

# COMM 614 – Media Theories

Fall 2024

Credits: 3

Tuesday 4 PM- 6:45 PM (In-Person)

**Instructor:** Burcu Baykurt

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ILC S416

Appointment hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1 PM- 2 PM

Course Description: The purpose of this course is to provide a historical and critical framework for the field of media studies. We will start from the history of “mass society” as a concept in social thought and then examine media as institutions, technologies, systems of representation, and cultural objects. We will discuss the links between media, culture, and power from a number of perspectives, including political economy, media effects, cultural studies, racial capitalism, postcolonial studies, and technology studies.

Course Materials:

There is no required textbook for this course. All course materials and other critical course content will be on Canvas.

Attendance Policy: Students are required to attend each class and participate in class discussions. If you miss five or more classes, I’ll advise you to withdraw. If personal challenges arise for you over the course of the semester, please bring them to my attention; we can work together to discuss alternative means of participation.

Late/ Make-Up Work Policy: Unless prior permission has been granted, no late work is accepted. This policy is in place to ensure every student has their work returned to them in a timely fashion. Please prepare in advance so that you will not encounter technical difficulties that may prevent submission of a given assignment. If you have a conflict with the due date, assignments can always be submitted early. I may grant extensions on assignments if you provide three days’ notice and can send me evidence that you are working on an idea that requires more time. Do not ask for an extension if you have not started writing yet. Late assignments will be docked a half grade (+/-) per day (i.e. after 10 days, you cannot earn a grade higher than F).

Grade Weight and Course Requirements:

- Attendance & Participation- 10%
  - Your preparation and participation will play crucial roles in the success of this seminar. You are expected to come to class with the required readings in hand, having read the texts for the week and ready to discuss them. Participation will be

evaluated on the basis of your presence in, preparation for, and energetic contribution to class discussions.

- Weekly readings & written responses- 50%
  - Weekly memos should be 1-2 double-spaced pages and focus on two things: 1) discussion of an argument or aspect of the readings that you found particularly interesting, and 2) compare/contrast the week's readings. Please post them on our Google Folder on Mondays by 5 pm. (If you're on rotation to present in class, skip that week's class memo).
- Class Presentation - 10%
  - Students will lead seminar discussions each week on a rotating basis. This component of the course is meant to provide you with an opportunity to sharpen your analytical skills, formulate open-ended questions, and practice speaking in front of a group. As discussion leader, your responsibilities will be:
    - Presenting a brief summary highlighting key arguments in the readings in class
    - Preparing and distributing 6-8 open-ended questions for discussion, to be distributed via email to all seminar participants on Monday by 5 pm
    - Writing and distributing a one-page summary of class discussion by 5pm on the Thursday following the class discussion that you lead
- Book Club Presentation- 10%
  - Students will review and present a recent book in media studies on a rotating basis. The idea is to both introduce a new book to the rest of class and to offer thoughts on the theoretical framing of the book (especially focusing on the role media theory plays in crafting a research project). In addition to a 15-min presentation in class, each student will circulate a 2-page review of the book before class meeting.
- Final paper- 20%
  - There are two options for the final paper: 1) a comps paper that focuses on a sub-field (such as political economy of media or media infrastructures or global media studies) and offers a mini review of 5-7 books to answer a broad question about the field, 2) a draft of a journal article that actively draws on media theories, based on some empirical research you have already started. Either way, the paper should not be more than 20 pages (5000 words) and will be due Dec 13. Please let me know of your choice by October 18<sup>th</sup>

Grade Scale:

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82

C+	77-79
C	73-76
F	0-72

Course Schedule:

9/3 **Week 1: Introduction**

Lisa Gitelman. 2006. Always Already New Media, History, and the Data of Culture [1-8]

9/10 **Week 2: Mass Society and the Media**

Lang, Kurt, and Gladys Engel Lang. 2009. "Mass Society, Mass Culture, and Mass Communication: The Meaning of Mass." *International Journal of Communication* 3: 998–1024.

Robert Darnton. (2000). "An Early Information Society: News and the Media in the Eighteenth-Century Paris," *American Historical Review* 105: 1-35.

C.Wright Mills. (1956). "The Mass Society." *The Power Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press. 298-324.

Jurgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere" in Mukerji and Schudson (eds). *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*. 398-404.

Nancy Fraser. (1990). "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Social Text*. 25/26: 56-80.

Recommended

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso. ["Cultural Roots."]

Jurgen Habermas (1989). *The structural transformation of the public sphere*. Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press.

Dewey, John. 1927. *The Public and Its Problems*. Chicago: Swallow Press. ["Search for the Great Community."]

Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (1925).

Warner, M. (2005). *Publics and counterpublics*. New York, NY, Zone Books.

Harold A. Innis. (1949). "The bias of communication." *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*. 457-476.

### 9/17 **Week 3: Media Influence and Effects**

Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton. (1948). "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action." in MCAST. 230-241.

Elihu Katz & Paul F. Lazarsfeld. (1955). *Personal influence: The part played by people in the flow of mass communications*. Glencoe, Ill: Free Press.  
[Selections]

Todd Gitlin. (1978) "Media Sociology: The Dominant Paradigm," *Theory and Society* 6: 205-253.

Bennett, W. Lance, and Jarol B. Manheim. 2006. "The One-Step Flow of Communication." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 608: 213–32.

Elihu Katz and Ruth Katz. 2016. Revisiting the Origin of the Administrative versus Critical Research Debate.

#### Recommended:

Katz, Elihu. 2001. "Lazarsfeld's Map of Media Effects." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 13 (3): 270–79.

Gillespie, Tarleton. 2018. *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Chadwick, Andrew. 2017. *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Papacharissi, Zizi. 2015. *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

### 9/24 **Week 4: Ideology and Hegemony**

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. (1944) *The culture industry: enlightenment as mass deception*.

Antonio Gramsci. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers.

Walter Benjamin. (1936) *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction*.

Theodor W. Adorno. 1989 [1967]. "The Culture Industry Reconsidered."

Roopali Mukherjee. 2020. "Of Experts and Tokens: Mapping a Critical Race Archaeology of Communication."

**STRONG RECOMMEND:** Stuart Hall. 1983. For A Marxism Without Guarantees <https://salvage.zone/for-a-marxism-without-guarantees/>

### Recommended

Christian Sandvig. 2015. "The Social Industry." *Social Media + Society*: 1-4.

Sarah Banet-Weiser. 2012. *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*. New York: NYU Press.

Tiziana Terranova. 2000. "Free labor: Producing culture for the digital economy." *Social Text* 18(2): 33-58.

### 10/01 **Week 5: Media and Technology 1**

Marshall McLuhan. 1994 [1964]. *Understanding Media* Cambridge: The MIT Press. Selections.

Sarah Sharma and Rianka Singh. 2022. *Re-understanding Media: Feminist Extensions of Marshall McLuhan*. [Selections]

Bruno Latour. 2005. Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory. [Pages 1-21; 247-262]

Langdon Winner, *The Whale and the Reactor*, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?"

Pablo Boczkowski, Roderic Crooks, Leah Lievrouw, and Ignacio Siles. 2022. "Bridging Communication Studies and Science and Technology Studies: Some Recent Developments."

Optional: Hannah Zeavin; Hot and Cool Mothers. *differences* 1 December 2021; 32 (3): 53–84.

**Book Club:** Emily Van Duyn. 2021. *Democracy lives in darkness: How and why people keep their politics a secret*.

### 10/08 **Week 6: Media and Technology 2**

Raymond Williams. 2003 [1973]. *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*.

Lynn Spigel. 2001. Media homes: Then and now. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4(4), pp.385-411

Michèle Martin. 1991. "The Culture of the Telephone," In: "Hello, Central?" *Gender, Technology, and Culture in the Formation of Telephone Systems* (140-150)

Optional: Claude S. Fischer. 1992. "Technology and Modern Life." Pp. 1-21 in *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

**Book Club:** TJ Billard. 2024. *Transgender Equality: Making Change in the Networked Public Sphere*.

10/15 NO CLASS

### 10/22 **Week 8: The Political Economy of Media**

Oscar Gandy (1992). "The political economy approach: A critical challenge," *Journal of Media Economics*, Summer, 23-42.

Janet Wasko (2013). The IAMCR political economy section: A retrospective. *The Political Economy of Communication*, (1), 4–8.

Aouragh, Miriyam, and Paula Chakravartty. 2016. "Infrastructures of Empire: Towards a Critical Geopolitics of Media and Information Studies." *Media, Culture & Society* 38 (4): 559–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443716643007>.

Nicole S. Cohen (2008). The valorization of surveillance: Towards a political economy of Facebook. *Democratic Communiqué* 22, No. 1, Spring, 5-22

Safiya Noble (2018). *Algorithms of Oppression*, Introduction: the power of algorithms and Chapter 6: The future of information culture.

Tressie McMillan Cottom. 2020. "Where Platform Capitalism and Racial Capitalism Meet: The Sociology of Race and Racism in the Digital Society." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 6(4): 441–49.

Optional: Vincent Mosco (2009, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition). *The Political Economy of Communication*. Pages 2-11; 21-64.

**Book Club:** Jennifer Nish. 2022. *Activist Literacies: Transnational Feminisms and Social Media Rhetorics*.

### 10/29 **Week 9: Media Consumption and Circulation**

Parameswaran, R. (2002). Reading fictions of romance: Gender, Sexuality, and Nationalism in Postcolonial India. *Journal of Communication*, 52(4): 832-851.

Deborah Spitulnick. (2002). "Mobile Machines and Fluid Audiences: Rethinking Reception Through Zambian Radio Culture," in *Media Worlds*, pp. 337-354.

Jack Bratich. 2008. "Activating the Multitude: Audience Power and Cultural Studies." Pp. 33-55 in P. Goldstein and J.L. Machor, eds.,

*New Directions in American Reception Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Livingstone, Sonia, and Das, Ranjana (2013) The end of audiences?: theoretical echoes of reception amid the uncertainties of use. In: Hartley, John, Burgess, Jean, and Bruns, Axel, (eds.) *A Companion to New Media Dynamics*. Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, UK, pp. 104-121.

Lopez, Lori Kido. 2017. "Asian America Gone Viral: A Genealogy of Asian American YouTubers and Memes," In *The Routledge Companion to Asian American Media*. Lori Kido Lopez and Vincent N. Pham, eds. New York: Routledge, pp. 157-169.

### Optional

John Fiske. 1989. "Moments of television: Neither the text nor the audience.: In: E. Seiter et al. (eds.), *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power* (pp. 56-78). London: Routledge.

Janice Radway. 1991. "Interpretive Communities and Variable Literacies: The Functions of Romance Reading." In C. Mukerji and M. Schudson, eds., *Rethinking Popular Culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

**Book Club:** Koen Leurs. 2023. *Digital Migration*

11/05 **NO CLASS**

### 11/12 **Week 11: The Politics of Media Representation**

Stuart Hall "The Work of Representation" Pp. 13-75 in his (Ed.) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (Sage 2003)

Campbell, Christopher P. 2017. "Representation: Stuart Hall and the 'Politics of Signification.'" In *The Routledge Companion to Media and Race*. New York: Routledge.

Racquel Gates. (2018) *Double Negative: The Black Image and Popular Culture*. pp. 1-34.

Serlin, D. (2006). Disabling the flâneur. *Journal of Visual Culture*, 5(2), 193-208.

Gamson, J. (1998). *Freaks talk back: Tabloid talk shows and sexual nonconformity*. University of Chicago Press. pp. 208-226.

Christian, Aymar Jean, and Khadijah Costley White. 2020. "Organic Representation as Cultural Reparation." *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 60 (1): 143–47.

### 11/19 **Week 12: Beyond Representation**

Haraway, D. 1985. A Manifesto for Cyborgs: science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s, *Socialist Review*, vol. 80, 65–108

Wajcman, J. (2010). Feminist theories of technology. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 34(1), 143–152

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. 2009. “Race and/as Technology; or, How to Do Things to Race.” *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 24 (1): 7–35.  
<https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-2008-013>.

Armond R. Towns. 2022. *On Black Media Philosophy* [Selections]

Keeling, Kara. 2014. “Queer OS.” *Cinema Journal* 53 (2): 152–57.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2014.0004>.

Ellcessor, Elizabeth, and Bill Kirkpatrick. 2019. “Studying Disability for a Better Cinema and Media Studies.” *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 58 (4): 139–44.

Haimson, Oliver L., Avery Dame-Griff, Elias Capello, and Zahari Richter. 2019. “Tumblr Was a Trans Technology: The Meaning, Importance, History, and Future of Trans Technologies.” *Feminist Media Studies* 21 (3): 345–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2019.1678505>.

**Book Club:** Apryl Williams. 2024. *Not My Type: Automating Sexual Racism in Online Dating*.

### 11/26 **Week 13: Global Media Studies**

Arjun Appadurai. 1990. “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy.” *Theory, Culture & Society*, 7(2), 295–310.

Joseph D. Straubhaar (1991) Beyond media imperialism: Asymmetrical interdependence and cultural proximity, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 8:1, 39-59.

Marwan Kraidy. 2005. *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. Pages 1-45.

Raka Shome, When Postcolonial Studies Interrupts Media Studies, *Communication, Culture and Critique*, Volume 12, Issue 3, September 2019, Pages 305–322.

Philip, K., Irani, L., & Dourish, P. (2012). Postcolonial Computing: A Tactical Survey. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 37(1), 3–29.

Raewyn Connell. 2007. *Southern Theory*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. Pp:193-232

**Book Club:** Lin Zhang. 2023. *The Labor of Reinvention: Entrepreneurship in the New Chinese Digital Economy*.

### 12/03 **Week 14: Media Infrastructures/Ecology**

Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski (eds). 2015. *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructures*, Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press. Pages: 1-30.

David Hesmondhalgh. 2021. "The infrastructural turn in media and internet research"  
In: McDonald, P. (Ed.). (2021). *The Routledge Companion to Media Industries* (1st ed.).  
Routledge. Pp. 132-140.

Plantin, J.-C., Lagoze, C., Edwards, P. N., & Sandvig, C. 2016. Infrastructure studies meet platform studies in the age of Google and Facebook. *New Media & Society*. 293-310.

Helga Tawil-Souri. 2015. "Cellular Borders: Dis/Connecting Phone Calls in Israel-Palestine" In: Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski (eds). 2015. *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructures*, Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press. Pages: 157-182.

Nemer, David and Chirumamilla, Padma. ["Living in the broken city: infrastructural inequity, uncertainty, and the materiality of the digital in Brazil."](#) In *digitalSTS: A Field Guide for Science and Technology Studies*, eds. Janet A. Vertesi and David Ribes. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.

### Optional

Susan Leigh Star, The Ethnography of Infrastructure, *American Behavioral Scientist* 43 (3), 1999: 377-391.

Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42 (2013): 327-343.

Gray, J., Bounegru, L., & Venturini, T. (2020). 'Fake news' as infrastructural uncanny. *New Media & Society*, 22(2), 317- 341.

**Book Club:** Iván Char López. 2024. *The Cybernetic Border: Drones, Technology, and Intrusion*

12/10 **Week 15: Bringing it all together**

Academic Honesty Policy:

Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent ([http://www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/)).

Accommodations Statement:

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements. For further information, please visit Disability Services (<https://www.umass.edu/disability/>)

Title IX Statement

In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 that prohibits gender-based discrimination in educational settings that receive federal funds, the University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students, free from all forms of discrimination, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and retaliation. This includes interactions in person or online through digital platforms and social media. Title IX also protects against discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, or related conditions, including recovery. There are resources here on campus to support you. A summary of the available Title IX resources (confidential and non-confidential) can be found at the following link: <https://www.umass.edu/titleix/resources>. You do not need to make a formal report to access them. If you need immediate support, you are not alone. Free and confidential support is available 24 hours a day / 7 days a week / 365 days a year at the SASA Hotline 413-545-0800.

For purposes of Title IX reporting, I am considered a “responsible employee” at UMass (<https://www.umass.edu/titleix/about>). **That means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and retaliation, I must share that information with the Title IX Coordinator.** Making a report to the Title IX Coordinator is my legal obligation, meets the University's goal of providing members of our community with supportive resources they might need, and enables the University to obtain a more accurate picture of the extent of sexual violence in our

community. **It will be completely up to you to determine if and how you want to work with the Title IX Coordinator's office. You will not be in trouble for reporting to me that you have experienced any of these situations, and the law prohibits retaliation against anyone who participates in a Title IX process.**