

**University of Calgary**  
**Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**Communication and Media Studies COMS 371 L01**  
**Critical Media Studies**

**Fall 2018**

**Class Dates:** Thursday, Sept. 6 – Friday, Dec. 7 (excluding Nov. 11 - 17)

**Lecture:** Wednesdays, 12pm-1:50pm

**Labs (based on enrollment):**

Lab 1: Fridays, 12:00pm - 12:50pm with TBA

Lab 2: Fridays 1:00pm - 1:50pm with TBA

Lab 3: Fridays, 12:00pm – 12:50pm with TBA

Lab 4: Fridays, 1:00pm – 1:50pm with TBA

**Instructor:** Dr. Jessalynn Keller  
**Office:** SS 304  
**Office Phone:** 403-220-8728  
**E-Mail:** jessalynn.keller@ucalgary.ca  
**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 1PM-3PM

**Teaching Assistants**

TBA

**Course Description**

This course emphasizes major critical approaches in communication and media studies with the intent of introducing students to the theoretical foundations of media and mass communication related research. The course explores the contexts in which these theories arose, identifies their major strengths and weaknesses, and provides an appreciation of how critical theory engages the social world through research on communication and media. Areas to be covered include: the culture industry, political economy of the media, cultural studies, feminist media studies, and critical race theory.

**Additional Information**

Prerequisite: COMS 201

**Objectives of the Course**

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Critically evaluate and discuss a range of theoretical and empirical approaches to media
- Understand the development of media studies theories in relation to their historical, social, and political context

- Articulate the relevance of power, agency, identity, and representation to media, communications and culture
- Apply key critical theories to primary research examples and case studies
- Develop both verbal and written analytic skills needed for undergraduate study

### **Textbook and Readings**

Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Routledge.

Additional reading will be supplied through D2L.

Please note that required readings should be read prior to the lecture for which they are assigned.

### **Internet and electronic communication device information**

I encourage you to bring your laptop or tablet to lectures and tutorials for note-taking purposes. Occasionally, you may be asked to use your device for an in-class exercise. However, students who are distracting their peers through the use of their computer/tablet/phone for purposes not related to class will be asked to leave.

\*\*No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the permission of the professor.\*\*

### **Email policy**

Before emailing me, please check that the answer to your question is not in the course syllabus! I aim to answer all email inquiries as soon as possible, but will not reply to emails in the evening or over the weekend. When sending me an email, please specify what course you are in (COMS 371) and include a clear statement of purpose in the subject line. Always be professional and courteous in your emails to me and your teaching assistants.

If you want to discuss an assignment or a concern about the course I prefer to meet in person during office hours, as these meetings are often more fruitful than a lengthy email exchange. I encourage you to use my office hours, and hope to meet many of you there throughout the semester.

### **Respect and Diversity in the Classroom**

This course is built around student participation. Lecture periods often contain opportunity for student contributions and I welcome your insightful comments (based on course materials) and questions. During these discussion periods I ask that students be respectful of diverse viewpoints; however, racist, sexist, homophobic, Islamophobic, and other types of discriminatory comments are not permitted in the classroom. Comments of this nature will be dealt with at the professor's discretion on an individual basis.

On pronouns: I respect all students' choice of pronouns. Please alert me to your preferred pronoun and I am happy to oblige.

## Assignments and Evaluation

| Weight | Course components                  | Due            |
|--------|------------------------------------|----------------|
| 15%    | Small group lab leadership project | As assigned    |
| 10%    | “Check in” multiple choice quiz    | Oct. 17        |
| 30%    | Midterm exam                       | Nov. 7         |
| 35%    | Culture jam essay (8-10 pages)     | Dec. 5         |
| 10%    | Lab participation                  | Weekly in labs |

### **Small group lab leadership (15%)**

**Due: As assigned in lab on week 1, starting Friday, Sept. 28**

In a group of five students, you will be responsible for “leading” your peers in one lab session that explores the week’s theory (30 minutes). The lab session must include the following: (1) A 10-minute introductory presentation outlining the key components of the week’s theory and an example of how the theory can be used to better understand media culture; (2) A 15-20 minute activity that will engage your peers in applying the theory; (3) In addition, each member of the group will hand in to the TA a one-page report outlining the rationale for their presentation/activity and detailing what each group member contributed to the project.

This is an opportunity for you to sharpen your presentation, organizational, and interpersonal skills, so you are encouraged to be creative and engage your peers in new and dynamic ways of learning! We welcome innovative presentation methods, the use of media, and creative activities in your lab session.

Please note: All groups must meet with the TA at least one week prior to their scheduled presentation in order to share their ideas and receive feedback. All members of the group must attend this meeting – those who do attend not will lose grade points on this assignment.

Further information about this assignment will be distributed in class on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

### **“Check in” multiple choice quiz (10%)**

**Due: Wednesday, October 17, 2018**

You will have 15 minutes to complete a multiple choice quiz of 10-15 questions. The quiz will cover lecture, lab, and reading materials from weeks 1 – 4. The purpose of the quiz is to “check in” to ensure you’re keeping up with course materials.

### **Midterm Exam (30%)**

**Due: Wednesday, November 7, 2018**

You will have 90 minutes to write a midterm exam that covers course material from weeks 2-8. The exam will primarily consist of short answer questions and will serve to test your knowledge of key course theories and readings. More information about the exam will be provided in class in October.

### **Culture Jam (35%)**

**Due: Wednesday, December 5, 2018**

Guided by course theories you studied during the semester, you are required to produce your own culture jam and written analysis (8-10 pages). This assignment has three components: First, you will describe and analyze the original advertisement/media text. (Remember to include a photo of the original media text.) Second, you will produce your own original culture jam, modifying the original media text chosen. Feel free to be creative here – cut paste, add glitter, use markers, etc.! You can also do this digitally if you have the skills, but please print out your final product so that you can include it with your assignment. Third, you will analyze your culture jam using relevant course theories. Your essay should be well-grounded in course theories, readings, and original research. You must use at least three course theories in your essay and cite a minimum of five academic sources (at least three of which must be course readings).

Further information about this assignment will be distributed in class on October 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Lab participation (10%)**

**Due: Ongoing**

Your weekly labs are an important component of this course and regular attendance is required. Because labs are structured around student discussion and activities, you are expected to actively participate in these sessions. Students will be evaluated on quality contributions, which should be informed, thoughtful, and demonstrate a familiarity with the assigned readings.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No**

**Note:** All assignments and exams weighted 25% or more must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

**Submission of Assignments:** Assignments must be submitted in hard copy directly to the professor in lecture. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox. **Please note that assignments will not be accepted via email.**

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

**Note:** It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

### **Policy for Late Assignments and Missed Quizzes/Exams**

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. This includes weekends (e.g. if an assignment is due Thursday and you submit it on Monday you will be penalized four grades). Late work will not be

accepted one week past the original deadline without appropriate documentation (i.e. doctor's note). Late work will not receive written feedback.

There is no opportunity to "make up" the quiz. If you miss the quiz, the 10% will be added to your midterm exam grade. Consequently, your midterm exam will be then worth 40% of your final grade.

You will only be allowed to make up the midterm exam with appropriate documentation provided to the professor.

### **Student Accommodations:**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

### **Writing Skills Statement**

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

## Grading & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film

Final grades are reported as letter grades. However, assignments in this course will be graded using raw scores (for example, an assignment worth 30% will be graded out of 30).

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, final raw scores (out of 100) will be converted to percentages and then letter grades using this chart.

| Grade Point Value | Description  | Grade      | Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents | Letter grade % equivalent for calculations |
|-------------------|--|------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>4.00</b>       | Outstanding  | <b>A+</b>  | 96 - 100%                           | 98.0%                                      |
| <b>4.00</b>       | Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.                           | <b>A</b>   | 90 - 95.99%                         | 93.0%                                      |
| <b>3.70</b>       |  | <b>A -</b> | 85 - 89.99%                         | 87.5%                                      |
| <b>3.30</b>       |  | <b>B+</b>  | 80 - 84.99%                         | 82.5%                                      |
| <b>3.00</b>       | Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.                     | <b>B</b>   | 75 - 79.99%                         | 77.5%                                      |
| <b>2.70</b>       |  | <b>B-</b>  | 70 - 74.99%                         | 72.5%                                      |
| <b>2.30</b>       |  | <b>C+</b>  | 65 - 69.99%                         | 67.5%                                      |
| <b>2.00</b>       | Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.  | <b>C</b>   | 60 - 64.99%                         | 62.5%                                      |
| <b>1.70</b>       |  | <b>C-</b>  | 55 - 59.99%                         | 57.5%                                      |
| <b>1.30</b>       | Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject | <b>D+</b>  | 53 - 54.99%                         | 54.0%                                      |
| <b>1.00</b>       |  | <b>D</b>   | 50 - 52.99%                         | 51.5%                                      |
| <b>0.00</b>       | Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.  | <b>F</b>   | 0- 49.99%                           | 0%   |

### Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

### Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

### Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

### Important information, services, and contacts for students

| For information about . . .  | Visit or contact . . .   |
|--|--|
| <b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)</b>   | SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca">artsads@ucalgary.ca</a>   |
| <b>CAMPUS SECURITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calgary Police Service</li> <li>• Emergency Text Messaging</li> <li>• Emergency Evacuation &amp; Assembly</li> <li>• Safewalk Program</li> </ul> | <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a> <b>403-220-5333</b><br><b>403-266-1234</b> <b>Emergency: call 911</b><br><a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage</a><br><a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints</a><br>If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a> |
| <b>DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT help line</li> </ul>   | <a href="http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students">http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students</a><br>403-220-5555 or <a href="mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca">itsupport@ucalgary.ca</a>  |
| <b>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Support Services</li> <li>• Student Services Mobile App</li> </ul>  | <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/ssc">http://ucalgary.ca/ssc</a><br><a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support">http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support</a><br><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents">http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</a>  |
| <b>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty of Arts Reps</li> <li>• Student Ombudsman</li> </ul>  | <a href="https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/">https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/</a><br><a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a>   |
| <b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling Services</li> <li>• Health Services</li> </ul>  | <b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm<br><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</a><br><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</a>   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE</b></li> </ul> | 403-266-HELP (4357)  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Online resources and tips</b></li> </ul>        | <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</a><br>If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line. |

## Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

Week 1      Wednesday, Sept. 12: Welcome: What is Critical Media Studies?

**Required reading:**

Stokes – No, you're not entitled to your opinion (on D2L)

**Lab: Introductions and assignments to lab leadership groups**

Week 2      Wednesday, Sept. 19: Marx and Media Studies: Ideology, Hegemony and Political Economy

**Required reading:**

Storey – Ideology (pgs. 2-5) and Marxisms (pgs. 61-64, 83-86)

Engstrom – Unraveling The Knot (on D2L)

**Lab: Discussion of the political economy of bridal media (TAs to model expectations for lab leadership)**

Week 3      Wednesday, Sept. 26: The Culture Industry: The Frankfurt School and their Critics

**Required reading:**

Storey – The Frankfurt School (pgs. 66-74)

Mills & Barlow – The Frankfurt School (pgs. 84-102, on D2L)

Ross – The Frankfurt School knew Trump was coming (on D2L)

**Lab: Small group lab leadership, Group #1**

Week 4      Wednesday, Oct. 3: Cultural Studies: The Birmingham School

**Required reading:**

Mills & Barlow – The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (pgs. 225-259)

DeLaure & Fink – All (Dis)Quiet on the Cultural Front: Culture Jamming in the Age of Trump (on D2L)

**Lab: Small group lab leadership, Group #2**

Week 5      Wednesday, Oct. 10: CLASS CANCELLED

Jessalynn in Montreal at AOIR. Students should use time to prepare for next week's quiz.

**Lab: Review period for quiz**

Week 6      Wednesday, Oct. 17: Semiotics, Barthes and Structuralism

\*\* QUIZ from 12PM – 12:15PM \*\*

**Required reading:**

Storey – Structuralism (pgs. 116-131)

Hall, Evans and Nixon: Excerpt from The Work of Representation (pgs. 20- 26, on D2L)

Romm – Why *Time's* Trump cover is a subversive work of political art (on D2L)

**Lab: Small group lab leadership, Group #3**

Week 7      Wednesday, Oct. 24: Power, Governmentality and Poststructuralism

**Required reading:**

Storey – Post-structuralism (pgs. 131-138)

Hall, Evans & Nixon – Excerpt from The Work of Representation (pgs. 26-36, on D2L)

Ouellette & Hay – Makeover Television, Governmentality and the Good Citizen (on D2L)

**Lab: Small group lab leadership, Group #4**

Week 8      Wednesday, Oct. 31: Feminist Media Studies

**Required reading:**

Storey – Gender and Sexuality (pgs. 140-167)

Joseph – Tyra Banks is Fat (on D2L)

**Lab: Small group lab leadership, Group #5**

Week 9      Wednesday, Nov. 7: Midterm Exam (90 minutes)

No required reading.

**Lab: Culture jam workshop**

Week 10    Wednesday, Nov. 14: MIDTERM BREAK (CLASS CANCELLED)

**Lab: CANCELLED**

Week 11    Wednesday, Nov. 21: Critical Race Theory

**Required reading:**

Storey – Race, racism and representation (pgs. 175-190)  
hooks – Eating the Other (on D2L)

**Lab: Small group lab leadership, Group #6**

Week 12    Wednesday, Nov. 28: Critical Approaches to Digital Life

**Required reading:**

Weigel – The Internet of Women (on D2L)  
Jeong – I tried leaving Facebook. I couldn't. (on D2L)

**\*\* Course evaluations will be completed at the end of lecture \*\***

**Lab:** Peer review of culture jam drafts (students must bring 5 pages of writing to session) and lab evaluations

Week 13    Wednesday, Dec. 5: Wrap-Up/Last class

**No required reading or lab.**

**\* Culture Jam essay due in class \***