

SOC 525 Media & Images of Inequality

Winter 2009

Sections 011, 021, 031, 041, 051

Designation: Professionally Related

Prerequisite: SOC 103 or SOC 104 or SOC 105 or SOC 11A/B or DST 501 or INT 902

Hours: 3 hours per week

Mode: 2 hour Lecture & 1 hour Tutorial (with teaching assistant)

Jennifer Brayton

Contact information

Office: Jorgenson Hall Room 331

Telephone: 416 979-5000 ext. 6212

E-mail: jbrayton@ryerson.ca

Office Hours: Thursdays from 10:00 – 12:00 noon

Course Description

This course examines the relationship between the representation of inequality on film and television and contemporary social structure. Students will study media, culture, socialization, power and inequality, critically examining images of disability, race, age, ethnicity, gender, social class and sexual orientation. Strategies and responses of various groups will be considered along with an analysis of cultural and social change.

Course Objectives

From early writing on stone and papyrus to the new development of the World Wide Web, human beings have found the need to communicate and exchange knowledge with each other. On one hand, the media are viewed by the public as a necessary and irreplaceable source of information in large, modern, democratic societies. On the other hand, mass media is constructed as part of a pervasive, consumption-oriented entertainment social structure. The term, "the media," has become an almost mystical component of both common sense and scientific explanations for anything that attracts the public's attention and concern. There is a deep social interest in media personalities and productions as well as every other facet of the media's development and impact. Our purpose in this course is to understand the structured relationship between the owners, producers, products, representations of identities, and audiences of mass media in contemporary North American culture, with a focus on visual media cultures.

- (1) The elusive and ambiguous nature of media effects and the confusion this generates.
- (2) The questionable, symbiotic relationship between the media and advertising industry.
- (3) The complex of forces that shape the material and information the media provide.
- (4) The features of North American media and their significance for the rest of the world.
- (5) The construction of social identity through the media.
- (6) The power of media ownership to determine social values.

Teaching Methods

This course will be taught using class lectures, active class discussions, video screenings, Q&A sessions, and in-class writing assignments. Each week will have a 2 hour lecture, where overarching ideas and concepts will be introduced. Students will also have a weekly 1 hour tutorial utilizing active learning practices designed to critically engage students with the reading materials, and connect the course ideas to their own lives

During the lecture we will be watching various films, television, and pictorial images that are intricate to the course and relevant discussions. During the tutorials, you will be analyzing your assigned readings in-depth with your TA and class mates. Attendance and participation are essential in order to succeed in the course. We will take attendance at tutorials.

Students will be examined on information taken from readings, class lectures, group discussions, web sites, advertisements, and video screenings. The mid-term exam will test on all material up to the mid-term. The final examination will test on material from the mid-term until the end of term.

Students must complete all components of the course evaluation in order to receive a passing grade for the course. *Failure to write the critical analysis essay and/or attend both the examinations will result an automatic F for the final grade.*

Course Materials

Dines, G. and Humez, J. M. (Eds). (2003). Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text Reader. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publication. Second Edition. [REQUIRED]

Course Evaluation

Tutorial Attendance and Participation	5% (all term)
Quiz (in tutorial)	10% (Feb 2-6)
Mid-Term Exam (short answer and long essay)	25% (Feb. 24 th)
Critical Analysis Essay (8-12 pages)	30% (March 31 st)
Final Exam (short answer and essay)	30% (exam period)

Alternative Essay Option – Service Learning (30%)

As an alternative to writing the critical analysis essay proposal and essay, students may apply to participate in the Service Learning high school twinning initiative. Students in SOC 525 will be twinned with students in Grade 11 **Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology, and Sociology** at Danforth Technical and Collegiate Institute. The Twinning project is aimed to build interest in and ‘demystify’ higher education by providing the high school students with a look inside a university and the chance to get to know university students. Students from Ryerson and the high schools will participate in reciprocal campus visits and Ryerson students will volunteer as classroom assistants in their twinned classes once a week for 5 weeks where they will support the teacher’s lessons and mentor students.

Specific Notes to Students

There are no bad questions, ever! If you are unclear or uncertain about topics addressed in class, please ask me for clarification. You may ask questions in class, before and after class time, by e-mail, and during office hours. I will endeavour to answer questions quickly and accurately. I encourage all students to actively participate in the class by asking questions, participating in group discussions, completing informal writing assignments, and talking with me personally or your TA.

Under **no circumstances** will grades be sent or discussed by e-mail. I welcome e-mails from students in regards to the course. I check my e-mail on weekdays, but I will not check on the weekends. E-mail replies will be within 48 hours. Only e-mail send from my Ryerson account is legitimate.

Students are expected to be familiar with the official policies of Ryerson University outlined in the Undergraduate Calendar. Students are also required to be familiar with the policies of the Department of Sociology: <http://www.ryerson.ca/sociology/handbook/>

It is the responsibility of students to attend classes and keep up with all lectures, readings, announcements and screenings. If a student must be absent, please consult with other students about what has been missed. Lecture notes from the instructor will not be provided.

Disruptive and rude behaviours will not be tolerated. Students are in attendance to learn the materials being conveyed in class, so please respect your colleagues. We can all learn from each other if we listen to one another. Disruptive behaviours include walking into class late and/or leaving early, talking while others are talking, using insensitive language, not listening to others speak, and dominating class discussion time. Cellular phones are to be turned off at the start of class. Please be sensitive and aware of the language choices you make in writing and speaking as derogatory language will not be permitted.

Plagiarism and cheating are extremely serious offenses that will not be tolerated. I will deal with any suspected cases according to the official University policy. Please read the Academic Integrity website on Cheating: <http://www.ryerson.ca/ai/students/studentcheating.html> and on Plagiarism: <http://www.ryerson.ca/ai/students/studentplagiarism.html>. It is *YOUR * responsibility to know the Ryerson policies on both and what they entail.

Should a situation arise during the term that compromises a student's performance in the course, please inform me immediately. Any requests for consideration must be made in advance, and according to university policy. A medical certificate or some form of legal documentation will be required within 3 days after missing the quiz, the essay deadline, the mid-term exam and the final exam. Please see Undergraduate Academic Consideration and Appeals at: <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol134.pdf>. Students with educational needs must make arrangements with the Access Centre at the start of the academic term.

Cel phones and PDAs are not permitted during the mid-term or final examinations. Please ensure you know the official examination policies of Ryerson University: <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol135.pdf>.

Grades will be posted on my office door, and on the returned assignments. Students can get grades from the instructor in person. Grades will not be available from Blackboard, nor sent through e-mail.

You must keep all your graded work for the course until the end of the examination schedule.

You must keep an electronic version of your essay until the end of the examination schedule. It is YOUR responsibility to keep a back-up copy of your essay!

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One: (Jan 5-9)

There is no lecture and tutorials this week as classes start on Wednesday and our lecture is on Tuesday.

Week Two: (Jan 12-16) – First lecture/tutorials

Media Ownership and Social Power
Consumer culture

Readings: Susan G. Davis (article 16); Juliet Schor (article 19)

**Jill Careless will be attending to explain the Service Learning Option for SOC 525.*

Week Three: (Jan 19-23)

Economic Social Class
Capitalism commodity production and consumerism

Readings: James Lull (article 5), Richard Butsch (article 54)

**Tuesday January 20th is the last day to add or change your Winter 2009 timetable and get a full refund.*

**Service Learning applications are due on Tuesday January 20th.*

Week Four (Jan 26-30)

Female gender inequality inside media industries
Female representation and images of gender

Readings: Imani Perry (article 14); Jean Kilbourne (article 26)

Week Five (Feb 2-6)

Male gender inequality inside media industries (intersections with other social locations)
Male representation and images of gender

Readings: Kenon Breazeale (article 24); Jackson Katz (article 34)

****Tutorial time this week will be used for your Quiz. You are being tested on materials from Week 2 - 4***

Week Six (Feb 9-13)

Queer representation
Marketing and branding towards queer consumers

Readings: Diane Raymond (article 10); Fred Fejes (article 22)

**February 10th is the last day to drop a course and be eligible for a 50% refund*

Week Seven (Feb 16-20)
STUDY WEEK FOR STUDENTS

Week Eight (Feb 23-27)
MID TERM SCHEDULED DURING CLASS TIME (2 hours)
You will be tested on materials from Week 2 – Week 6

Tutorials will still be running this week – attendance is still mandatory. This time will be used for discussion of your critical research essay.

Week Nine (March 2-6)
Media racism/racist media
Stereotypes and racial/ethnic media representation

Readings: Clint Wilson & Felix Gutierrez (article 29); Chyng Feng Sun (article 63)

Week Ten (Mar 9-13)
Ideologies of whiteness
Debates over “White” culture

Readings: Stuart Hall (article 8); Jan Nederveen Pieterse (article 11)

Week Eleven (Mar 16-20)
Disability representations
Disabled workers within media industries in Canada

Readings: Beth Haller & Sue Ralph (article 30)

Whittington-Walsh, F. (2002). *From Freaks to Savants: Disability and Hegemony from The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1939) and Sling Blade (1997)*. In, Disability & Society 17. 6, 695-707. **Online via Blackboard**

**March 17th is the last date to drop a course in Winter 2009 without academic penalty, but with no refund*

Week Twelve (Mar 23-27)
Images of age representation surrounding consumers and producers
Cool hunters and cool culture

Readings: Henry A Giroux (article 17); Henry Jenkins (article 37)

Week Thirteen (March 30-April 3)

Active audiences - fandom studies, fan culture, and fan production/consumption

Readings: Jennifer Brayton "Fic Frodo Slash Frodo: Fandoms and *Lord of the Rings*"
Online via Blackboard

Online Reading: <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/44/64>
Coppa, Francesca. 2008. Women, *Star Trek*, and the early development of fannish
vidding. *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 1.

***Your Critical Research Essay is due at the start of class. You will hand in your essay
and sign in to confirm you have completed your essay on time.**

Week 14 (April 6-10)

Resistance, social activism, and subverting mass media industries
Strategies for media activism

Readings: Tricia Rose (article 38); Ellen Arnold & Darcy Plymire (article 70)

Week 15 (April 13-14)

TUESDAY LECTURE: End of term review of Winter 2008 SOC 525 course,
highlighting central themes, concepts, current media issues and media practices.

There are no tutorials this week as the term ends on Tuesday April 14.

FORMAL CLASS EVALUATION

Tutorial Participation: 5%

Attendance at tutorials is mandatory and attendance will take place each week. This is the time and place in which to engage in critical thinking about the assigned weekly readings and connect them to everyday life.

Quiz: 10%

You will have a quiz in your tutorials during week of February 2-6. This is to ensure you are on track with the readings and to prepare you for the mid-term examination. This will be testing your knowledge of concepts from the readings and lectures week 2-4.

Mid Term Examination: 25%

The format is written short answer and long essay questions (with choice), and students must return the examination question sheet as well as the examination booklets. Students will be evaluated on any material covered up until the midterm including lectures, tutorials, readings, web sites, ads, documentaries, and videos. This is a 2 hour examination taking place in class time on February 24, following Study Week..

Critical Analysis Essay: 30%

Students will write a formal essay critically analyzing the construction of social identity within visual culture in the area of television. This research paper will allow you to choose from between the major locations we have studied this term: sex/gender, sexual orientation, age, economic class, race/ethnicity, or disability representation. In your essay, you will make an argument, using sociological theories of the media, regarding HOW and WHY your media topic reinforces and/or challenges cultural stereotypes and dominant ideologies. Your final essay must have a minimum of 6 academic sources, of which 3 are original on-topic references found during your research. Please note: original references do not include course textbooks and readings, though they will be relevant to your overall bibliography. Papers must be 8-12 full pages of writing, with a separate title page and bibliography. Your essay is due at the start of class on March 31st and you will sign in when you submit your essay.

Alternative Essay Option – Service Learning (30%)

In lieu of the critical research essay, some students may opt to participate in the Service Learning high school twinning initiative. Information to be provided on January 13th.

Final Examination (Examination Schedule): 30%

The final examination will be scheduled by Ryerson University, and set during the examination time period. The format is written short answer and essay questions. It is the responsibility of the student to note the dates and locations of examinations. Students are expected to be available during the full examination schedule. This is a 2 hour examination, with short and long essay questions (with choice). This will test from the mid-term onwards.

Detailed information to follow during the term!