

FILM 1302: MEDIA AND CULTURE

January 2014

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PURPOSE:

This course explores the key industries, cultures, technologies and critical approaches of media in the United States. It provides a broad overview of contemporary media as industrial and cultural institutions, so that you will understand how these media systems function today. While the course is designed as an introduction for FILM majors, non-majors will also take away a useful grounding in media aesthetics, economics, and theory.

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the basic features of key media forms
- To understand the relationships between media industries, forms, and audiences
- To understand the basic economics of contemporary media
- To understand the key critical concepts in the study of media and culture
- To understand our individual and social roles in relation to media and culture

COURSE READINGS:

The course has no single textbook. Readings are assigned as PDFs or links available on the course Blackboard site (<http://courses.smu.edu>), in the Course Materials section. Additional readings and online screenings may be assigned as the semester progresses.

COURSE BLOG: (film1302.wordpress.com)

Your final writing assignment will be an extended blog post (see description in assignments), although you are welcome to post as much as you want. **NOTE:** You must register as a Wordpress user to post on the blog; instructions will be discussed the first day

TECHNOLOGY:

Although a laptop/tablet is not required, it will be **very** useful in the course of this class to bring one every day.

ASSIGNMENTS:

In-Class Exercises	40%
Presentation (January 15)	20%
Blog Post (January 15)	20%
Participation	20%

In-Class Exercises will occur daily, and consist of research and/or writing prompts, as directed by the topic(s) of the day. Work will be completed and submitted in class (via Blackboard, if possible) before you leave for the day.

The **presentation** and **blog post** are joint assignments due on the same day. You will develop a contemporary media issue to research quickly, and then deliver a short (5-7 minute) presentation on the topic in class. Then, you will write and publish, working in and out of class, a 600 to 1200 word blog post (for our class blog) on your topic, complete with appropriate links, images, and/or clips.

The overall success of this class also entails your **participation** in discussion, as your contributions will help shape our overall discussion of key topics, readings, and screenings. Moreover, due to the unusual nature of the J-Term, discussion is the fuel that keeps our class days moving. **Please note that simply attending (and never contributing to discussion in class) will earn a D for your participation grade.**

NOTE: There will be **NO** extra credit opportunities beyond the assignments listed here.

GRADING STANDARDS:

A range work fulfills all the requirements of the assignment with exceptional quality. The writing and presentation are clear, precise, and engaging throughout, and have no significant issues of grammar, spelling, and style. Most importantly, A-range writing goes beyond the essentials of the assignment in its insight and originality; in other words, it displays effective “outside the box” thought and composition.

B range work fulfills all the requirements of the assignment with good quality. The writing and presentation are mostly clear, precise, and engaging, though they may have a few significant issues of grammar, spelling, and style. Work that relies too heavily on formula, no matter how well intentioned, often falls in this range.

C range work fulfills some to most of the requirements of the assignment with fair quality. The writing and presentation has some clarity or interest, but relies heavily on the obvious or cliché, and is also bogged down with significant issues of grammar, spelling, and style.

D range work does not fulfill most of the requirements of the assignment. The writing and presentation are generally poor, with little clarity, precision, organization, or interest, and suffer from significant issues of grammar, spelling, and style.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Like all of your professors, I assume you'll approach every aspect of your life at SMU conscientiously. Nevertheless, some of you may be tempted to cut corners and cheat, particularly in the classroom. If you are caught cheating on any assignment (e.g., copying test answers or plagiarizing sources), we will follow the guidelines in the SMU Honor Code (found online at http://www.smu.edu/studentlife/PCL_05_HC.asp). Depending on the situation, penalties may range from an F for the assignment to expulsion from the course. If you are unaware of what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the Honor Code, or the Academic Honesty course on Blackboard.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

I will take attendance each class meeting, via a sign-in sheet passed around. Consistent tardies will also be factored into your participation grade, at half the penalty of absences; if you come in late, see me after class for the sign-in sheet.

You are allowed **one** unexcused absence (for whatever reason); after that I will deduct **five points from your overall grade for each additional absence**. I will only grant excused absences as detailed in the 2013-14 SMU Student Handbook for allowed religious observances and school-sanctioned activities (see below); all such excused absences must be accompanied by written documentation. **Please note that illnesses and "family emergencies" fall under the one unexcused absence you are already granted.** The only exceptions to this policy are for more extreme situations (e.g., traffic accidents), and if you have a highly contagious illness (e.g., the flu). Notify me as soon as possible (via e-mail) if you know you will miss class.

Religious Observance and Attendance:

Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify me in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with me, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

University Extracurricular Activities and Attendance:

Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity may make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is your responsibility to make arrangements with me prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)

DISABILITY ACCOMODATIONS:

Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first be registered with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Students may call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/alec/dass> to begin the process. They should then schedule an appointment with me to make appropriate arrangements. (See University Policy No. 2.4.)

ONLINE CONTACT:

My e-mail address is dkompare@smu.edu. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have about the course or Film and Media Arts curriculum, or even areas beyond that scope. That said, I cannot monitor my e-mail at all times, but endeavor to reply as needed as soon as possible. Please allow at least 24 hours for me to get back to you. Any e-mail I receive after noon on Friday will not be replied to until Monday morning, at the earliest.

NOTE: You *must* use your SMU e-mail address as a reliable contact, for Blackboard and if I need to reach you.

General questions about Film & Media Arts can be directed to film@smu.edu.

I am also available on Twitter: [@profkompare](https://twitter.com/profkompare), or on my more active broader account, [@d_kompare](https://twitter.com/d_kompare), and I encourage you to follow either or both accounts. I will use the hashtag #film1302 to post any class-related information I find useful.

RECOMMENDATION LETTERS/REFERENCES:

I would be happy to write a letter or be a reference for you once the class is complete (never during the semester). However, this is not a guarantee that I will write one for you. I will only write a letter for you if I have a strong, positive experience of you as a student.

Here's what you can do to help your case while in my class:

- Attend and participate regularly in class.
- Submit your work as directed on the syllabus, earning high grades.
- Show me your personality.

If you want a letter later on,

- Approach me well in advance of any deadline for the letter or reference.
- Be proactive in sharing your goals and qualifications with me.

OTHER:

While in class...

- Be careful with food or drink, and clean up at the end of the day.
- You may use laptops, tablets, phones, and the WiFi connection, for your class notes and in-class assignments, but do not use the Internet to the distraction of others.

Outside class...

- Absorb media in as much variety as is possible; get out of your comfort zones!
- Keep connected to others and the world in general
- Take care of yourself (physically, mentally, spiritually); you're the only you you've got.

SCHEDULE:

All readings and assignments are due in class on the date indicated. **Late work is only accepted if it's the result of an excused absence, or medical or family emergency, and only if notified in advance.** Any other conflict on your time (including jobs and work for other classes) does **NOT** constitute an acceptable excuse.

DAY 1: Monday, January 6

Key Concepts: Media and Culture

READ: Smith, "It's Only A Movie"; Rushkoff, "Digiphrenia"

ASSIGNMENTS: Media self-catalog, Blog setup

DAY 2: Tuesday, January 7

Media Industries

READ: Havens & Lotz, "Key Concepts in Media Industry Studies"; Media Consolidation 2011

Media Convergence

READ: Miller, "Convergence and the Contemporary Media Experience"

ASSIGNMENTS: 30 minute media/culture mapping, Mobile Convergence

DAY 3: Wednesday, January 8

Film

READ: Corrigan and White, "Encountering Film"; BoxOfficeMojo, "2013 US Box Office"

ASSIGNMENTS: 2013 film industry reports, Oscar predictions

DAY 4: Thursday, January 9

Television

READ: Mittell, "Telling Television Stories"; Peterson, "The New Canon"; Critical TV essay (your choice)

ASSIGNMENTS: TV show breakdowns

DAY 5: Friday, January 10

Recordings and Radio

READ: Browne, “It’s Survival of the Fittest”; Lowery, “Letter to Emily White”; Arbitron, “Radio Today”

BROWSE: Billboard Hot 100 Songs: 2013; RIAA, “2012 Year-End Statistics”

LISTEN TO: DJ Earworm, “United State of Pop 2013”; at least one track from the pop music history folder

ASSIGNMENTS: Music industry breakdown, Pop song analysis

DAY 6: Monday, January 13

Games

READ: Smith et al, “Video Game Aesthetics”; Sheffield, “Video Games and Male Gaze”; deWinter and Kocurek, “Rescuing Anita”

BROWSE: Top games of 2013 lists

WATCH: Anita Sarkeesian TEDxWomen talk (YouTube clip)

ASSIGNMENTS: Presentation proposal (due Sunday night by 10pm), Network mapping, Game analysis

DAY 7: Tuesday, January 14

Audiences and Regulation

BROWSE: Economist, “Counting Coach Potatoes”; Nielsen, “TV Measurement”; Walsh, “Who Reaps the Rewards of Live Tweeting?”; FCC, “Obscenity, Indecency, and Profanity”; Ratings guides

WATCH: PBS Off Book, “Can Fandom Change Society?” (YouTube video); *This Film Is Not Yet Rated* (video clip)

ASSIGNMENTS: Network notes, workshop presentations and posts

DAY 8: Wednesday, January 15

Final Presentations

ASSIGNMENTS: Presentations and Blog posts