

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

**Communications Studies COMS 471 L01**

**Audience and Reception**

**Winter 2015**

Mon., Jan. 12 – Wed., April 15 (excluding Feb. 15 - 22)

**Tuesday, 12:30-15:15**

**Instructor:** Samantha C. Thrift  
**Office:** SS 210  
**Office Phone:** 403-220-5320  
**E-Mail:** [samantha.thrift@ucalgary.ca](mailto:samantha.thrift@ucalgary.ca)  
**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** Wednesdays, 14:00-16:00

**Course Description**

Approaches the communications process from the point of view of the audience. Students will be introduced to the history of media research dealing with the public and the audience, and consider the changes in theoretical and research paradigms from administrative approaches to those centred on fan practices and subcultures. Topics may include public opinion, uses and gratifications, reception theory, constructivism, shopping, consumption and subjectivity, fan cultures, experiential marketing, and culture jamming.

**Additional Information**

Prerequisite: COMS 371

**Objectives of this Course**

- Advance students' intellectual understanding of what the audience "is" and how it has been conceived over the course of modern media history;
- Develop students' ability to critically analyze a range of theories and approaches to media influence and power;
- Encourage students to rethink the adequacy of existing theories of audiences and reception, and the relationship between existing theories of audiences and reception, and their lived experience as viewers.

**Textbooks and Readings**

Brooker, Will and Jermyn, Deborah (eds.). *The Audience Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Additional readings will be made available via the COMS 471-01 D2L course website.

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

The in-class use of computers for activities other than note taking purposes will not be tolerated. Therefore, cell phones and other electronic communication devices must be turned off upon entering the classroom and may not be used in the classroom or during class time. If you engage in non-course related online activity during class, the professor will confiscate the device for the duration of that class.

No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

### **Email**

When corresponding with the instructor via email, students should include the course number (COMS 471) and a clear statement of purpose in the subject line. If you do not include the course number in your email's subject line, your email may get lost in your instructor's overflowing inbox and go unread! Please maintain a respectful tone in your correspondence with course instructors.

Email correspondence is most useful for short specific inquiries. If you have detailed questions on the course material or assignments please visit me during office hours.

I will return emails during the week, usually on a first-come, first-served basis. Emails sent in the evening or on weekends will not be read or replied to until the next working day. NOTE: I do not accept email submissions of work.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

| <b>Assignment</b>    | <b>Weight</b> | <b>Due Date</b> |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Audience Response    | 15%           | February 3      |
| Critical Comparison  | 20%           | February 24     |
| Essay Proposal       | 15%           | March 10        |
| Essay Draft Workshop | 15%           | March 31        |
| Final Essay          | 35%           | April 14        |

#### **Audience Response: 15%**      Due: February 3

Each student will submit an informal audience response to the instructor, analyzing his or her reaction to the consumption of two specific forms of media (to be discussed further in class). The purpose is to assess one's reactions critically: if there is enjoyment or disappointment, what is the source? If there is guilty pleasure, anger, change of opinion, etc., why is this the case? Responses should make substantive reference to

**two** course concepts studied thus far, and should be 3-4 pages, double-spaced and typed.

**Critical Comparison: 20%**      Due: February 24

Each student will be expected to submit a short essay conducting a critical comparison of two approaches to audience studies. Students' responses will be evaluated for their understanding of the concepts discussed in the readings, their ability to discuss these critically and in depth, and their application of the reading concepts and themes to relevant examples. Responses should be a maximum of 4-5 pages, double-spaced and typed.

**Active Audiences: Analysis Essay**

This assignment consists of three graded components:

- Essay Proposal: 15%      Due: March 10
- Essay Draft Workshop: 15%      Due: March 31
- Final Essay: 35%      Due: April 14

New media scholar Sonia Livingstone (2013) argues that “audiencing has become a vital mode of engaging with all dimensions of daily life.” For this assignment, students will consider what constitutes an ‘audience’ in online media spaces and identify an online site of “audiencing” to study. This could include the comment section of a website, Facebook threads, Twitter feeds, and more. Students will apply course concepts from three assigned readings to critically analyze audience practices in the contemporary media environment. More details will be provided in class.

i. The essay proposal provides an opportunity for students to receive early feedback on the planned structure of their essay, their choice of sources, and writing style. Proposals should be a maximum of 4 pages, double-spaced, including bibliography, and should be formatted using MLA or APA. Proposals should include a tentative thesis statement, discussion of possible arguments, and inclusion of potential sources.

ii. In-class time will be provided for sharing and discussing a draft version of your final paper in peer groups. Students need to prepare a complete (intro, body, conclusion) draft of their final essay and bring TWO copies to class. You will submit one copy to the instructor at the end of class.

iii. The final essay will build on the proposal, draft workshop, and the subsequent feedback. The essay should be 10-12 pages long, double-spaced and typed, formatted using MLA or APA, and must include a bibliography.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No**

PLEASE NOTE: All assignments and exams weighted more than 20% must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

**Submission of Assignments:** Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. 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 include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. 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. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

### **Policy for Late Assignments**

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

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.

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than 14 days after the start of the course.

### **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. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. 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 System & Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**Grade Scale** Work in this course will be graded using letter grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film:

| <b>Grade Point Value</b> | <b>Description</b> | <b>Grade</b> | <b>Department grade scale equivalents</b> | <b>Letter grade % equivalent for calculations</b> |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------|---|---|
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------|---|---|

|             |  |            |             |       |
|-------------|--|------------|-------------|-------|
| <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>   | 00 - 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 <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/node/208> . 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 (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/research/research-ethics>

## Important information, services, and contacts for students

| For information about . . .  | Visit or contact . . .  |
|--|---|
| <b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (PIC)</b>   | SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:picarts@ucalgary.ca">picarts@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 ( <b>220-5333</b> ). 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="http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html">http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html</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> <li>• Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE</li> <li>• Online resources and tips</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><br><b>403-266-HELP (4357)</b><br><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   |

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|  | the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line. |
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**Schedule of Lectures and Readings**

The Schedule of Readings will be posted to D2L before the first class.