

CST 300

Readings in Communication and Culture

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Course Description

This course is an advanced level examination of contemporary issues in the field of Communication and also in the general areas of social and cultural criticism. We will be examining advanced, at times difficult (but rewarding!) readings and theories. Specifically, we will be looking at how people form identities in modern post-industrial life through communication. The question of identity is a major issue in contemporary communication theory; some questions include: how are identities formed? How do communication technologies contribute to identity group formation? How are alternative communities formed through communication?, among many others. The individual as constructed by organization and society is a primary topic of theorists in our field. I also hope to place our examination of these issues within the broader context of the theories and practices of social and cultural criticism in general.

Course Objectives

This goal of this course is to expose students to a selection of advanced readings in various fields within communication: journalism, mass communication and society, public relations, etc., as well as writings in contemporary social and cultural criticism.

Course Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will:

1. Know current issues and controversies in contemporary communication subdisciplines;
2. Be able to analyze and take a position in those debates, as well as write thoughtfully and coherently about their position/point of view;
3. Be able to orally defend those positions in a group debate format.

Materials:

Stauber, J. and Rampton, S. (2002). *Toxic Sludge is Good For You: Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press.

Photocopied Readings: I'll announce where and when to get this in class; many will be passed out in class. Otherwise, we will determine as a class which of the following we will read this semester. Specific texts will be determined by class vote on the second day of class. These may include:

Other texts not on the reading list, but recommended, are:

Bauman, Z. (1991). Modernity and the holocaust. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Gitlin, T. (2002). Media Unlimited: How the Torrent of Images and Sounds Overwhelms Our Lives
New York: Owl Books.

Herman, E. S. and Chomsky, N. (1988). Manufacturing Consent. N.Y.: Pantheon Books.

Hochschild, A. R. (2003). The Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work.
Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Gabler, N. (2001). Life: The Movie. N.Y.: Vintage Press.

Kilbourne, J. (2000). Can't Buy My Love. N.Y.: Touchstone Books.

Klosterman, C. (2004). Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs: A Low Culture Manifesto. New York:
Scribner Books.

Rampton, S. and Stauber, J. (2001). Trust Us, We're Experts: How Industry Manipulates Science
And Gambles With Your Future. New York: Tarcher/Putnam.

Rifkin, J. (2000). The Age of Access. N.Y.: Tarcher/Putnam Books.

Sarup, M. (1996). Identity, Culture, and the Postmodern World. Athens, GA: University of Georgia
Press. This is not currently in bookstore; wait for class announcement.

Storey, J. (1998). An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture. Athens: University of
Georgia Press.

Policy on Readings and Attendance:

The nature of this course makes regular attendance essential for several reasons. First, these readings will be unfamiliar to some of you, and we will need to work together to analyze and debate their arguments. Second, this is an advanced class, and I am looking forward to having lively discussion and debate. Without you reading the assignments closely and carefully, and coming to class regularly prepared to introduce/discuss/question/praise/tear apart them, the class will be a boring flop. I am excited to be exploring this material with advanced students, so let's not let each other down. I believe mature students should be coerced as little as possible, so there is no strict attendance policy. If the situation requires it, I may give quizzes on the readings to be applied to your participation grade; I don't expect that will be necessary. Bottom line, however, is that I will try to ensure that everyone holds up their part to create an enjoyable and effective group of learners.

Other Guidelines:

A late written assignment will result in the work receiving five points lower for each day that it is late. Oral presentations must be delivered on the day assigned, as class time does not allow for rescheduling; therefore, if you have a presentation scheduled, you cannot turn in a corresponding paper afterward or redo the assignment.

On days that you are not presenting a reading, you have to turn in discussion questions. These questions must be typed and ready to turn in at the beginning of class. Don't forget your questions that you've written for that day, if you're not presenting, or you will not be given credit for them. They are not useful to me if they are handed in late, for the obvious reason that these questions can't be asked during the relevant class period. Everyone can forget or choose not to hand in questions **twice** throughout the semester, with the proviso that you don't tell me about it (I'll figure it out).

Participation:

Your participation is graded at the end of the semester. Participation primarily means doing your reading and coming prepared to apply the information that you have gained on your own. Part of participation is attending class, of course.

I tend to ask a lot of questions in class like, "so what does the theory of X say about..." Blank expressions are a big clue as to whether a student has done their work. This is a long way of saying: come to class prepared, which can also mean coming to class ready to ask informed questions about the readings. These questions will be a required part of the class work.

WARNING!! YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO COMPLETE YOUR READING, in any way that truly appreciates or understands it, on the night before. Most of these readings will have to be done slowly, with margin notes. It's a different form of reading, one which also helps you to remember what you learn. So give yourself time to do it.

Requirements of the course/grading

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Points</u>
Attendance, Participation, and Discussion Questions	200
Presentation of Final Paper	50
Final Paper	150
Papers/Class Presentations of Material	<u>600</u>
Total	1000

Final letter grades on a 10% scale. + and -'s are given.

Concerns about your grade should be discussed with me as soon as possible in the semester. Please come and talk to me about assignments AHEAD of time; preventing misunderstandings or problems is the best policy.

This course is governed by the principles and provisions of both the CCC Honor Code and the Cedar Crest Classroom Protocol. Although the Honor Code at Cedar Crest covers such areas of concern, remember that plagiarism on any assignment will result in the failure of that assignment at a minimum, and possibly will result in failure for the course and referral for further disciplinary action by the College. Don't take that chance: do your own work.

Tentative schedule of classes

<u>Date</u>	<u>Materials and Activities</u>	<u>Groups:Assignments</u>
1/20	Syllabus/The Modern Situation	Handout: Baudrillard
1/22	Baudrillard, Modernity, & Ideology	Baudrillard handout continued