

Soc 146a
Brandeis University
Fall 2007
M W Th 11:10-12:00
Pearlman 113

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office hours: M 1:30-2:30
W 12:00-1:00
and by appointment

Mass Communication Theory

Among the many changes that characterized the development of modern society were the spread of communication technologies, the growth of a commercialized leisure sector, and the emergence of a mass audience for the resulting products. For the past century, social scientists have endeavored to understand the significance of these developments. This course provides an introduction to many of the major theories and perspectives that have been used to explain mass communication and the mass media. We will read some of the classic thinkers in the field, and examine the ways in which subsequent theories have built on or diverged from their predecessors. Additionally, we will consider the relevance of these various theories for understanding contemporary communications media. Topics discussed will include mass media effects, the institutions involved in mass communication, the autonomy of the audience, and the relationship between the mass media and economic and political power.

The TA for this course is Guy Abutbul (guya@brandeis.edu). His office hours will be announced in class.

Requirements

Students are expected to keep up with the readings, attend class, and actively participate in discussions. In addition, you will complete two short papers covering readings and other course material, and a take-home final.

Evaluation

First short paper (4-5 pages)	30%
Second short paper (5-6 pages)	33%
Take-home final	37%

Students are expected to uphold standards of academic integrity. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person without proper acknowledgement of that source. This means that you must use references and, where appropriate, quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, or ideas not your own -- whether they are found in written materials or on the Internet, and whether they are created by a published author, another student, or your parent. Violations of University policies on academic integrity may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, and could end in suspension from the University. Students with questions about standards of academic integrity are advised to consult Section 4 of Rights and Responsibilities from the Brandeis Student Handbook and/or speak to the course instructor.

If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, you should contact me, and present your letter of accommodation, as soon as possible. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations, you should contact Beth Rodgers-Kay in Undergraduate Academic Affairs at 736-3470. Letters of

accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

The following books are available for purchase in the bookstore:

Todd Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

John Fiske, *Television Culture: Popular Pleasure and Politics*. New York: Routledge, 1989.

These books are also on reserve at the main library.

The readings for Weeks 2-5 are on the Latte site for this class. Look at the section titled "Readings."

All other readings are contained in a custom course packet. Information on how to purchase this will be announced in class.

Course Schedule

week 1
Aug 30

Introduction

weeks 2-3
Sep 5-10

A New Force in Society

Peter Odegard, *The American Public Mind*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1930, chap. 8.

Harold D. Lasswell, "Propaganda and the Channels of Communication." In Elmer Ellis, ed., *Education Against Propaganda: Developing Skills in the Use of the Sources of Information about Public Affairs*. National Council for the Social Studies, Seventh Yearbook 1937, pp. 14-26.

Malcolm M. Willey, "Communication Agencies and the Volume of Propaganda." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 179, May 1935, pp. 194-200.

weeks 3-4
Sep 12-19

Reaction: The Theory of Limited Effects

Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications*. New York: Free Press, 1955, Part 1, chaps. 1-2, 4; Part 2, chap. 14-15.

weeks 4-5
Sep 20-26

Mass Culture and the Frankfurt School

Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. New York: Vintage Books, 1973 [originally published 1965], chap. 2.

José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1932, chaps. 1, 4, 8.

weeks 6-7
Oct 1-8

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Continuum, 1989.

week 7
Oct 9-11

Organizational Studies and the Production of Culture

Lewis A. Coser, "Publishers as Gatekeepers of Ideas." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 421, September 1975, pp. 14-22.

Paul DiMaggio, "Market Structure, the Creative Process, and Popular Culture: Toward an Organizational Reinterpretation of Mass-Culture Theory." *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Fall 1977, pp. 436-452.

Mark Fishman, *Manufacturing the News*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980, pp. 3-16.

first paper due Wednesday, October 10th

week 8
Oct 15-18

Todd Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000 [originally published 1983], Introduction, chaps. 1-4, 6-7.

week 9
Oct 22-25

Hegemony

Todd Gitlin, "Television's Screens: Hegemony in Transition." In Donald Lazere, ed., *American Media and Mass Culture: Left Perspectives*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, pp. 240-265.

Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. Houndmills, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1978, pp. 53-62 & 201-227.

week 10
Oct 29-Nov 1

From Cultural Imperialism to Globalization

Herbert I. Schiller, *Mass Communications and American Empire*. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970, chap. 8.

Gage Averill, "Global Imaginings." In Richard Ohmann, ed., *Making & Selling Culture*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press/University Press of New England, 1996, pp. 203-223.

Ian Condry, "Japanese Hip-Hop and the Globalization of Popular Culture." In George Gmelch and Walter P. Zenner, eds., *Urban Life: Readings in the Anthropology of the City*, fourth edition. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2002, pp. 372-387.

week 11
Nov 5-8

The Active Audience: Reception and Uses

Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz, *The Export of Meaning: Cross-cultural Readings of Dallas*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993, Introduction, chaps. 5-8 & 11.

week 12
Nov 12-15

Interpretation as Resistance

John Fiske, *Television Culture: Popular Pleasure and Politics*. New York: Routledge, 1989, chaps. 1, 5, 9, 12, 13, 14.

second paper due Thursday, November 15th

week 13
Nov 19-21

The Medium Matters

Harold A. Innis, "Minerva's Owl." In *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951.

Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. London: Routledge, 1988 [originally published 1982], chap. 4.

Joshua Meyrowitz, "Shifting Worlds of Strangers: Medium Theory and Changes in 'Them' Versus 'Us'." *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol. 67, No. 1, February 1997, pp. 59-71.

week 14
Nov 26-29

The Media and the Public Sphere

James Curran, "Rethinking the Media as a Public Sphere." In Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks, eds., *Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere in the New Media Age*. London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 27-57.

Nicholas Garnham, "The Media and the Public Sphere." In Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992, pp. 359-376.

Peter Dahlgren, *Television and the Public Sphere: Citizenship, Democracy and the Media*. London: Sage, 1995, chap. 1.

week 15
Dec 3-7

Mass Media as Ritual Activity

Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, "Articulating Consensus: The Ritual and Rhetoric of Media Events." In Jeffrey C. Alexander, ed., *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 161-186.

Karin Becker, "The Diana Debate: Ritual." *Screen*, Vol. 39, No. 3, Autumn 1998, pp. 289-293.

Joke Hermes, "The Diana Debate: Hollywood." *Screen*, Vol. 39, No. 3, Autumn 1998, pp. 293-295.

Take-home final due Thursday, December 13th