

## **Senior Media Seminar: Production of Culture**

Spring 2014

MCC-1200-007

Wed. 9:30 a.m. – 12 noon

Location: Tisch Hall, 40 West 4th St: LC-7

Prof. Rodney Benson

Room 722 East Building (239 Greene Street)

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Office Hours: Monday, 3-4 p.m., and Tuesday, 2-3 p.m.

### **Course Description**

How is “culture” concretely produced by creative professionals and amateurs? Beyond the personal idiosyncrasies of individual media owners and creative workers, which factors play the greatest role in shaping cultural production: professional values and traditions, forms of ownership and funding, government regulations, organizational dynamics, and/ or the social properties of media owners, workers, and audiences? Adequately sorting out the factors that shape cultural production can best be accomplished via comparative research – across geographical regions, time periods, and institutional fields. This course offers a theoretical and methodological roadmap to such a project, incorporating a range of case studies.

### **Teaching / Course Objectives**

- \* to provide students with an understanding of the concrete working conditions and challenges that shape the production of culture across a range of fields (magazines, newspapers, music, art, advertising, etc.);
- \* to provide students with knowledge of the major evaluative and explanatory theories for the production of culture;
- \* to equip students with knowledge of methods needed to research cultural production, including analysis of political and economic data, ethnography, in-depth interviewing, and discourse/image analysis.

### **Texts**

Required Books (Available for purchase at NYU Bookstore/on reserve at NYU Library)

Brooke Duffy. 2013. *Remake, Remodel: Women’s Magazines in the Digital Age*.

Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Matt Stahl. 2012. *Unfree Masters: Recording Artists and the Politics of Work*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Sarah Thornton. 2009. *Seven Days in the Art World*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Joseph Turow. 2013. *The Daily You: How the New Advertising Industry is Defining Your Identity and Your Worth*. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press.

Pdf texts: Available on NYU Classes under “Resources” (indicated in schedule with asterisk).

## **Course Assignments and Evaluation**

### **(1) Attendance and Participation (15%)**

You are expected to arrive on time, fully prepared to discuss the readings and participate in class discussions. The course is a collaborative, interactive seminar: please bring your experience, insight, and intelligence to our discussions. You will be evaluated on the quality and amount of your participation, both for discussions of readings and for in-class interviews of guest “cultural professionals.”

Please bring a paper copy of the assigned reading (article or book) to the class, so that we will all be, literally, on the same page. I strongly encourage active, annotated reading practices. Cell phone use (including texting) is not permitted in class. Laptops should only be used for note-taking. Use of laptops for email or internet surfing, unless linked to a class assignment, is not permitted: violation of this policy will negatively affect your participation grade. Please inform me in advance if you will be missing class for religious observances, family emergencies, or medical problems.

### **(2) Weekly Short Comments/Questions (15%)**

Each week with assigned readings, you will turn in at the beginning of class a short critical response (200-250 words maximum, equivalent to no more than ½ page single-spaced or one full page double-spaced, either typewritten or handwritten neatly). Comments will be graded with a plus (A range -- insightful, original, evidence of close reading), check (B range -- meets requirement), or minus (C-D range – needs more thought or effort). If you turn it in late (any time after the beginning of the relevant class), it will be downgraded a minimum of one grade, e.g., plus to check); if you do not turn it in at all, it will receive a 0 (F).

### **(3) Response Essay (20%)**

Each person will write one in-depth response (4 pages: 1000 words) to the cluster of readings assigned for one class. You will sign up for this assignment the first day of class. This essay should offer a critical synthesis and analysis and develop a few key arguments supported by evidence (short citations) from the texts. A copy should be emailed to the entire class and to me 24 hours before the class meets (Tuesday 9:30 a.m.). Please also bring in a paper copy to class (double-spaced, stapled). In general, this paper should address the following questions: a) who is the author addressing, and for what purpose? b) what are the primary arguments? c) what evidence is provided in support of these arguments? d) what are the actual or potential counter-arguments? and e) how does this work contribute to the field of media, culture, and communication studies (noting any significant connections to other authors)? After you have completed the readings (read ahead!), you are free to consult with me about strategies for organizing your paper. Do not consult or cite any outside sources.

### **(4) Final paper (50%)**

In this 16-20 page paper (4000 - 5000 words) paper, you will research and write a production of culture case study, drawing on in-depth interviews, ethnographic observations, analysis of industry/professional documents or records, or other appropriate methods. You will need to secure my approval in advance for your paper topic (including methodological approach and use of any outside sources). You must turn in with your final paper copies of all primary and secondary research materials, including your notes for interviews or observations. More information on this assignment will be provided.

## **Grading Policies**

Plagiarism is strictly prohibited. This policy will be strictly enforced. “Plagiarism, one of the gravest forms of academic dishonesty in university life, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. In a community of scholars, whose members are teaching, learning and discovering knowledge, plagiarism cannot be tolerated. Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score and/or other materials, which are not your original work. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: Copy verbatim from a book, an article or other media; Download documents from the Internet; Purchase documents; Report from other’s oral work; Paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis and/or conclusions; Copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.” (NYU Steinhardt School of Education Statement on Academic Integrity)

### Assignments:

1) must be turned in on-time: late assignments will be down-graded (one half grade if not turned in by the appointed hour; one full grade after one week, and one full grade per week thereafter); 2) must be stapled, if more than one page; 3) must have your name at the top of the page; 4) must have all pages numbered. Any assignments not formatted as indicated in 2) through 4) may be downgraded 1-3 points.

### Grading Standards:

A = excellent. Outstanding work in all respects. Your papers and essays are thoroughly researched, appropriately documented, logically organized and rhetorically convincing. Your analysis is comprehensive and sound, as well as creative and original. In short, you not only get it, but also begin to see through it!

B = good. Your understanding of course materials is complete and thorough, and there is at least some evidence of your own critical intelligence at work. You demonstrate basic competence in research, writing and oral presentation.

C = adequate. Your writing is vague and incoherent or riddled with grammatical or spelling errors. You do not make proper use of source materials, and there is little depth or concreteness to your research or analysis. Your understanding of concepts and ideas is incomplete and often misguided, but there is at least some evidence that you learned something from this course.

D = unsatisfactory. Work exhibits virtually no understanding or even awareness of basic concepts and themes of course. Your participation has been inadequate or superficial. Either you have not been paying attention or you have not been making any effort.

F= failed. Work was not submitted or completed according to the basic parameters outlined in the course syllabus and any additional information provided about assignments (basic requirements for page length, topical focus, types and number of primary and secondary sources, deadlines).

Grades are calculated according to the following scale: 94-100 A; 90-93 A-; 87-89 B+; 83-86 B; 80-82 B-; 77-79 C+; 73-76 C; 70-72 C-; 67-69 D+; 63-66 D; 60-62 D-; 0-59 F

**Schedule** (subject to revision):

\*course readings available through NYU Classes

**1 Jan. 29**  
**Overview**

**2 Feb. 5**

**What's at Stake: Normative Models**

\*David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker. 2011. "A model of good and bad work." In *Creative Labour*. London: Routledge

\*Myra Marx Ferree et al. 2002. "Normative Models of the Public Sphere." In *Shaping Abortion Discourse: Democracy and the Public Sphere in Germany and the United States*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

\*Bruce Williams and Michael X. Delli Carpini. 2011. "Shaping a New Media Regime." In *After Broadcast News: Media Regimes, Democracy, and the New Information Environment*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

**3 Feb. 12**

**Explanatory Theories of Cultural Production**

\*Richard A. Peterson and N. Anand. 2004. "The production of culture perspective." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30: 311-334.

\*Randall Collins. *Sociology of Philosophies* (selections).

\*Pierre Bourdieu. *The Field of Cultural Production*. (selections).

\*Howard Becker. *Art Worlds* (selections).

**4 Feb. 19**

**Case Study: Women's Magazines**

Duffy, *Remake, Remodel*.

Guest Speaker: Brooke Duffy, Temple University

**5 Feb. 26**

**Research Methods: Institutional/Organizational and In-Depth Interviewing**

\*Bourdieu, "Understanding," from *The Weight of the World*

\*Robert Mikecz. 2012. "Interviewing Elites: Addressing Methodological Issues." *Qualitative Inquiry* 18(6): 482-93.

**6 March 5**

**Case Study: Advertising**

Turow, *The Daily You*

- 7 March 12**  
**Case Study: Advertising**  
 Guest Speakers: Mark Truss (research) and Robert Quinn (planning), JWT Advertising
- March 17-21 NYU Spring Break**
- 8 March 26**  
**Case Study: Journalism**  
 \*Michael Schudson. 2005. "Four Approaches to the Sociology of News." Pp. 172-97 in J. Curran and M. Gurevitch, Eds., *Mass Media and Society*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. London: Arnold.  
 \*Rodney Benson. 2013. *Shaping Immigration News: A French-American Comparison* (chs. 1-3, 6, 8). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- 9 April 2**  
**Visit to Democracy Now!**
- 10 April 9**  
**Research Workshop: Student Presentations of Work-in-Progress**
- 11 April 16**  
**Case Study: Music**  
 Stahl, *Unfree Masters*
- 12 April 23**  
**Case Study: Music**  
 Guest Speaker: Joel Hamilton, Grammy-nominated engineer, producer, and musician; founder and director of Joel Hamilton Recording Studio, Brooklyn
- 13 April 30**  
**Case Study: Art**  
 Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World*
- 14 May 7**  
**Case Study: Art**  
 Panel of Guest Speakers: Ingrid Dudek, Senior Specialist at Christie's; David Everitt Howe, independent curator and critic; and Nathan Hedges, sculptor.

**\*Final Paper due Wednesday, May 14, 6 p.m.**