edu