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CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIA COMM 326 – Fall 2006

Course Description:

This course examines the structures, practices and functions of the mass media in society, based on critical approaches. The course focuses on journalism and on how news reports play an important symbolic role by reinforcing or altering public perceptions of ideas, events, and people. After an introduction to news values and practices, the course discusses critical perspectives on the news media, including semiotics, political economy, framing analysis, and organizational approaches. The course then investigates the representations of African Americans in the news media and how these representations shape audiences' attitudes on race. Finally, several contemporary and critical issues will be introduced, including public journalism, Latino news, feminist perspectives, as well as the relationship between news, war, and terrorism. One of the main purposes of the course is to provide methodological and analytical tools for a critical understanding of newsmaking processes and institutions.

Textbooks:

- Howard Tumber (ed.), *News: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Robert Entman and Andrew Rojecki, *The Black Image in the White Mind: Media and Race in America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Both books will be available through Tulane Bookstore.

Required texts:

Besides the textbook, we will work with several articles and book chapters which will be available online at Blackboard. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the classes for which they are listed in the syllabus. All students should have hard copies of the texts and bring them to the respective sessions. Failure to do so will affect your participation grade.

Blackboard:

Blackboard will be used for posting announcements, assignments, and grades, and other information. The system can be accessed at: <<http://blackboard.tulane.edu/>>. If you have problems using the system, you can call the help desk: 862.8888.

Attendance:

Regular attendance is required and attendance will be taken in every class meeting. You can miss three class sessions without penalty in your participation grade. Seven unexcused absences will result in the final grade recommendation of a "WF".

Evaluation:

Your course grade will be based on the following:

1) Midterm exam: Students will take an in-class midterm exam which covers parts I and II of the course. A list of possible questions will be delivered to students in advance and two of the questions will be chosen by the instructor to be included in the exam. The midterm is a closed book exam. Students should bring a pen and a blank blue book on the scheduled date for the exam;

2) Semiotic analysis paper: Students will be required to develop a semiotic analysis of news texts and present the results in a 6-page long paper. Detailed instructions for the assignment will be provided later;

3) Participation: It is very important that students complete all the assigned readings before each session and bring the texts and their notes to class. The course will adopt a seminar format, meaning that students are expected to engage with in-class discussion of the readings and themes of the course. You should be able to summarize the main arguments of the reading assignment/s of the day. I will call on students and ask for their summaries and comments on the readings. Attendance will also be considered when assessing participation;

4) Final paper: Students will be required to write a 10/12-page paper. Specific guidelines for the paper will be given later;

5) Discussion board: Students will be evaluated for their participation in the “Discussion Board” area of Blackboard. This is where our online discussions will take place. There will be one forum to each part of the course and the discussions will be “threaded”, i.e. organized by topics. Students should use the online board to engage with issues related to the readings or class discussions. There are no major restrictions on the postings, but students should be cordial and respectful when discussing classmates’ arguments. Failure to do so will disqualify the respective postings and may result in other penalties.

How to post to a discussion board: 1) click on the discussion board button; 2) click on the respective “forum” (Part I, II, etc.); 3) add a new “thread” to the discussion or post a message (response or comment) to the existing thread. Click "add a new thread" to create a heading or click “reply” to comment on someone’s posting.

You will be expected to post at least one message (an original thread or a comment/response to a classmate’s posting) in each of the 12 designated weeks for online discussions (listed below). Every designated week starts at 8:00 am of Monday and ends at midnight of the following Friday. Of the 12 required messages, 4 of them need to be original threads. Whether you post more than these 12 messages is entirely up to you. As long as you complete the 12 minimum posts (four threads and eight messages) with serious and thoughtful contributions, you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade.

Designated weeks for online discussions - Week 1: Sep 4-8; Week 2: Sep 11-15; Week 3: Sep 18-22; Week 4: Sep 25-29; Week 5: Oct 2-6; Week 6: Oct 16-20; Week 7: Oct 23-27; Week 8: Oct 30-Nov 3; Week 9: Nov 6-10; Week 10: Nov 13-17; Week 11: Nov. 27-Dec 1; Week 12: Dec 4-8.

Your final grade will be calculated in the following manner:

Midterm Exam	-	30 %
Final Paper	-	30 %
Participation	-	15 %
Semiotic analysis paper	-	15 %
Discussion Board	-	10 %

Grading scale:

A	94.0 to 100.0	B	84.0 to 86.9	C	74.0 to 76.9	D	64.0 to 66.9
A-	90.0 to 93.9	B-	80.0 to 83.9	C-	70.0 to 73.9	D-	60.0 to 63.9
B+	87.0 to 89.9	C+	77.0 to 79.9	D+	67.0 to 69.9	F	00.0 to 59.9

Academic dishonesty:

Remember that plagiarism is a form of cheating. Do not present someone else's ideas as yours, without citing the source. Buying or finding papers on similar topics of the course on the Internet is a form of plagiarism. Also remember that turning in the same paper for credit in two courses is a violation of scholarly ethics. This course adheres strictly to the Tulane Honor Code, available at: < <http://www.tulane.edu/~lasdean/honor%20code.htm>>

Course Schedule:

PART I
INTRODUCTION TO NEWS AND NEWSMAKING

Aug 31 - Introduction to the procedures and contents of the course

(No readings)

Sep 5 – Definitions of News

- * Walter Lippmann, "Public opinion", *News*, pp. 5-10.
- * Robert Park, "News as a form of knowledge", *News*, pp. 11-15.
- * Daniel Boorstin, "The image", *News*, pp. 16-20.

Sep 7 – Objectivity and professionalism

- * Michael Schudson, "Discovering the news", *News*, pp. 287-296.
- * Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as strategic ritual", *News*, pp. 297-307.
- * John Soloski, "News reporting and professionalism", *News*, pp. 308-319.

Sep 12 – Introduction to newsmaking

- * Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge, "The structure of foreign news", *News*, pp. 21-31
- * Bernard Roshco, "Newsmaking", *News*, pp. 32-36
- * Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester, "News as purposive behavior", *News*, pp. 37-48.

Sep 14 – Gatekeeping

- * David White, "The 'Gatekeeper'", *News*, pp. 66-72.
- * Pamela Schoemaker, "Gatekeeping", *News*, pp. 73-78.
- * Warren Breed, "Social control in the newsroom", *News*, pp. 79-84.
- * Walter Gieber, "News is what newspapermen make it", *News*, pp. 218-223.

PART II
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES IN NEWS ANALYSIS

Sep 19 – The semiotic method

* Jonathan Biegnell, *Media Semiotics: An introduction*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997 (chapter 1, “Signs and myths”, pp. 5-29).

Sep 21 – The semiotic method applied to news

* Jonathan Biegnell, *Media Semiotics* (chapter 4, “Newspapers”, pp. 81-108).

Sep 26 - Who owns the news media? The political economy perspective

* Ben Bagdikian, “The media monopoly”, *News*, pp. 148-154.

* Peter Golding and Graham Murdock, “Culture, communications, and political economy”, *News*, pp.155-165.

* John McManus, “Market driven journalism: Let the citizen beware”, *News*, pp. 180-190.

Sep 28 – Hegemony, Framing and the Vietnam war

* Todd Giltin, “The whole world if watching”, *News*, pp. 267-279.

* Daniel Hallin, “The ‘uncensored’ war: the media and Vietnam”, *News*, pp. 329-339.

Oct 3 – The propaganda model (Semiotic analysis paper due!).

* Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, “Manufacturing consent”, *News*, pp. 166-179.

Oct 5 – The organizational approach

* Mark Fishman, “Manufacturing the news”, *News*, pp. 102-111.

* Herbert Gans, “Deciding what’s news”, *News*, pp. 235-248.

Oct 10 - News sources and ideology

* Leon Sigal, “Reporters and officials: the organization and politics of newsmaking”, *News*, pp. 224-234.

* Stuart Hall et al., “Policing the crisis”, *News*, pp. 249-256.

* Richard Ericson et al., “Negotiating control: a study of news sources”, *News*, pp. 280-284.

Oct 12 - MIDTERM EXAM

PART III
NEWS MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

Oct 17 – The method of content analysis

* Anders Hansen et al., *Mass Communication Research Methods*. New York: New York University Press, 1998 (Chapter 5, “Content Analysis”, pp. 91-129).

Oct 19 – Screening of the documentary “The Black Press: Soldiers without Swords”

Oct 24 - The black press

* Charles Simmons, *The African American Press*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 1998 (chapters 1-3, pp. 9-50)

Oct 26 – Racial attitudes and the media

* Entman and Rojecki, chapters 1 and 2, pp. 1-45.

Oct 31 – Black representations in network news

* Entman and Rojecki, chapters 3 and 4, pp. 46-77.

Nov 2 – Race and news coverage of crime and poverty

* Entman and Rojecki, chapters 5 and 6, pp. 78-106.

Nov 7 – News representations of affirmative action and of black leaders

* Entman and Rojecki, chapters 7 and 8, pp. 107-143.

Nov 9 – Media representations of African Americans: conclusions

* Entman and Rojecki, chapter 12, pp. 205-225.

PART IV
CONTEMPORARY AND CRITICAL ISSUES

Nov 14 – Critical analysis of news trends

* Thomas Patterson, “Doing well and doing good: how soft news and critical journalism are shrinking the news audience and weakening democracy – And what news outlets can do about it”. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

Nov 16 – The public journalism movement

* Davis Merrit, “Public journalism and public life: why telling the news is not enough”, *News*, pp. 365-378.

* Michael Schudson, “What public journalism knows about journalism but doesn’t know about ‘public’”, in T. Glasser (ed.), *The Idea of Public Journalism*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1999, pp. 118-133.

Nov 21 – Latino television news

* América Rodriguez, *Making Latino News*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1999 (chapter 5, “Nationhood, nationalism, and ethnicity in the making of U.S. Latino news”, pp. 75-106).

Nov 23 – No class. Thanksgiving Holiday.**Nov 28– Feminist perspectives on journalism**

* Lisbet van Zoonen, “A tyranny of intimacy? Women, femininity and television news”, in P. Dahlgren and C. Sparks (eds.), *Communication and Citizenship*. London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 217-235.

Nov 30 - Globalization

- * Jeremy Tunstall, “World news duopoly”, *News*, pp.191-200.
- * Robert Picard, “Global communications controversies”, *News*, pp. 355-364.
- * Jo Bardoel, “Beyond journalism: a profession between information society and civil society”, *News*, pp. 379-391.

Dec 5 - Journalism after September 11

- * Michael Schudson, “What’s unusual about covering politics as usual”; and
- * Silvio Waisbord, “Journalism, risk, and patriotism”. Both in Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan (eds.), *Journalism after September 11*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Dec 7 - Conclusions and course evaluation**FINAL PAPER DUE DEC 18, MONDAY, 10:00 a.m. – noon.**

Papers should be delivered at the instructor’s office: 219 Newcomb Hall. Late papers will not be received.