SOAN 204: Media and society
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Carleton College
Fall 2015

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Office hours: MW 3-4pm; Tu F 11am-12pm, or by appointment

Class meets MWF, 5a (1:50 to 3pm MW; 2:20 to 3:20pm F) in Leighton 350

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 and political 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).


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 15%
- Critical reading questions 15%
- Discussion leadership assignment 10%
- Reflective papers (4) 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 reading questions* You will be responsible for posting a critical reading response and question to the appropriate discussion board on Moodle before each class. This requirement is designed to help you practice focusing and articulating your engagement with the text, as well as to develop critical questioning skills.

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

*Reflective papers* In a series of informal short essays, you will both engage with the course readings, and reflect on your own experience with media.

*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.

Class presentations and public speaking

Speech coaching is a student-staffed resource designed to assist you with class presentations, comps talks, and other speech-related events. Your coach can assist you with speech & communication skills including clarity, organization, articulation, projection, body language, eye contact, and effective use of aids (e.g., notes, PowerPoint, Keynote, etc.). Depending on your goals, your coach can also work with you on the content of the presentation: organization, voice, clarity, and, ultimately, persuasive impact. Individuals and groups are welcome to request a speech coach by completing a brief, online form. The speech coach will meet you at a mutually convenient time and place. For more information, visit go.carleton.edu/speakeasy.

Time Management, Study Skills, and Test-Prep Strategies

All Residential Life Area Directors are trained to work with you to improve your time management and academic skills. Their 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. Meetings are by appointment; you simply need to email one of them to arrange a visit. For details and resources: https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/asc/academicskillsconsulting/

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 and more information can be found at: https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/asc/writingcenter/ You can reserve specific times for conferences in 420 4th Libe by using their online appointment system. Walk-ins are welcome, 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, Multilingual 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: Communication, media**

Sept. 14  Greetings and introductions


          John Thompson, Introduction and Chapter 1, *The Media and Modernity*, pp. 1-45

**Week two: Public and private**

Sept. 21  Jürgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article,” in *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*, Blackwell, 2006, pp. 73-78

          John Thompson, Chapter 2, The Media and the Development of Modern Societies”, *The Media and Modernity*, pp. 44-80

Sept. 23  Nancy Fraser “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” *Social Text*, 1990, pp. 56-80

          Seyla Benhabib, ”Models of Public Space,” in *Situating the Self*, Routledge, 1992, pp. 89-120

Sept. 25  Zizi Papacharissi, “The Virtual Sphere 2.0: The Internet, the Public Sphere, and Beyond,” in *Handbook of Internet Politics*, Routledge, 2008, pp. 230-245


**Week three: Technology**

Sept. 28  Thompson, Chapter 3: The Rise of Mediated Interaction”, pp. 81-118


Anna McCarthy, “From Screen to Site,” in *The Media Studies Reader*, Routledge, 2013, pp. 144-155


*Week four: Interaction, self, other*

Thompson, Chapter 7 “Self and Experience in a Mediated World” pp. 207-254


Oct. 16 Sauter, Theresa. "'What's on your mind?' Writing on Facebook as a tool for self-formation." *new media & society* (2013)

*Week five: Identity, difference, representation*


Oct. 7 Rosalind Gill, *Gender and Media*, Chapter 1, pp. 7-42


*Week six: Network, globalization*

Oct. 19 Midterm break: No class

Additional reading TBA

*Week seven: Software, platforms*

Oct. 26  Van Dijk, *The Culture of Connectivity*, Chapters 1 & 2, pp. 3-44
Oct. 28  Van Dijk, *The Culture of Connectivity*, Chapters 3 & 4, pp. 45-88
Oct. 30  Van Dijk, *The Culture of Connectivity*, Chapters 6 & 7, 156-188

*Week eight: Morality*

Nov. 2    Silverstone, *Media and morality*, Chapters 1 & 2, pp. 1-55
Nov. 4    Silverstone, *Media and morality*, Chapters 3 & 4, pp. 56-105
Nov. 6    Silverstone, *Media and morality*, Chapters 5 & 7, pp. 106-135; 162-188

*Week nine: New media and social movements*

Nov. 9    Papacharissi, *Affective Publics*, Chapters 1 & 2, pp. 6-63
Nov. 11   Papacharissi, *Affective Publics*, Chapters 3-5, pp. 64-136
Nov. 13   Readings TBA

*Week ten: Social movement case study: Black lives matter*

Nov. 16   Readings TBA
Nov. 18   Readings TBA