

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 371 (L01): Critical Media Studies

FALL 2021

September 7 to Dec. 9 (excluding Oct. 11 Nov. 7 – 13)

Lecture: Posted on Mondays on D2L (asynchronous)

Labs: B01 Fridays 11AM – 11:50AM (synchronous, on Zoom)

B02 Fridays 12PM – 12:50PM (synchronous, on Zoom)

B03 Fridays 1PM – 1:50PM (in-person)

B04 Fridays 2PM – 2:50PM (in-person)

IMPORTANT NOTE ON COURSE DELIVERY FOR FALL 2021:

Asynchronous & Synchronous Course Components: Please read this outline carefully to see which course components will be offered synchronously (where you are expected to participate in person or online at the usual scheduled course time) and which components will be offered asynchronously (to be completed on your own time). Synchronous sessions hosted on Zoom can be accessed on D2L by clicking on the Communications tab and selecting Zoom.

Note: If you will not be able to participate in synchronous in-class or online class sessions owing to time differences or geographical location, then consult with the instructor to see if accommodation is possible or arrange to take this course in a future term.

Online Quizzes and Exams: You will be allowed a minimum window of 24 hours to access online quizzes and exams, but there may be a time limit for completing a quiz once you open it. Read the description carefully. The time specified for any timed online assessments includes 50% extra time

Instructor:	Dr. Jessalynn Keller (she/her)
Email:	Jessalynn.keller@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	Tuesdays, 10am-12pm (on Zoom) – you must book an appointment through keller-jessalynn.youcanbook.me

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

This course will be taught as a hybrid course, with both asynchronous and synchronous components. All lectures will be asynchronous, with weekly lectures posted to D2L on Mondays. All Friday labs will be synchronous in person or on Zoom – depending on which

section in which you are registered. You must attend the lab section in which you are registered.

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L.

Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

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

Textbooks and Readings

Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, 9th edition*. New York: Routledge. (Older editions may be used, although page numbers may differ slightly with edition.)

Additional reading will be supplied through D2L.

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

Learning Technologies and Requirements & Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

This is an online course. In order to complete online (or blended) courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external);
- A microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone. If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact the university's IT department. For more information, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Instructors may arrange to record synchronous zoom class sessions for lesson capture; however, students are not to share recordings with others. Please carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

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 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 – virtually -- throughout the semester.

Respect and Diversity in the Classroom

Lab periods will provide opportunity for student contributions and we 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 pronoun and I am happy to oblige. I am suggesting that you include your pronoun in your Zoom name, for example: Jessalynn (she/her)

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
10%	Lab participation Weekly labs are essential to your success in this course. You are expected to come to labs prepared (having watched the weekly lecture and completed the required readings) and participate in the lab activities and discussions. You will be graded upon the quality of your contributions to the lab, which includes an ability to discuss course material thoughtfully during discussions, engage with peers and TA in lab activities, and ask questions when clarification is required.	Ongoing
15%	Quiz #1 You will be responsible for completing a multiple choice quiz based on course materials from weeks 1 – 6. The quiz is designed to be completed in <u>20 minutes</u> , however, as per university policy, you will be given <u>30 minutes</u> to complete the quiz.	Friday, Oct. 22

	The quiz will be open for a 24-hour period on D2L, beginning at 7AM on Friday, October 22.	
30%	<p>Media Analysis</p> <p>For this written assignment, you will conduct a 4-5 page media analysis based on a provided prompt. Your analysis will require you to use one or more theories covered in the course to date.</p> <p>Detailed information about this assignment (including prompts) will be posted to D2L and discussed in both recorded lecture and lab.</p>	Thursday, Nov. 4 at 9PM
15%	<p>Quiz #2</p> <p>You will be responsible for completing a <u>cumulative</u> multiple choice quiz based on course materials from weeks 1 – 12. The quiz is designed to be completed in <u>20 minutes</u>, however, as per university policy, you will be given <u>30 minutes</u> to complete the quiz.</p> <p>The quiz will be open for a 24-hour period on D2L, beginning at 7AM on Friday, December 3.</p>	Friday, Dec. 3
30%	<p>Reflection Journal</p> <p>Throughout the term you will be required to keep an online reflection journal (using the free platform Padlet) where you will answer questions about each week's course material. Journal questions for each week are included in the syllabus in the weekly schedule, along with the length of answer I expect. Each week, after you've watched the lecture and completed the readings, you'll answer the question(s) posed. I expect answers to be thoughtful and demonstrate an engagement with course material. During lab periods, you'll often be asked to draw upon your journal entry as a 'jumping off' point for discussion.</p> <p>Detailed information about this assignment will be posted to D2L and discussed in both the week 1 recorded lecture and lab.</p>	Friday, Dec. 10 at 12PM

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Note: All assignments and exams weighted 30% or more must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

If you miss a required course component, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments electronically by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox (unless instructed otherwise in the assignment guidelines). Include your name and ID number on all assignments. It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission).

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the ***Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act***. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recorded for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

The pandemic has revealed the ways in which social inequalities shape care work and responsibilities, which can affect one's ability to complete assessments on time. As such, I approach late assignments with flexibility when possible, however, you must communicate with me about your situation and needs. If you require extra time for an assignment please book an office hours appointment and we can scaffold a plan for you to complete the assignment and receive full credit. This meeting should happen at least one week prior to the deadline whenever possible.

If I do not hear from you, I assume that you will complete the assignment on time. As such, 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. Late work will not receive written feedback.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation 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) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses 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 and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, letter grades will be used for written assignments, while numeric grades will be used for quizzes.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

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.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

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, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health

Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

** The page numbers listed for the Storey readings are from the 7th edition. Please note there might be slight variation depending on which edition you have. Use the subtitles provided to ensure you're reading the correct pages. **

Week 1 Sept. 7 – 10: Welcome: What is Critical Media Studies?

Required reading:

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

Beltran – Representation (Note: This chapter is a bit of a "road map" of the course. You likely won't understand everything when you read it on week 1, but you will understand most of it by week 14...)

Journal question(s): What do you want to learn in this course? Why is this course interesting to you? What topic(s) are you most excited about? (1 paragraph)

Friday, Sept. 10 (Lab -- synchronous): Introductions and course expectations

Week 2 Sept. 13 – 17: 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)

Journal question(s): What is Engstrom's main argument? Why is political economy an important approach for her research? What was your main "take-away" from this article? (1- 2 paragraphs)

Friday, Sept. 17 (Lab – synchronous): Discussion of core concepts from this week in relation to Engstrom article and bridal media

Week 3 Sept. 20 – 24: 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)

Journal question(s): Reflect on the Ross piece in relation to what you've learned about the Frankfurt School: What is the main argument that Ross makes in this article? Ross writes, "Of the clouds and shadows that hung over Clinton in the press, the darkest, perhaps, was the prospect of boredom." What does he mean by this? How does it relate to the argument made by the Frankfurt School? (2-3 paragraphs)

Friday, Sept. 24 (Lab – synchronous): Discussion of Frankfurt School core concepts and Ross article

Week 4 Sept. 27 – Oct. 1: Cultural Studies: The Birmingham School

Required reading:

Mills & Barlow – The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (pgs. 225-259)
Kelly – More Than Stans: Stop Dismissing the K-Pop's Fandom's Political Power

Journal question(s): How does the political activism of fans, as you read about in the article by Kelly, demonstrate one key component of cultural studies? Can you think of another example of fan political activism? (2 paragraphs)

Friday, Oct. 1 (Lab – synchronous): Discussion of cultural studies and “active audiences.” Please bring your example of fan political activism (from journal entry) to lab to share with peers.

Week 5 Oct. 4 – Oct. 8: Semiotics, Barthes and Structuralism

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)

Journal question(s): Pay attention to the media you consume this week and choose one media image that operates semiotically. Include this image in your journal and do a mini semiotic analysis – what is the signifier? Signified? Sign? (2 paragraphs) This entry is an opportunity for you to “practice” applying semiotics, so don't worry about being “right”!

Friday, Oct.8 (Lab – synchronous): Discussion and examples of semiotic analysis from journal.

Week 6 Oct.11 – Oct. 15: 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)

Journal question(s): Reality television, according to Ouellette and Hay, “governs less through the dissemination of ideology than through the enactment of participatory games and lifestyle tutorials that guide, test, and supposedly enhance subjects' capacity to play an active role in shaping uncertain outcomes – to govern themselves through freedom, not control...” (472). Considering what we just learned about governmentality, what does this mean? Come up with one original example from a media text (it may be reality television, but it doesn't have to be!) that illustrates the above quote. (2 paragraphs)
Finally, how might social media be an example of governmentality? (1 paragraph)

Friday, Oct. 15 (Lab – synchronous): Discussion of governmentality and social media.

Week 7 Oct. 18 – Oct. 22: QUIZ #1

No recorded lecture, required reading, or journal question. Please use the time to prepare for the quiz.

Friday, Oct. 22 – QUIZ #1

Timed quiz (30 minutes to complete) will be open for 24 hours, starting at 7AM

Friday, Oct. 22 (Lab – synchronous): Workshop on media analysis assignment. Please come prepared with an idea.

Week 8 Oct. 25 – Oct. 29 : Feminist Media Studies

Required reading:

Harvey – Representing Gender

Banet-Weiser – Popular Misogyny: A Zeitgeist

Journal question(s): Which two concepts did you find most important in this week's readings? Why? How do they help us understand the representation of gender in media culture? (2-3 paragraphs)

Friday, Oct. 29 (Lab – synchronous): Discussion of feminist media studies core concepts and popular feminism

Week 9 Nov. 1 – Nov. 5: At-home screening of *Disclosure* (Feder, 2020)

No recorded lecture or required reading.

Due Thursday, November 4 at 9PM: Media Analysis (4 -- 5 pages)
Please submit via D2L Dropbox.

Required watching before Friday's lab:

Disclosure (2020) – Dir. Sam Feder, streaming on Netflix

TW: anti-Trans violence, sexual violence

Journal question(s): Reflect on the documentary *Disclosure*: What did you learn from this documentary? What was most compelling? Which course concepts were raised in the film? (3 paragraphs)

Friday, Nov. 5 (Lab – synchronous): Discussion of *Disclosure* and the representation of trans identities in media culture

Week 10 Nov. 8 – Nov. 12: MIDTERM BREAK

No recorded lecture, required reading, journal question, or lab.

Week 11 Nov. 15 – Nov. 19: Critical Race Theory

Required reading:

Storey – Race, racism and representation (pgs. 175-190)

hooks – Eating the Other (on D2L)

Monk-Payton – Introducing the first black Bachelorette

Journal question(s): What is hooks' main argument in this chapter? What does it mean to "eat the Other?" Choose one quote from the chapter that you think is the most powerful – why did it stand out to you? (2-3 paragraphs)

Friday, Nov. 20 (Lab – synchronous): Discussion of Monk-Payton's article and "diversity" in popular media

Week 12 Nov. 22 – Nov. 26: Queer Media Studies

Required reading:

Doty – There's Something queer here (on D2L)

Day and Christian – Locating Black Queer TV: Fans, Producers, and Networked Publics on YouTube

Journal question(s): What is a "queer reading" and why might this concept be useful for thinking about popular media cultures? Can you think of a contemporary media example that where a queer reading would be useful? (1-2 paragraphs)

Friday, November 26 (Lab – synchronous): Discussion of queer media studies/ Review for Quiz #2

Week 13 Nov. 29 – Dec.3: QUIZ #2

No recorded lecture, required reading, journal question, or lab.

Friday, December 3 – QUIZ #2
Timed quiz (30 minutes to complete) will be open for 24 hours, starting at 7AM

Week 14 Dec. 6 – Dec. 9: Course Wrap-up: Critical Media Studies in Everyday Life

Required reading:

Beltran – Representation (Yes... again! Returning to read this chapter again will allow you to take stock of what you've learned... and it serves as a useful recap of the course.)

Journal question(s): In this final journal entry, I'd like you to meaningfully reflect on the course: Read through your journal entries from this semester -- what was the most compelling thing you learned? Why did you find it compelling? Did any of the content challenge what you thought you knew about media culture? Which reading stands out to you as the most important of the course? Finally, give one specific example as to how you will approach media differently – this might be in your personal life, your job, or your studies -- after taking this course. (3 paragraphs)

Due Friday, December 10 at 12PM: Reflection Journal
Please submit PDF of Padlet journal via D2L Dropbox.
Include the URL to your Padlet in the comments of your Dropbox submission.