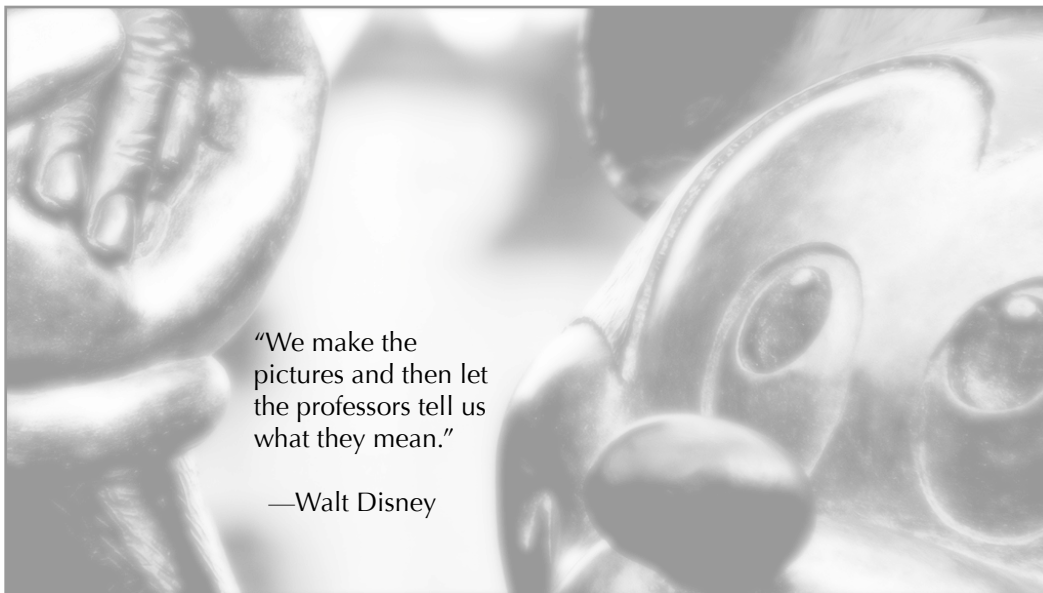


Communication 401: Advanced Media Theory



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Office Hours: Monday, 10:30-11:30; Tuesday, 2:00-3:00; or by appointment
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Course Summary

This course will serve as an advanced introduction to media theory, including units on political economy, authorship, feminism, postmodernism, and more. Our case study will be the multifaceted media empire that is the Disney corporation, a storied company that has grown up with the modern media—and that generations of Americans have grown up with as well. Disney represents some of the best-loved media products of all time, but also some of the most problematic, and also engages in a wide range of positive and not-so-positive business and political practices, making it an ideal exemplar of the power and potential of the media in society.

As a liberal arts course, this class has been designed to help you move (in Barry Kroll’s words) from ignorant certainty to intelligent confusion. In other words, you have ideas and feelings about the media generally and Disney specifically, possibly passionately-held ideas and feelings in many cases. My goal in this course is to complicate those ideas and leave you appreciating the complex processes through which stories and ideologies get produced and consumed, as well as the political, economic, and social implications of those stories.

This course will not be “hating on” Disney, nor will we speak often of the “genius” of Disney, although Walt Disney himself and countless people who have worked for the Disney corporation over the years can legitimately claim that distinction. It’s best not to think of this as a class about Disney at all; it’s a class about some of the ways we can understand the stories that we as a society tell ourselves. Disney merely provides an especially important example of those stories, their origins, and their consequences.

Importantly, too, this class is a writing class. There is basically one assignment: write a 25-page research paper. That assignment will be broken up into discrete sections, but they are all geared toward the same goal of a semester-long research project. Preparedness and engagement will be graded, and you will have to write a few reading summaries, but otherwise there are no exams, no quizzes, no exercises, no nuthin not connected to the paper. There is but reading and viewing and discussing and thinking and writing, not always in that order.

Required Text

Laughey, Dan. *Key Themes in Media Theory*. Open University Press/McGraw-Hill, 2007. Available in the bookstore.

Assignments

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Late assignments will be penalized ½-grade per day (e.g. B+ to B). Reading summaries may not be handed in late for credit.

Reading Summaries	09%	Tweet	01%
Sources Assignment (9/25)	05%	Peer Review	05%
Paper: first draft (10/21)	15%	Preparedness & Engagement	15%
Blog Post (11/4)	12%	Paper (revision)	30%
Abstract	08%		

Screenings

Although there is not a separate screening time in this class, screenings are a required part of the course. DVD copies for all screenings will be on reserve in the library every day except Mondays (when I'll have them for class); additionally, many (but not all) of the screenings are available on Netflix, YouTube, etc.

Policies and Expectations

Attendance: Your attendance and participation are integral to the success of the course as well as your own personal achievement. I will be taking attendance daily, and missing class or failing to participate constructively will definitely impact your class engagement grade. You are allowed **three absences** during the semester for sports, illness, or other reasons. On your fourth absence from class, your final grade will drop a half-letter grade (e.g. from B to B-). On each of your fifth and sixth absences your grade will drop additional half-letters. If you miss more than six classes for any reason other than verified medical or other personal emergency, you will receive an F for the course. You are responsible for all class content from days that you have missed.

Lateness: Be in your seat and ready to begin class at the scheduled start time. If you come in late (i.e. after I have shut the door and begun class), it will count as half an absence.

Engagement: The main responsibilities of creating a productive and enjoyable class rest with you, and that is why class contribution is weighted heavily in your final course grade (15%). Your active engagement affects not only what you get out of the course but also what your classmates get out of the course. Merely attending class and taking notes is not enough for your success in this course.

Preparation: Always bring that day's readings to class with you. The syllabus will always state clearly what you should read prior to each class, which assignments you should hand in, and what else you must do or bring for a given day. Late assignments will be penalized by a half-grade for each 24 hours of lateness (e.g. from B+ to B). If you know that you will have difficulty completing an assignment on time, let me know before the deadline and I will try to work with you if possible.

Written Work: All written work must be typed (double-spaced), spellchecked, and proofread. Failure to run your work through a spellchecker (one more time before printing is a good idea) will automatically result in a half-letter-grade deduction from your grade for that assignment. Multiple-page documents must be stapled—I will not accept unstapled work, and if you hand in an unstapled multiple-page document anyway, you will receive a full-letter-grade deduction on that assignment (please note that paper clips and dog-ears are *not* staples).

Grades: All assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade. The calculation of your grade will be based on a 1,000-point scale, and the weight of each assignment is listed above. If you are concerned about your grade, come talk to me as early as possible.

In-Class Behavior: You may not eat in class (beverages are okay). You may not leave class except in actual emergency situations--no casual trips to the restroom or water fountain.

Electronics: You may not use computers in class without prior approval. Your cell phone or PDA must be turned off and put away during class. If you absolutely need to have your phone on during class for some reason, talk to me at the beginning of the semester or the particular class session.

NOTE: TEXTING OR WEB-SURFING IN CLASS WILL RESULT IN AN **AUTOMATIC ZERO FOR CLASS ENGAGEMENT** FOR THE SEMESTER. THIS IS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE INSTRUCTOR AND **THERE IS NO APPEAL:** IF I THINK YOU'VE DONE IT, YOU'VE DONE IT. SO DON'T EVEN *GIVE THE APPEARANCE* OF SNEAKING IN A TEXT, A QUICK PEEK AT FACEBOOK, ETC.

Email Policy: I will regularly use email to send out announcements, changes in the syllabus, reminders about tests or due dates, etc. It is your responsibility to check your email regularly to keep up-to-date with these announcements. I promise to answer all email from students within 24 hours (36 hours on weekends) and will hold you responsible for any announcements made via email within 24 hours of the announced change (36 hours on weekends).

Accessibility and Special Accommodations: It is important that the course be accessible to all students. If you need any alternative accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or evaluation procedures in order for you to be able to participate fully in the course, or if there are any external issues that may affect your work in this course, please contact me privately as soon as possible to discuss your specific needs. I rely on the Academic Support & Enrichment Center in 102 Doane to verify the need for reasonable accommodations based on documentation on file in that office.

Academic Honesty: You may not turn in substantially similar work to two classes without the express consent of *both* instructors. All sources in your written work must be properly cited; if you have any doubts about correct citation, contact the Writing Center or any of the many paper and online guides to academic citation. Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated, and students found to have committed plagiarism, **regardless of whether the plagiarism was committed intentionally and knowingly**, will face severe grade penalties (up to and including an F in the course) and will also be reported to the university to face further academic discipline.

There is a foolproof way to avoid this outcome: do your own work and cite all of your sources correctly. You are encouraged to use the resources available in the library system and the Writing Center to guide your research. In addition, I call your attention to Denison's statement on academic integrity:

"Proposed and developed by Denison students, passed unanimously by DCGA and Denison's faculty, the Code of Academic Integrity requires that instructors notify the Associate Provost of cases of academic dishonesty, and it requires that cases be heard by the Academic Integrity Board. Further, the code makes students responsible for promoting a culture of integrity on campus and acting in instances in which integrity is violated.

"Academic honesty, the cornerstone of teaching and learning, lays the foundation for lifelong integrity. Academic dishonesty is intellectual theft. It includes, but is not limited to, providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for evaluation. This standard applies to all work ranging from daily homework assignments to major exams. Students must clearly cite any sources consulted—not only for quoted phrases but also for ideas and information that are not common knowledge. Neither ignorance nor carelessness is an acceptable defense in cases of plagiarism. It is the student's responsibility to follow the appropriate format for citations. Students should ask their instructors for assistance in determining what sorts of materials and assistance are appropriate for assignments and for guidance in citing such materials clearly.

"For further information about the Code of Academic Integrity see <http://www.denison.edu/about/integrity.html>."

Reading Summaries

For most class sessions, a group will be assigned to write summaries of the reading(s) for that day. These summaries should be emailed as a Word document attachment to assignments@billkirkpatrick.net by **8:00 p.m. the night before class** (points will be deducted from summaries submitted between midnight and class; summaries may not be handed in for credit after class). The guidelines for these are as follows:

- First, you should give a sentence or two stating **your understanding of the theme for the day**: why did I assign this (these) reading(s) to you? What ties all of the articles for that day together?
- Next, your summary should synopsize the key reading for that day (if there are multiple readings, summarize the one that has an asterisk by it). This synopsis should clearly **state the thesis** of the reading: what, exactly, is the author arguing? It is important to give the author's largest claim(s) in your own words. Do not just parrot back the author's own language, nor simply make vague statements about the argument. Your synopsis should also clearly state **why the author's argument matters**: what's the "so what"?
- Finally, after synopsizing the article, you should give **an original thought** based on considering the readings: what new insight or understanding did the readings provide *you*? How have the readings changed your perspective on digital technology? How might you begin to apply them?
- Summaries must be **between 250-300 words total**, plus any bibliographic information. Points will be deducted on summaries that fall outside of this range in either direction.
- Your summary should be **well written**: grammatically correct, almost entirely typo-free, and stylistically polished. Summaries with substantial grammar and proofreading errors will receive a \surd^- regardless of content.
- Summaries will be graded as \surd^+ , \surd , or \surd^- and will cumulatively comprise 9% of your final grade. For the purposes of calculating your grade, you will receive 30 points for each \surd^+ , 23 points for each \surd , and 15 points for each \surd^- (out of a total of 1000 points for the semester).

Daily Schedule

All readings (except Laughey) will be linked on Blackboard. Screenings will be on reserve in the library, and many of them are also readily available online. Readings should be completed by that day's class, and you should come prepared to discuss them. **Every single thing on this syllabus is subject to change, so check your email or Blackboard for announcements and keep on your toes.**

Sep. 2 **Introduction: What is media theory?**

Sep. 4 **Authorship & Adaptation I**

Read: *Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962"
Barthes, "The Death of the Author"
Lethem, "The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism"
Turn In: Reading Summary (Group 1)

Sep. 9 **Authorship & Adaptation II**

Watch: Disney Compilation 1: "Steamboat Bill," *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* (excerpt), *Steamboat Willie*, *Puss In Boots*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*
Read: Laughey, pp. 38-41
Grimm & Grimm, "Little Snow-White"
Perrault, "Puss In Boots" (NS)
Lessig, "Creators"
Wasko, 83-89
*Zipes: "Breaking the Disney Spell"
Turn In: Reading Summary (Group 2)

Sep. 11	Political Economy I	<u>Read:</u> Marx & Engels, <i>The German Ideology</i> (excerpt) *Adorno & Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry" Herman & Chomsky, "A Propaganda Model"
		<u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 3)
Sep. 16	Political Economy II	<u>Watch:</u> <i>The Incredibles</i> <u>Read:</u> Laughey, pp. 122-138 Giroux, "Disney, Militarization, and the National-Security State After 9/11"
Sep. 18	Ideology and Hegemony I	<u>Read:</u> *Hall, "Encoding/Decoding" Barthes, "Myth Today" Laughey, pp. 54-77 <u>Email:</u> General paper topic by 5:00 p.m. to assignments@billkirkpatrick.net <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 4)
Sep. 23	Ideology and Hegemony II	<u>Watch:</u> <i>Vanishing Prairie, Seal Island</i> <u>Read:</u> Deiss, "Do You Understand Your Child's Secret Language?" Spock, <i>Baby and Child Care</i> (excerpt) Disney, "What I've Learned From the Animals" *Sammond, "Raising the Natural Child" <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 5)
Sep. 25	Writing a Research Paper	<u>Turn In:</u> Sources Assignment
Sep. 30	NO CLASS: Extra office hours to discuss your papers	
Oct. 2	Feminism and Postfeminism I	<u>Read:</u> *Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" Faludi, "Blame It on Feminism" *McRobbie, "Postfeminism" <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 1: Mulvey; Group 2: McRobbie)
Oct. 7	Feminism and Postfeminism II	<u>Watch:</u> "Me, Myself and Time" (link on BB) <i>Enchanted</i> <u>Read:</u> Laughey, pp. 100-120 Tasker, "Enchanted by Postfeminism" *Blue, "D-Signed for Girls" <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 3)
Oct. 9	Queer Theory I	<u>Read:</u> *Doty, <i>Making Things Perfectly Queer</i> (excerpt) Lipton, "Queer Readings of Popular Culture" <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 4)
Oct. 14	Queer Theory II	<u>Watch:</u> Disney Compilation 2: <i>Ferdinand the Bull, The Reluctant Dragon, "Spin and Marty"</i> <u>Read:</u> *Griffin, "Mickey Mouse: Always Gay!" <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 5)

Oct. 16	NO CLASS: Extra office hours	
Oct. 21	NO CLASS: Paper due by 5:00 p.m. to assignments@billkirkpatrick.net	
Oct. 23	NO CLASS: Paper conferences 10/22-10/25	
Oct. 28	Postmodernism I	<u>Read:</u> *Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra" Jameson, <i>Postmodernism</i> (excerpt) <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 1)
Oct. 30	Postmodernism II	<u>Watch:</u> "Weddings of a Lifetime" (link on BB) <u>Read:</u> Laughey, pp. 147-159 *Levine, "Fractured Fairy Tales" <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 2)
Nov. 4	Representations I: Overview In-class screening: <i>Mickey Mouse Monopoly</i>	<u>Turn in:</u> 1000-word blog post
Nov. 6	Representations II: Orientalism	<u>Read:</u> *Said, <i>Orientalism</i> (excerpt) Laughey, pp. 138-142 <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 3)
Nov. 11	Representations III	<u>Watch:</u> <i>Pocahontas</i> <u>Read:</u> *Kutsuzawa, "Disney's Pocahontas" Lacroix, "Images of Animated Others" <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 4)
Nov. 13	Representations IV	<u>Read:</u> *Dyer, "The Matter of Whiteness" <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 5)
Nov. 18	Representations V	<u>Watch:</u> Disney Compilation 3: excerpts from <i>Song of the South</i> and <i>Dumbo</i> <i>The Princess and the Frog</i> <u>Read:</u> Breaux, "After 75 Years of Magic"
Nov. 20	Writing Workshop I	<u>Turn in:</u> 250-word abstract of paper

THANKSGIVING BREAK, NOV. 23-NOV. 31

Dec. 2	Writing Workshop II	<u>Bring:</u> Two copies of your paper
Dec. 4	Globalization I	<u>Read:</u> Wise, "Culture and the Global" <u>Tweet:</u> 140-character statement of your argument
Dec. 9	Globalization II Note: Evals in Sec. 01	<u>Read:</u> Fung & Lee, "Localizing a Global Amusement Park" <u>Bring:</u> Laptop, iPad, or similar if available
Dec. 11	NO CLASS: Extra office hours	
Dec. 17	Final Paper due to assignments@billkirkpatrick.net by 11:00 a.m.	