ENGL 392c: History and Theory of Media

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Welcome to English 392c, History and Theory of Media!

Please feel free to see me with any concerns or questions you have about the class, the readings, or the assignments. I will be in my office during the hours noted, and I’m always very happy to have students drop by during these times, or by appointment at other times. Beyond office hours, you may use email to set up an appointment with me. I will read your emails within one day, and will try to respond within two business days.

Course description:

According to the undergraduate calendar this course “explores the practical and theoretical issues raised by our everyday technologies of representation including written, spoken, and gestural language, print and visual media, photography and film, audio recordings, computer-mediated communications, and interactive digital media.” We will take a historical as well as theoretical overview of the mass media of the twentieth (and twenty-first!) century, from the newspaper to new media and from the Frankfurt School to globalization.

Course meeting times

The course meets twice weekly, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30-4:00, in DWE (Engineering) 3522.

Required and Recommended texts

The following texts are required for this course. They are available at the University Bookstore in South Campus Hall now. Please buy them, and bring them to class as the assigned readings dictate.


We will also occasionally be reading pieces accessible online: be sure to print copies to bring to class, or take notes from which you can make clear reference to the text. Links to these texts are provided from the website listed in the contact information above.

Additionally, everybody needs a good dictionary at their elbow at all times. I always keep an online one and a print one handy. The Oxford English Dictionary online (accessible via the university library web site) is very thorough, and the Concise Oxford Dictionary or the Canadian Oxford English Dictionary are very good print texts, well-worth the purchase.

**Style matters:** habituate yourself to the rigors of academic writing—good writing and clear thinking proceed hand in hand. The MLA Handbook (6th ed.) should be your guide to research and writing. Several prominent style bibles (including Strunk and White’s *Elements of Style*) are available online for free at www.bartleby.com. If you see yourself spending a lot of time writing about new media, you might do well to invest in Constance Hale and Jessie Scanlon’s *Wired Style: Principles of English Usage in the Digital Age*.

### Assignments and Mark Distribution

The following are the graded components of the course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid Term Exam One</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>October 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Term Exam Two</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>November 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>(TBA – during exam period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Responses (2)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>mid-October, mid-November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (5)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>(check class website)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The assignments and due dates have been carefully chosen to balance our work across the semester, and to test your accomplishment in the primary goals of the course: a historical and theoretical grasp of media technologies and practices in the twentieth century.

The three exams of the course will test your recall of important dates and facts, your comprehension of key theories, and your capacity to synthesize your learning in the service of reasoned interpretation. You will receive handouts detailing what is expected of you in the critical response assignments. Quizzes, to be taken periodically online, both ensure that you’ve undertaken the required reading, and prepare you for the exams.

Your attendance grade will be calculated as follows: you get one freebie unexcused absence (hey, I used to be a student too); each subsequent unexcused absence results in a loss of one point, to a maximum of five. It’s really easy to score a perfect five, and this can boost your grade.
Absence and Late Policy

You are busy; you are tired. You might be taking 6 courses, or possibly working part time. Maybe you have a new puppy, or a new love interest, taking up a lot of your energy. I understand that this is a pretty intense time of your life. But, as a good friend of mine says: This is not a crisis – this is your life. Life’s conflicting demands will not likely get any easier to balance any time soon. One of your fundamental tasks in university, then, is to hone your time-management skills. The syllabus outlines all the major assignments, tasks, readings, and due dates from here until the end of term. It’s up to you to manage your time to get it all done. Absence and missed assignments, or attendance and timely completion—these are choices that you make, and I expect you will take responsibility for them.

Absence from class requires advance permission: I’m always happier to hear about an absence or a conflict earlier rather than later. Absences should have compelling reasons: “I’m really busy with assignments in all my other courses” is not a legitimate excuse, for example. Medical absences must be documented by a doctor’s note.

Assignments are due at the time and date noted; unless prior arrangements are made late assignments will lose one letter grade (10%) per day late, counting weekends. Assignments more than two days late will not be accepted.

Rights and Responsibilities

Every member of this class—instructor as well as students—has rights and responsibilities to ensure a pleasant and productive experience for all. We are all answerable to University policies governing ethical behaviour (Policy 33) and academic integrity (Policy 71), as well as to those outlining grievance or dispute procedures (Policy 70). Here are some more specific expectations for this course:

You will:

• know the university policies that govern your behaviour
• attend all scheduled classes
• arrive prepared: with assigned reading and writing completed, and with the textbook in hand
• participate actively in your own learning, while respecting the rights of others to learn as well: this means active listening as well as active speaking
• give thoughtful consideration to instructor feedback on written and oral work

I will:

• adhere to the university policies that govern my behaviour
• attend all scheduled classes
History and Theory of Media

- make myself available for consultation in person and for appointment-making over email
- return assignments of 1 page or less within one week, and all others within 2 weeks
- provide helpful and respectful feedback on student work

The Faculty of Arts, which administers this course and is responsible to ensure adherence to codes of academic conduct, requires that the following paragraphs appear in this syllabus:

"Note on avoidance of academic offences: All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offence, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offence is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (section 1; on the Web at http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infoucal/UW/policy_71.html).

"If you need help in learning how to avoid offences such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your TA or course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean.

"Students who believe that they have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized have the right to grieve; refer to Policy #70, Student Grievance, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infoucal/Policies/policy70.html."

Students seeking guidance on academic honesty are urged to discuss the issue with their instructor, or to consult the following page of the Arts Faculty Web site, "How to Avoid Plagiarism and Other Written Offences: A Guide for Students and Instructors" (http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/~sager/plagiarism.html)

A final word

Once more, welcome to the course! I hope you find as valuable as it will be challenging. I am looking forward to a productive and exciting semester, and to getting to know all of you.
English 392C: History and Theory of Media

Foundations: Early Twentieth Century

September 13: Introduction, Syllabus

September 15: Mass Society and Modernity (UM)
    Raymond Williams, "Media"

September 20: The Press as Mass Medium (MAS)
    Paul N. Edwards, "How to Read a Book"

September 22: The Development of the Film Industry (MAS)

September 27: The Growth of Radio Broadcasting (MAS)

September 29: REVIEW DAY

October 4: MID-TERM ONE

Media Grows Up: Theory and Practice

October 6: The Rise of Advertising (MAS)

October 11: The Censorship of Money (UM)

October 13: Propaganda in Peace and War (MAS)
    Cold War and Communication (MAS)

October 18: Inside the Image Factory (UM)

October 20: Telling it as it is? (UM)

October 25: Ways of Making You Think (UM)

October 27: REVIEW DAY

November 1: MID-TERM TWO

Post-War Media and Postmodernity

November 3: Schools of Thought (UM)
November 8: Televisions and Consumer Society (MAS)


November 15: The Audience Strikes Back (UM)

November 17: Media, Information, and Entertainment (MAS)

New Media

November 22: New Media Theory (UM)

November 24: Media, War, and International Relations (MAS)

November 29: New Media (MAS)
   Globalization and New Media (MAS)