

Media Theories

FILM 240

Wed 4:00-7:00
Dwinelle 226
No Lab

Prof. Jacob Gaboury
Office Hours: By Appointment
Office Location: 6223 Dwinelle

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers an introduction to media theory not as a fixed disciplinary form but as a heterogeneous field of inquiry with multiple and competing origins, influences, and applications. Tracing media theory's early 20th century origins alongside field-defining movements - including the Toronto School, the New York School, and the more recent turn toward so-called German Media Theory - the course will track the expansion of the media concept to its near-universal application across a range of disciplines from film studies and art history to geology and quantum mechanics. On completing the course students will be able to articulate and engage with contemporary debates in media theory, as well as describe the ways in which media theory has transformed over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Required Texts

NOTE: All texts but our final three books will be provided as PDFs on bCourses. Nonetheless it is imperative that you bring a copy of the readings to each class and refer to them in our discussion. The following two books should be purchased as physical copies:

Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press (2016).

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.

CLASS SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTIONS

01/17

Syllabus Presentation

General Introductions

01/24

Ben Kafka. "Medium/Media" Apter, et al., eds., *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press (2014) 626-629.

John Guillory. "Genesis of the Media Concept" *Critical Inquiry* 36 (Winter 2010): 321-362.

Hansen, Mark BN. "Media theory." *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 2-3 (2006): 297-306.

Pias, Claus. "What's German About German Media Theory?" In *Media Transatlantic: Developments in Media and Communication Studies between North American and German-speaking Europe*. Springer International Publishing, 2016. pp. 15-27.

FRAMES

01/31

Communication

Innis, Harold A. "The bias of communication." *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science/Revue canadienne de economiques et science politique* 15, no. 4 (1949): 457-476.

Flusser, Villem. "On the theory of communication." *Writings*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. 2002 pp.8-20.

Peters, John Durham. *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*. University of Chicago Press, 2012. 1-32.

Carey, James W. "A Cultural Approach to Communication," *Communication as culture, revised edition: Essays on media and society*. Routledge, 2008.

02/07

Media

McLuhan, Marshall. "Part I" *Understanding Media, The Extensions of Man*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: MIT Press (1994) 1-76

McLuhan, Marshall. "Playboy magazine interview." *Playboy Magazine* 26 (1969).

Enzensberger, Hans Magnus. "Constituents of a Theory of the Media." *New Left Review* 64 (1970). 13-36

Baudrillard, Jean. "Requiem for the Media." *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1981): 164-84.

02/14

Technology

Heidegger, Martin. "The Question Concerning Technology". *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. New York: Harper (1977) 3-35.

Winner, Langdon. "Do artifacts have politics?." *Daedalus* (1980): 121-136.

Raymond Williams. "The Technology and the Society" and "Effects of the Technology and its Uses." In *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. New York: Schocken Books, 1974. Pp. 9-31; 119-134.

Marx, Leo. "Technology: The emergence of a hazardous concept." *Technology and Culture* 51, no. 3 (2010): 561-577.

02/21

Sensation

Benjamin, Walter. "The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility," *The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility and other writings on media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin." *Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP* (2008).19-55.

Hansen, Miriam. "Benjamin's aura." *Critical Inquiry* 34, no. 2 (2008): 336-375.

Somainsi, Antonio. "Walter Benjamin's media theory: The Medium and the Apparat." *Grey Room* 62 (2016): 6-41.

Crary, Jonathan. "Techniques of the Observer." *October* 45 (1988): 3-35.

02/28

Information

Wiener, Norbert. "Cybernetics." *Scientific American* 179, no. 5 (1948): 14-19.

Weaver, Warren. "Recent contributions to the mathematical theory of communication." *ETC: a review of general semantics* (1953): 261-281.

Aspray, William F. "The scientific conceptualization of information: A survey." *Annals of the History of Computing* 7, no. 2 (1985): 117-140.

Durham Peters, John. "Information: Notes Toward a Critical History" *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 12 (1988) 9-23.

Terranova, Tiziana. "Communication beyond Meaning: On the Cultural Politics of Information" *Social Text* 22:3 (2004) 51-73.

Galison, Peter. "The ontology of the enemy: Norbert Wiener and the cybernetic vision." *Critical inquiry* 21, no. 1 (1994): 228-266.

03/07

Midterm Presentations

CONCEPTS

03/21

Aufschreibesysteme

Kittler, Friedrich. "Foreward" *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* Stanford University Press, 1992. vii-xxxiii.

Kittler, Friedrich. "Preface," "Introduction," and "Film" *Gramophone-Film-Typewriter*, Translated by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. , xxxix-xli; 1- 19; 115-182.

Siegert, Bernhard. "Media After Media" *Media After Kittler* eds. Eleni Ikoniadou and Scott Wilson (2015) 79-91.

04/04

Dispositif

Foucault, Michel. "The Confession of the Flesh" *Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, Colin Gordon ed. New York: Vintage (1980) 194-228.

Deleuze, Gilles "What is a Dispositif?" *Michel Foucault Philosopher*. New York: Routledge (1992) 159-168.

Agamben, Giorgio. "What is an Apparatus?" *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*. Stanford: Stanford University Press (2009) 1-24.

Pasquinelli, Matteo. "What an apparatus is not: On the archeology of the norm in foucault, canguilhem, and goldstein." *Parrhesia* 22 (2015): 78-89.

Kessler, Frank. "The cinema of attractions as dispositif." *The cinema of attractions reloaded* (2006): 57-69.

Kessler, Frank. "Notes on dispositif." *Utrecht (NL): Universiteit Utrecht* 15 (2006).

04/11

Kulturtechnik

Siegert, Bernhard. *Cultural Techniques: Grids, Filters, Doors, and Other Articulations of the Real*. Oxford University Press, 2015. 1-17, 97-120, 192-205.

Winthrop-Young, Geoffrey. "The Kultur of Cultural Techniques Conceptual Inertia and the Parasitic Materialities of Ontologization." *Cultural Politics* 10, no. 3 (2014): 376-388.

Mauss, Marcel. "Techniques of the body." *Economy and society* 2, no. 1 (1973): 70-88.

FORMS

04/18

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton University Press, 2015.

04/25

Sharpe, Christina. *In the wake: On blackness and being*. Duke University Press, 2016.

ASSESSMENT

Participation: 20%

Presentations: 30%

Midterm Paper/Presentation: 10%

Final Paper: 40%

ENGAGEMENT

I expect you to attend and actively engage in class. You will notice that you are being graded not simply on your attendance, but on your engagement with the class. Engagement can mean any number of things, from asking questions in class to engaging course material both in and out of class. I recognize that different students have different learning styles, and may find it challenging to speak up every day in discussion. The important thing is that you find ways to make your engagement legible to me as best you can. If you think you are struggling with this, please meet with me during office hours to discuss.

PRESENTATIONS

Once or twice (depending on class size) over the course of the semester, you will be responsible for leading discussion on the class readings for that day. Each class period I will begin with a 20-30 minute lecture/presentation on the broader framework of the reading we have done, its disciplinary home and historical context. Your responsibility will be to stick closely to the text, draw out its arguments and conflicts, and lead the class through key concepts that we might derive from the work. You are encouraged to produce handouts or supply media objects to help us think through and apply the readings to our own work.

ESSAYS

You will be responsible for two essays to be completed over the course of the semester. The first will take the form of a five page conference-style paper, which will outline your topic, thesis, and framework for the final paper. You will then present the paper in class on March 7 and receive feedback from the class to help you shape your final project. The presentation should be 10 minutes long with an additional 10 minutes for feedback.

Your final paper will be a 20 page original research paper on the topic of your choice. This paper is an opportunity for you to produce work related to your research interests in the context of the class readings. The goal of this paper is to reframe your area of research around the concept of media/mediation, in distinction with theories of textuality, artistic or creative practice, etc. What new arguments or claims does this shift in register allow you to enact, and how might it reorient your work for a broader field or audience?

LATE POLICY

I may offer extensions on writing assignments only if you provide me with at least three days' notice and sufficient evidence that you are working on an idea that requires more time. This does not guarantee an extension, but rather is the base requirement for a request. Do not ask for an extension the day before an assignment is due, or if you have not started writing yet. Late assignments will be docked 1/3 a grade for each day they are late (B+ to a B, B to a B-, etc.).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Any suspected instance of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic integrity page at the Center for Student Conduct's website at: <http://sa.berkeley.edu/conduct/integrity>.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

If you have a documented physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact the Berkeley Disabled Students Program, 260 César E. Chávez Student Center, #4250, (510) 643-0518. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.