

SOAN 204: Media and society

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Carleton College
Fall 2014

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Office hours: MW 3-4pm; F 10am-12pm, or by appointment if necessary

Class meets MWF, 3a (11:10-12:20 MW; 12-1 F) in Leighton 330

Course description

In contemporary Western society, most of us are awash in media. Although the technologies which ground our mediated actions and interactions are proliferating and changing at a rapid rate, we can only understand our situation by viewing it historically. It is typically far easier to adapt to and employ new media forms than it is to think deeply, critically, and sociologically about them. Our goal in this course is to both survey some key concepts, themes and theories in the study of communication media, and to develop some crucial intellectual tools for grasping our media-saturated selves and world.

The course is intended to be both an introduction and a survey; however, in an extremely broad and fast-changing field, we'll necessarily have to restrict our focus. Using a variety of texts, from different disciplinary perspectives, we'll conduct our inquiry through the interconnected themes of (1) Communication, society and the public sphere; (2) Self, meaning and representation; (3) Power, visuality and visibility; and (4) New technologies and media forms.

Although designed as an introduction, the course will move quickly through sophisticated texts and theories. We'll conduct our inquiry as a collaborative discussion seminar, therefore the thorough preparation, engagement and participation of all members will be crucial to our overall success.

This syllabus is preliminary; I'll probably need to make changes based upon the interests and needs of course participants.

Course Objectives

- Introduce key themes and theories of critical social thought about media
- Develop a vocabulary of theoretical concepts for understanding contemporary forms of media
- Think broadly, critically, and historically about the relationship between technology and social structures and practices

- Develop skills of reflection, critical reading, critical thinking, and communication

Student Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are specified at the department level. The relevant outcomes for this course are the following:

- Connect information about historical and contemporary socio-cultural phenomena.
- Apply sociological and anthropological theory to analyze socio-cultural phenomena.
- Draw upon your understanding of historical and contemporary socio-cultural phenomena to engage the world.

Course Materials

There are six required books for the course, which are available at the Carleton bookstore. In addition to these texts, there will also be required readings available on the course website (Moodle).

- Chouliaraki, Lilie (2006) *The Spectatorship of Suffering*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dean, Jodi (2010) *Blog Theory: Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Drive*. Malden, MA: Polity.
- Galloway, Alexander (2012) *The Interface Effect*. Malden, MA: Polity.
- Gill, Rosalind (2007) *Gender and the Media*. Malden, MA: Polity.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1991) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Thompson, John (1995) *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*. Stanford University Press.

Approach, expectations, suggestions

The course will be conducted as a discussion-based seminar, although I may lecture from time to time. I view my professorial role to be one of facilitation, rather than knowledge dissemination. My goal is to create a context and structure to help you develop your critical intellectual skills and your knowledge of critical and sociological approaches. The success of the course will depend upon the continued preparation, engagement and participation of all members.

Reading

In many ways, this is a seminar in reading. The reading load will vary, but will often be substantial, and the texts will require significant attention and active engagement. You should expect to spend a considerable amount of time reading critically, in preparation for our class meetings. You are not expected to have mastered them on your own before coming to class; we'll collectively make sense of

them in class. You should always bring the relevant texts to class with you. *I strongly discourage using ereaders*, as they (in my opinion), make active engagement with the text more difficult. Readings available on Moodle should be printed out and brought to class.

Technology

My approach to teaching and learning is centered around discussion, engagement, community and collaboration. I have found that this approach is best facilitated by keeping technology, for the most part, out of the classroom. I expect all phones and laptops to be turned off and put away before coming into the classroom. If you have a circumstance which merits an exception to this policy, please see me about it.

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory. If you need to be absent for a legitimate reason, please talk to me ahead of time. You may have one unexcused absence during the term. Any additional unexcused absences will result in deductions from your final grade for the course.

Communication and office hours

I am available for discussion and/or assistance outside of class, and I welcome student feedback, discussion, and questions. If you have any questions or concerns throughout the term, we can chat about them. *If you find yourself struggling with the course or some aspect of it, come and see me before it gets too stressful or too late to remedy.*

Course requirements

Your course grade will be calculated according to the following schema:

- Participation 25%
- Discussion leadership assignment 15%
- Critical sociological journal 30%
- Research paper (in stages) 30%

Participation Your success in the course (as well as the overall success of the course) will depend upon your active and sustained engagement. I expect everyone to participate at a high level; however, we all don't have the same aptitudes and learning styles, so you should think about participation flexibly. While it includes asking questions and participating in discussions, it also includes *active* listening, having your text open (and reading along), annotating and notetaking, and participation in small-group work.

Active participation also involves making comments that show how you have substantially engaged with the text on your own time, and are making connections between different texts and themes that

we've covered, as well as connections to other courses or everyday life.

Critical sociological journal This assignment will take the form of frequent, informal writings, in which you will develop your understanding of course themes and texts. These will be submitted on a weekly or bi-weekly basis during the first six or seven weeks of the course.

Discussion leadership assignment You will have the opportunity to lead the class discussion on a day and topic of your choosing.

Research paper For this assignment, you will pursue a research topic of your choosing. The development of the paper will proceed in stages of topic statement, annotated bibliography, and drafts.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Carleton College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Disability Services, Andy Christensen, at 222-4464 or anchrist@carleton.edu, to begin the process. Carleton faculty are strongly encouraged to wait for official notification of accommodations before modifying course requirements for students.

Academic support

Carleton has a wealth of resources for students who want to improve their academic skills. Take advantage of them!

Library research

Ask a librarian for help with your research in this class. You can drop by the library's Research/IT desk to ask any question you have, at any point in your process. Librarians help students find and evaluate articles, books, websites, statistics, data, government documents, and more. For more information on hours and librarians, visit the library's website: <http://go.carleton.edu/library>.

Public Speaking and Class Presentations

The Speakeasy is a student-staffed resource designed to assist you with class presentations, comps talks, and other speech-related events. Groups and individuals are welcome at our location in the Libe (room 314). A Speakeasy coach, Chad Stevenson or Diana Fraser, can also meet you at other mutually convenient times. Just email them at stevensonc@carleton.edu or fraserd@carleton.edu. For days and times when the Speakeasy is open, visit go.carleton.edu/speakeasy.

Time Management, Study Skills, and Test-Prep Strategies

Chavonna Savage (csavage@carleton.edu), a Hall Director who also works in the Academic Support Center, can work with you to improve your time management and academic skills. Her goals are to heighten your awareness of your personal strengths and skills, and to offer different ways you can

approach your academic work so you're more efficient and effective. Chavonna meets students during her regular drop-in office hours, which are listed on the Academic Skills Coaching website. You can also email her to set up a meeting outside her office hours.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center, located in 420 4th Libe, has peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours are listed here: <https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/asc/writingcenter/>. You can reserve specific times for conferences in 420 4th Libe by using their online appointment system: <https://writingcenter.carleton.edu/>. Walk-ins are welcome in 420 4th Libe, though writers with appointments have priority.

Writing Assistance for Students Whose First Language Is Not English

If you are a second language writer and believe you might benefit from working individually with a writing consultant on a regular basis this term, email Renata Fitzpatrick, Second-Language Writing Coordinator, call her at x5998, or stop by her office in 420D 4th Libe. She can arrange once- or twice-a-week meetings between you and a specific writing consultant throughout the term.

Course schedule (tentative)

Week one: Introduction to the course and the study of media

- Sept. 15 Greetings and Introductions
- Sept. 17 Thompson, Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 1-43
- Sept. 19 Thompson, Chapters 2 & 3, pp. 44-118

Week two: Historical background: The public sphere

- Sept. 22 Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, Parts 1 & 2, pp. 1-56
- Sept. 24 Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, Part 3, pp. 57-88
- Sept. 26 Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, Part 5, pp. 141-180

Week three: The contemporary public sphere

- Sept. 29 Habermas, Part 6, pp. 181-235
Daniel Dayan, (2001) "The Peculiar Public of Television," *Media, Culture and Society*, 24 (6): pp. 743-765
- Oct. 1 Thompson, Chapter 5, "The Globalization of Communication," pp. 149-178
Nancy Fraser (1990) "Rethinking the public sphere," *Social Text*, pp. 56-80
- Oct. 3 Nancy Fraser (2007) "Trannsnationalizing the public sphere," *Theory, Culture & Society* 24(4), pp. 7-30

Week four: Meaning & representation

- Oct. 6 Shani Orgad (2014) "Media Representation and the Global Imagination: A Framework," in *Media Representation and the Global Imagination*, Polity, pp. 15-51
- Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright (2009) "Practices of Looking: Images, Power, and Politics," in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Oxford, pp. 10-44
- Oct. 8 Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, (2009) "Spectatorship, Power, and Knowledge," in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Oxford, pp. 10-44
- David Morley and Kevin Robins (1994) "Under Western Eyes: Media, Empire, and Otherness," in Laurie Ouellette (ed.) *The Media Studies Reader*. Routledge, pp. 363-378
- Oct. 10 TBA

Week five: The self in the mediated world

- Oct. 13 Thompson, Chapter 7, "Self and Experience in a Mediated World" (pp. 207-234)
- Anthony Elliott (2011) "I want to look like that:" Cosmetic Surgery and Celebrity Culture" *Cultural Sociology*, 5(4): 463-477
- Oct. 15 José van Dijck (2013) "'You have one identity': performing the self on Facebook and LinkedIn," *Media, Culture and Society* 35 (2): 199-215
- Oct. 17 Martin Hand (2014) "Persistent traces, potential memories: Smartphones and the negotiation of visual, locative, and textual data in personal life," *Convergence* (forthcoming)
- Ori Schwarz (2012) "The past next door: Neighborly relations with digital memory-artefacts," *Memory Studies* 7(1), pp. 7-21

Week six: Power, visibility, surveillance

- Oct. 20 **Midterm break: no class**
- Oct. 22 Thompson, Chapter 4, "The Transformation of Visibility," 119-148
- Mark Andrejevic (2007) "Surveillance in the digital enclosure," *The Communication Review* 10, 295-317
- Oct. 24 Taina Bucher (2012) "Want to be on top? Algorithmic power and the threat of invisibility on Facebook," *New Media and Society* 14 (7): pp. 1164-1180
- Markus Schroer (2014) "Visual culture and the fight for visibility," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 44 (2): pp. 206-228

Week seven: Remote others and the spectatorship of suffering

- Oct. 27 TBA

Oct. 29 TBA

Oct. 31 TBA

Week eight: Analyzing media content: gender

Nov. 3 Gill, *Gender and the Media*, Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 1-72

Nov. 5 Gill, *Gender and the Media*, Chapters 3 and 4, pp. 73-150

Nov. 7 Gill, *Gender and the Media*, Chapters 6-8, pp. 180-271

Week nine: Thinking critically about new media

Nov. 10 Dean, *Blog Theory*, Chapters 1-2, pp. 1-60

Nov. 12 Dean, *Blog Theory*, Chapters 3-4, pp. 61-126

Nov. 14 Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, Chapters 1-2, pp. 25-77

Week ten: Thinking critically about new media

Nov. 17 Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, Chapters 3-4, pp. 78-120

Nov. 19 Catch up and wrap up