

**Communication 300: Foundations for the Study of Entertainment, Communication and Society**

Fall 2016

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**Course Description:**

The influence of entertainment culture is one that we can hardly ignore. This course will explore the impact of entertainment on individuals, culture and society. From a variety of perspectives, the course will introduce some of the key debates involved in the study of entertainment. You will become familiar with the historical roots of the use of entertainment and the very idea of entertainment; the consequences for the individual and for society of the power of entertainment; the structure, ownership and production of the entertainment industry; and the ways in which our personal lives are implicated in entertainment culture. The course will consider questions such as: what is the history of contemporary U.S. entertainment? Why do people around the globe seek entertainment experiences and why do they choose specific media, products or genres? Is entertainment “serious” culture? Can entertainment be both political and trivial? What does it mean for a society that entertainment is a crucial part of how we define “culture”? Although our focus will be on entertainment within American culture, we will also consider questions of globalization, such as: what does it mean to “export” a culture? Or, from another direction, what does it mean to “export” values through entertainment?

**Course Objectives**

- To assess the promises and problematics of media representations in entertainment culture.
- To consider the intersection of the popular and the political as it occurs through entertainment.
- To complete two critical projects around the issue of entertainment culture and social change.

**Course Readings:**

All course readings (except for occasional handouts and a few PDF files on Blackboard) can be found in a mandatory reader with photocopied articles available at Magic Machine. Location for Magic Machine: Shopping Center Olympic Park Plaza, 2820 S. Vermont Ave., No.12 Between 29th & 28th St., 3 Blocks North of USC.

NOTE: There is significant material covered in lecture that is not in the readings and you cannot pass the course if you do not attend most of the lectures.

**Course Requirements and Attendance:**

1. Students are required to do all of the reading, attend all classes, complete all assignments, and participate fully in class discussions. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken each class meeting -- tardies (whether coming to class late or leaving early) will be tracked along with absences. Students who miss more than two lectures will have their grades reduced and risk failing the course: there is a deduction of half a grade off the final grade for each unexcused absence. Attendance grade may also be affected by your promptness and level of attention during class lecture. Filling a seat does not constitute participation. I understand that some students are more overtly involved than others, however I expect all of you to find ways to contribute within the classroom by being supportive listeners, thoughtful speakers, and respectful peers.
2. Competing Media: While in class, you are expected to be fully present. This means in part that you must turn off your cell phone when class begins, iPods and other technologies should not be used or examined during the class period, and if using a laptop, you should take pains to avoid extraneous web-surfing, doing other coursework, or otherwise allowing your computer to distract you (and potentially others) during class.

\* NOTE: Use of computer in the classroom is a privilege. You may use a computer in the classroom ONLY for taking notes. If you abuse this privilege computers may be banned from the classroom altogether.

**Assignments and Grading:**

The final course grade will be based on the following distribution:

Class participation	10%
Extra Credit	5% (.5% surveys, 1% FG)
Reflection 1 and 2	14% (7% each: 9/13; 9/29)
Midterm	25%
Paper	26%
Final Exam	25%

You must complete ALL of these assignments in order to pass the class. **Failure to complete one or more of them will result in an F in the class.**

You will receive details about each assignment/exam separately.

All assignments are to be turned in when due. You will receive a grade reduction (ex: A to A-) for each day that the assignment is late (including Saturdays and Sundays). After seven days, you will no longer be eligible to turn in the assignment and will receive a zero.

If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must appeal it in writing, stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate, within one week of receiving the graded assignment. No late appeals will be accepted for review.

\*All written assignments will be graded for clarity, quality of argument, quality of analysis, and quality of writing. All papers should be typed, use a single appropriate format for citations (MLA, APA, or Chicago is fine), and should be spell-checked. Serious errors in grammar, spelling, or citation may negatively affect your grade. Take advantage of the Writing Center if you need assistance copyediting your paper. Students should retain electronic copies of all written assignments and be prepared to provide them at the professor's request.

**Academic Integrity:**

Cheating and plagiarism are not games where you try to pull one over on the professor or the TA, they are means by which you undermine your own educational opportunities. Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated, and ignorance will not be considered an excuse for such behavior. The School of Communication and Journalism is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. It endorses and acts on the SCampus policies and procedures detailed in the section titled "University Sanction Guidelines." These policies, procedures and guidelines will be assiduously upheld. They protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course, and be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

If you have any questions, please see the TA or me and we'll work together to make sure you're on a path that will lead to successful learning without dishonest means. Along with more "cut and dried" types of cheating, keep in mind that:

Not citing sources is a form of plagiarism. Be honest about where you get your information, as recognizing the scholarly work that precedes you is a sign of respect and "due diligence" in your research.

Turning in a single paper in multiple classes—even if you wrote it—is plagiarism. If you have a topic that you'd like to pursue in multiple courses, you must talk to me (and your other professor) about how to do so appropriately.

**Disability:**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.- 5:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Website and contact information for DSP:

[http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html), (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu)  
Stress Management:

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

**Sexual Assault Resource Center:**

The Center for Women & Men and the Sexual Assault Resource Center are one and the same. Student Counseling Services is a separate place that also offers confidential counseling and support groups on a variety of other topics. To schedule an appointment with Student Counseling Services, call (213) 740-7711 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays or visit the Engemann Student Health Center on the University Park Campus.

**Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis:**

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

**ESL Students:**

Please inform me as soon as possible if you require special accommodations based on your understanding of the English language.

**SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: August 23/25**

Tuesday: Intro

Thursday: Richard Dyer, from *Only Entertainment*, (Routledge, 1992),  
“Introduction.”

**Boundaries of E!: historical debates**

**Week 2: August 30/ September 1**

Tuesday: Plato, “Republic, V (473b-480) and X (595-608b).” *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, (Princeton, 1963, 191).

See the following link:

“Plato’s Popular Culture Problem, and Ours”. *New York Times*, August 29, 2010  
<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/08/29/platos-pop-culture-problem-and-ours/>

Thursday: Aristotle, “Poetics, 6-19” *Introduction to Aristotle*, Richard McKeon, 2nd ed., (Chicago, 1947, 1973). (**Available on BB**)

Daniel Boorstin, from *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, (Vintage, 1961), “From Ideal to Image: The Search for Self-Fulfilling Prophecies”.

**Week 3: September 6/8**

Tuesday: Johan Huizinga, from *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, (Beacon Press, 1950), “Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon.” (**Available on BB**)

Thursday: Jeffrey Jones, “Rethinking Civic Engagement in the Age of Popular Culture” from *Entertaining Politics: New Political Television and Civic Culture* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

**Week 4: September 13/15**

Tuesday: Liesbet Van Zoonen, “Personalization: The Celebrity Politician” from *Entertaining the Citizen: When Politics and Popular Culture Converge*, (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

**Reflection 1 DUE**

Thursday: Jeffrey Jones. "The Comedian-Talk Show host as Political Commentator: Dennis Miller, Bill Maher, and John Stewart" from *Entertaining Politics: New Political Television and Civic Culture* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2005)

**Studying Entertainment  
Social sciences and humanities approach**

**Week 5: September 20/22**

Tuesday: Megan Garber. "From Amy Schumer to John Oliver, How Comedians Became Public Intellectuals". *The Atlantic*, 5-28-2015. **(Available on BB)**

Thursday: Jeff Jones. "Toward a New Vocabulary for Political Communication Research: A Response to Michael X. Delli Carpini". **(Available on BB)**

**Week 6: September 27/29**

Tuesday: Albert Hadley Cantril. "Preface." From *The invasion from Mars: A study in the psychology of panic* (New Brunswick, UK, 1940)

See the following link (Available on BB):

"Radio Listeners in Panic, Taking War Drama as Fact: Many Flee Homes to Escape 'Gas Raid from Mars'". *New York Times*, October 31, 1938.

<http://select.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=F70A17FB3D5F1B7A93C3AA178BD95F4C8385F9>. **(Available on BB)**

Thursday: Debates and Issues:  
Common Critiques of Media Effects:  
<http://web.mit.edu/cms/People/henry3/profjenkins.html>

How Pro-Social Message Make their Way into Entertainment Programming. A Report to the Carnegie Foundation on Media, Citizens & Democracy. A Project of the Center for Excellence in Government and The USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. **(Available on BB)**

**Reflection 2 DUE**

**Week 7: October 4/6**

- Tuesday: Martine Bouman, "Turtles and Peacocks" Collaboration in Entertainment Education Television. Communication theory. May 2002.  
**(Available on BB)**
- Thursday: Jones, J. P. (In Press). A cultural approach to the study of mediated citizenship. Social Semiotics 16 (2): 365-383.

**Week 8: October 11/13**

- Tuesday: Midterm prep
- Thursday: **MIDTERM**

**The Political economy of the Entertainment Industry**

**Week 9: October 18/20**

Issues of content and ownership

- Tuesday: Michael Parenti. "Preemptions, Profits and Censors." From Make-Believe Media: The Politics of Entertainment. St. Martin's, 1992.
- Thursday: Jeremy Rifkin, excerpt from The Age of Access: The new culture of hypercapitalism where all of life is a paid-for experience. **(Available on BB)**
- Chris Anderson. "The long tail"

**Week 10: October 25/27**

Policies and regulations

- Tuesday: Christina Dralle, "Communication Media in a Democratic Society," 9 Comm. L. & Poly 213-235 (2004). **(Available on BB as well as reader)**
- Thursday: Robert, McChesney. "Media Policy Goes to Main Street: The Uprising of 2003." The Communication Review, 7: 223-258, 2004.

**New Media and Old Media. A changed landscape?**

**Week 11: November 1/3**

New media New Possibilities?

Tuesday: Henry Jenkins. "Photoshop for Democracy." From *Convergence Culture: Where old and New media collide*. New York University Press, 2006.

Thursday: Bond et al. "A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization." *Nature*. 2012 September 13; 489(7415) (**Available on BB**)

**Week 12: November 8/10**

Tuesday: Lynn Owens and Kendall Palmer. "Making the News: Anarchist Counter-Public relations on the World Wide Web." *Critical Studies in Media Communication*. Vol. 20, No. 4, December 2003, pp. 335 – 361.

Guest Lecture: David Craig

Thursday: Tanni Haas. "From "Public Journalism" to the "publics Journalism"? Rhetoric and reality in the discourse on Weblogs." *Journalism Studies*, Volume 6, Number 3, 2005, pp. 387 -396.

**Week 13: November 15/17**

Impact of cultural consumption

Tuesday: Nestor Garcia Canclini. "Introduction" and "Consumption is Good for Thinking." From *Consumers and Citizens: Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

Thursday: Sarah Banet-Weiser, "Branding Politics: Shopping for Change?" From *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*, New York University Press, 2012. (Available on BB)

**Paper DUE**

**Entertaining Globally or Global Entertainment?**

**Week 14: November 22/24**

Tuesday: Tomlinson, John (1997) *Cultural Globalization and Cultural Imperialism*, pp. 170-190 in Ali Mohammadi (ed.) *International Communication and Globalization*. London: Sage. (Available on BB)

Thursday: THANKSGIVING

**Week 15: November 29/ December 1**

Tuesday: Evelyn Asultany. "Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity through Non-Profit Advertising Post-9/11. The American Studies Association, 2007.

Thursday: Greg Dickinson. "Selling Democracy: Consumer Culture and Citizenship in the wake of September 11." Southern Communication Journal, Volume 70, Number 4, Summer 2005, pp. 271-284.

**NOTE: Final exam – Tuesday December 13, 8-10 AM**