

understanding contemporary media

MFCO 102



Please note: the following is a shortened example of a course outline as it has been taught in past years. As such it is **indicative only**: the assessment and schedule may change. If you require any further information please contact the department: mfco@otago.ac.nz.

Paper Description

We live in a highly mediatised world. The paper will equip students with tools for engaging critically with this world in both New Zealand and international contexts. This paper introduces students to both the historical framework of media studies and the contemporary discourses that define the discipline. Students will engage with theories of representation, subjectivity and power, as well as develop valuable skills for analysing media texts including advertisements, television programmes and social media. The skills developed in *Understanding Contemporary Media* include semiotic and discourse analysis of a range of media texts in terms of the following frameworks: Marxism, feminism and critical race theory.

Paper Aims

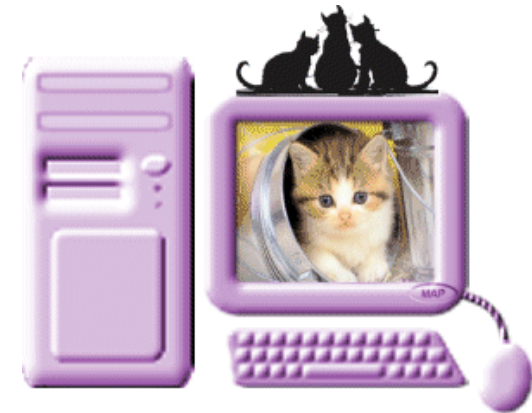
“Understanding Contemporary Media” will equip students’ with analytical tools for engaging with media in New Zealand and internationally. Students will be introduced to key concepts in media studies, as well as developing strategies for critically engaging

with a variety of theoretical and media texts. Along with lectures and tutorials, students will be given the opportunity to hone their written skills in order to effectively communicate knowledge and understanding of the main issues raised by the paper.

Paper Objectives

Students will be given the opportunity to:

- Gain a theoretical understanding of the social issues raised by contemporary media studies
- Develop critical tools for analysing contemporary media
- Develop an understanding of the distinctive and interconnected nature of contemporary media
- Form necessary skills for writing about contemporary media.



Assessment Information

50% Internal, 50% Final Exam

Internal – 50%		
Take Home Concepts Test (advertisement analysis)	Due 24 th August by 12noon	Worth 25% of final grade
Essay (discourse analysis)	Due 5 th October by 12 noon	Worth 25% of final grade

External – 50%

3-hour Exam

During exam period

Worth 50% of final grade

Weekly Lectures and Readings

Note: if required, the paper outline may be altered during the semester. There is also *extensive* further reading on BlackBoard.

Week One: Defining media studies

Set reading:

Nicholas Carah and Eric Louw. 2015. 'Introduction'. *Media & Society: Production, Content & Participation*. London: SAGE. pp. 1-8.

Week Two: Mediated meanings

Set reading:

Mitchell Hobbs. 2015. 'Semiotics'. *Communication, Digital Media + Everyday Life*. Tony Chalkley, Mitchell Hobbs; Adam Brown; Toija Cinque; Brad Warren and Mark Finn. Eds. Melbourne: OUP. pp 80-92.

Optional viewing:

Semiotics Inc. 2011. 'Semiotics of the Tie' *Big Bang Theory*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeefWS8YrDw>

Week Three: Media and representation

Set reading:

Nicholas Carah and Eric Louw. 2015. 'Meaning, Representation and Power'. *Media & Society: Production, Content & Participation*. London: SAGE. pp. 13-38.

Optional viewing:

Stuart Hall. nd. (c. 1992). *Representation and the Media*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTzMsPqssOY>

Week Four: Subjectivity, ideology and power

Guest lecturer: Brett Nicholls

Set reading:

Adam Brown. 2015. 'Reading Film: Techniques, Identification and Ideology'. *Communication, Digital Media + Everyday Life*. Tony Chalkley,



Mitchell Hobbs; Adam Brown; Toija Cinque; Brad Warren and Mark Finn. Eds. Melbourne: OUP. pp. 155-169.

Brett Nicholls. 2014. 'Ideology'. *Media Text Hack*. <http://mediatexthack.wordpress.com/2013/12/12/ideology/>

Week Five: Advertising

Set reading:

Michael O'Shaughnessy and Jane Stadler. 2008. 'Reading Images and Advertisements'. *Media and Society*. Melbourne: OUP. pp. 145-162.

Judith Williamson. 1979. 'Introduction: Meaning and Ideology'. *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*. London: Marion Boyars. pp. 11-14.

Optional viewing:

John Berger / BBC. 1972. *Ways of Seeing: Episode 4*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhOVdoMxYxU>

Optional reading:

Sut Jhally and James Twitchell. nd. 'Jhally vs Twitchell: On Advertising'.

Week Six: Mediating class

Set reading:

Chris Barker. 2004. selection from *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies*, London: SAGE. pp. 113-115, 156.

Thomas Frank. 'Commodify your dissent'. 163-9.

William Outhwaite. 2015. 'Capitalism'. *Social Theory*. London: Profile. pp. 21-35.

Optional reading:

Maddison Stoff. 2017. 'Dole-bludgers, leaners and other neoliberal fantasies'. *Overland*. <https://overland.org.au/2017/01/dole-bludgers-leaners-and-other-neoliberal-fantasies/>

* Useful resource on Marx:

<http://www.marxists.org/subject/students/index.htm>

Week Seven: Mediating gender

Set reading:

bell hooks. nd. 'Understanding Patriarchy'. *Imagine No Borders: Louisville's Radical Lending Library*.

Michael O'Shaughnessy and Jane Stadler. 2008. 'Feminism, Postfeminism and Ideologies of Femininity'. *Media and Society*. Melbourne: OUP. pp. 359-377.

Optional reading:

Beulah Devaney. 2014. 'A Beginner's Guide To Contemporary Feminist Language'. *Buzzfeed*.



* Useful resource on feminism:
<http://everydayfeminism.com/>

Week Eight: Mediating race

Guest lecturer: Holly Randell-Moon

Set reading:

Peggy McIntosh. 1988. 'White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack'. *Working Papers* 189. Wellesley: Wellesley College Centre for Women.

Michael O'Shaughnessy and Jane Stadler. 2008. *Media and Society*. Melbourne: OUP. pp. 402-421.

Week Nine: Discourse analysis 1

Set reading:

Vivien Burr, *An Introduction to Social Constructivism*, London, Routledge, 1995, 46-61.

Week Ten: Discourse analysis 2

Set reading:

Michael O'Shaughnessy and Jane Stadler. 2008. 'Defining Discourse and Ideology'. *Media and Society*. Melbourne: OUP. pp. 173-180.

Entries on "Discourse" and "Foucauldian Discourse Analysis" from the *Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methodologies*, available at <http://srmo.sagepub.com/view/sage-encyc-qualitative-research-methods/n112.xml>

Week Eleven: Social media

Set reading:

Christian Fuchs. 2014. 'Facebook: A Surveillance Threat to Privacy?' *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage. pp. 153-174.

Optional reading:

Jennifer Pan. 2014. 'The Labour of Social Media'. *Jacobin*. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/02/the-labor-of-social-media/>

Week Twelve: Television

Set reading:

TBA

Week Thirteen: Exam review

