Seminar in Communication Theory & Research  
MCOM 301 / SOAN 313

Course Description:
This seminar examines theoretical approaches that are central to the study of media, communication, and culture. It will provide students with an historical and critical framework for understanding the literature and research tradition within the field of media studies with an emphasis on contemporary communication theories that have emerged in the discipline since the 1950s. The intent is to both encourage an awareness and understanding of the classic or ‘foundational’ literature in our field, and to interrogate key contemporary theoretical problems.

Required Text/Readings:
- Other readings will be posted on Moodle.

Attendance:
Attendance is absolutely mandatory. If you are absent more than 2 times, you will lose participation grades.

Special Circumstances, Considerations, Needs:
If you have any special circumstances, consideration or needs that you feel will either affect your ability to complete assignments or participate in recitation discussions, please let me know as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. As noted in “Attendance,” documentation is critical to processing special requests, and I will help facilitate this to the best of my abilities.

Miscellaneous:
As in all of your courses, good faith, respect and trust are crucial to enabling class discussion. The ideas and concepts we’ll be discussing may challenge or conflict with our commonly held beliefs and perspectives. Such challenges should not be construed as value judgments nor should anything discussed in class be construed as a personal offense. Our goal (and that of the university more generally) is to get us thinking critically about the things we often take for granted and to enable us to support our beliefs intelligently and thoughtfully. If you experience any discomfort with material discussed in class, please talk with me directly, and we’ll work together to resolve the situation effectively.

Expectations and Grading:
1. Seminar Facilitation: While all seminar members are required to complete the readings every week, each member of the class will be responsible for leading the discussion of selected readings for TWO weeks. You are not expected to summarize the contents of the readings; rather you should demonstrate your analytical understanding of the readings by considering the main strengths of the arguments
advanced, pointing out any weaknesses you see in the work and raising other issues or questions the readings may provoke for examination/discussion.

2. Response papers: You will be required to submit **FIVE** critiques of the topics during the semester (these can NOT be the same as the topics for which you are leading discussion), which are due at the beginning of the class for the topic selected. These should be about three pages in length each, and should not be summaries, but rather your engagement with the readings based on a careful and critical reading. For example, you can address the following questions:
- What is the central thesis of this work? What argument or perspective is the author arguing?
- On what assumptions or points is the thesis of the work built?
- Is the author overlooking anything that might weaken his/her argument? What are the limitations, shortcomings or weaknesses in the work?
- What are the major terms or concepts central to this work, and how does the writer define them?
- What are the methods of argument and kinds of evidence used to develop and support the thesis of the work?
- Has anything changed, in your view, since the article was written, that might affect the strength or value of the argument?
- What is the relationship between this work and other works you have read in the is course (and in other courses). How would you evaluate this argument in terms of the other ideas you have encountered?
- How does the essay contribute to our understanding of issues in communication? i.e. what are the major contributions and strengths of this work to the understanding of media and communication?

3. Research paper. A separate handout detailing the requirements will be distributed within the first couple of weeks of classes. **Research papers are due at the beginning of the last class before Christmas break (Thursday December 20).**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation &amp; Seminar facilitation</th>
<th>15%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response papers</td>
<td>25% (5% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>60%</td>
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**Late Assignments:**
All work is due on the dates indicated in the Course Syllabus (unless other arrangements have been made in advance). Late assignments are subject to a penalty equivalent to five (5) percent for each day after the due date. Generally, this means that a one-day late assignment awarded an A will be given an A-, and so on. **Work more than 4 days late will not be accepted, and will result in zero points.**

**Academic Dishonesty And Plagiarism:**
"Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do.... You violate the principle when you: cheat on an exam; submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home that calls for
independent work; or plagiarize. Plagiarism, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: copy verbatim from a book, article, or other media; download documents from the Internet; purchase documents; paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis, and/or conclusions; copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you. "When in doubt, cite it out!" There will be zero tolerance for plagiarism of any kind. You may fail a course or be dismissed from the program entirely if you are caught. Ignorance is not an acceptable excuse.

Everything should be cited appropriately. For further information and assistance in determining when and how to properly cite your sources, please refer to the following resources:

Definitions of plagiarism: http://turnitin.com/research_site/e_home.html.

University's Student Code of Conduct:
http://pnp.aub.edu.lb/general/conductcode/index.html

It is your responsibility to become familiar with the university's ethics policy, to know what is and is not a code violation, and to abide by the university’s code of conduct. Violation of any policy will result on disciplinary action, including expulsion.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Week 1 (Sept 20) Introduction to course

Week 2 (Sept 27) Beginnings and Underlying Controversies
• Denis McQuail. “Origins and Development of the Field of Study: General Introduction,” in McQuail; pp. 1-20
• Todd Gitlin, “Media sociology: the dominant paradigm” in McQuail; pp. 25-35)
• R. Craig (1999), “Communication Theory as a Field”, Communication Theory 9(2); 119-161

Facilitator:

Week 3 & 4 Critical Studies of Culture and Society
(Oct. 4 & 11)
• Judith Williamson (DATE), “Meaning and Ideology” in McQuail; pp. 298-301
• John Thompson “The Concept of Ideology” from Ideology and Modern Culture
• C. Wright Mills “The mass society” in McQuail; pp. 73-79.

Facilitator:

Week 5 (Oct 18) Approaches to Mass Communication Research
• Mass Communication Theory and Research: Concepts and Models (Stacks and Salwen; pp. 61-74.
• Media Gatekeeping (Stacks and Salwen; pp. 75-89)
• Pamela Shoemaker, “A new gatekeeping model” in McQuail; pp. 253-260
• The Agenda Setting Role of News Media (Stacks and Salwen; pp. 90-105)
• Cultivation Analysis: Research and Practice (Stacks and Salwen; pp.106-121)
• Uses and Gratifications (Stacks and Salwen; pp. 137-152)
• Additional reading(s) TBA

Facilitator:

Week 6 (Oct. 25) Politics and Influence
• Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence (excerpts)
• Jacques Ellul, Propaganda (excerpts)
• Edward S. Herman, “The propaganda model: a retrospective” in McQuail; pp. 60 – 68.
• Spiral of Silence: Communication and Public Opinion as Social Control (Stacks and Salwen; pp. 153-168
• C. Wright Mills, “The Cultural Apparatus” and “Mass Media and Public Opinion” from People, Power, Politics.
• John Thompson, “The discourse of cultural imperialism” in McQuail; pp 222-230

Facilitator:

Week 7 (Nov. 1) Effects Research
• Part X. Mass Media Effects, in McQuail; pp. 375-418
• Additional readings: TBA

Facilitator:
Week 8 (Nov. 8)  **Cultural Studies**
- James Carey, “A cultural approach to communication” in McQuail; pp. 36-45
- Lawrence Grossberg, “Strategies of Marxist Cultural Interpretation”
- Raymond Williams, “Culture” & “Structures of Feeling” in *Marxism and Literature*

Facilitator:

Weeks 9 & 10 (Nov 15 & 22) – No classes. University holiday.

Week 11 (Nov. 29)  **Audiences**
- Part IV: The Media Audience, in McQuail; pp321-374.

Facilitator:

Week 12 (Dec. 6)  **Political Economy**
- Herbet Schiller, “The Corporation and the Production of Culture” in *Culture Inc.*
- Sut Jhally, “The Political Economy of Culture”
- Vincent Mosco, “The Political Economy of Communication” in *The Political Economy of Culture*
- Nicholas Garnham “Contributions to a Political Economy of Mass Communication”
- Eileen Meehan “Gendering the Commodity Audience: Critical Media Research, Feminism, and Political Economy”
Facilitator:

**Week 13 (Dec. 13)  Globalization and the Posts:- (modernism & colonialism), I**
- David Harvey “Postmodernism” from *The Condition of Post-Modernity*
- Frederic Jameson “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”
- Jean Baudrillard, “Simulacra and Simulations: Disneyland”
- Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy”

Facilitator:

**Week 14 (Dec. 20)  Globalization and the Posts:- (modernism & colonialism), II**
**RESEARCH PAPERS DUE**
- Edward Said, *Orientalism* (excerpts)
- Chandra Talpade Mohanty “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”
- Marjorie Ferguson, “The mythology about globalization” in McQuail; pp. 238-248

Facilitator:

**Week 15 (Dec. 27)  No classes. University holiday**

**Week 16 (Jan. 3)  Thoughts on the future of Mass Communication research**

Facilitator: