

Soc 146a  
Brandeis University  
Fall 2009  
M W Th 10:10-11:00  
Pearlman 113

Laura Miller  
Office: Pearlman 103  
(781) 736-2643  
lamiller@brandeis.edu  
office hours: M 2:30-3:30  
Th 11:00-12:00  
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 Nicki Fox (nsfox@brandeis.edu). Her 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 three short papers and a take-home final covering readings and other course material. Each of these assignments will ask you to show that you understand the theories being discussed and are able to apply them to contemporary phenomena. Assignment instructions will be distributed approximately two weeks before the due date.

I expect courtesy in the classroom. That means arriving to class on time, turning cell phones off *before* class begins, no texting, and no side conversations. Please recognize how distracting these latter behaviors are for your classmates and your instructor. If you bring food or drink to class, remember to clean up after yourself.

### **Evaluation**

First short paper	23%
Second short paper	23%
Third short paper	23%
Take-home final	23%
Participation	8%

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:

Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications*, second ed. Edison, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005 [1955].

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 & 4 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 27

#### **Introduction**

week 2  
Aug 31-Sep 3

#### **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 9-14

### **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*, second ed. Edison, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005 [originally published 1955], Part 1, chaps. 1-2, 4; Part 2, chap. 14-15.

You are strongly encouraged to attend some or all of the conference, "TMI: Social Justice in the Age of Facebook," to be held September 10-11 in Rapaporte Treasure Hall, Goldfarb Library. For more information, go to: <http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/events/index.html>

weeks 4-5  
Sep 16-21

### **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 5-6  
Sep 23-29

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

weeks 6-7  
Sep 30-Oct 8

### **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.

Elana Levine, "Toward a Paradigm for Media Production Research: Behind the Scenes at *General Hospital*." *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, Vol. 18, No. 1, March 2001, pp. 66-82.

first paper due Thursday, October 1st

week 8  
Oct 12-15

### **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 9  
Oct 19-22

### **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 10  
Oct 26-29

### **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 11  
Nov 2-5

### **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 Wednesday, November 4th

week 12  
Nov 9-12

### **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 13  
Nov 15-19

### **The Network Society**

Manuel Castells, "Communication, Power and Counter-Power in the Network Society." *International Journal of Communication*, Vol. 1, No., 2007, pp. 238-266.

Amelia Arsenault and Manuel Castells, "Switching Power: Rupert Murdoch and the Global

Business of Media Politics." *International Sociology*, Vol. 23, No. 4, July 2008, pp. 488-513.

week 14  
Nov 23-25

### **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.

third paper due Monday, November 23rd

week 15  
Nov 30-Dec 2

### **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 Friday, December 11th