

MCC-GE 2184 Production of Culture in the Digital Age

Spring 2018

MCC-GE 2184.001 Monday 11 am – 1:15 pm

Location: 239 Greene Street, 7th floor Big Conference Room (Room 741)

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Office Hours: By Appointment, or Before or After Class

Course Description

This is an exciting and transformative moment for cultural production across the globe. Our goal is to lift the veil and explore the concrete making of cultural products (music, cinema, art, digital news, television dramas, etc.) by various types of individuals and organizations, working with diverse technologies, oriented toward divergent audiences. The premise of the course is that the process is not random. There are differences across organizations, worlds, networks, and/or fields (pick your framework) and these differences are consequential for the kind of culture that gets produced, which may be normatively desirable or undesirable depending on your conception(s) of excellence and the common good. What are the differences that make a difference: organizational structures and dynamics, forms of ownership and funding, government regulatory regimes, and/or the social properties of media owners, workers, and audiences? These are complex questions, and we will attempt to answer them through comparative research – across geographical regions, time periods, and institutional fields. Drawing on the latest theorizing and research in the sociology of culture and media studies, this course offers a theoretical and methodological roadmap to such a project, incorporating a range of case studies.

Teaching / Course Objectives

- to provide you with an understanding of the concrete working conditions and challenges that shape the production of culture across a range of cultural fields ;
- to provide you with new ideas about how to evaluate and explain how culture gets produced;
- to equip you with useful knowledge of the methods you'll need to do original research about cultural production, such as analysis of government and economic data, ethnography, in-depth interviewing, and discourse/image analysis;
- to give you an opportunity to conduct your own in-depth research project on contemporary cultural production.

Texts

Required Books (Available for purchase at NYU Bookstore):

Josh Braun. 2017. *This Network is Brought to You By Distributing Television News Online*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Clayton Childress. 2017. *Under the Cover*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Also available as e-book at NYU Library: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/nyulibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4878424&query=9781400885275>

Brooke Duffy. 2018. *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Recommended:

Roger White. 2015. *The Contemporaries: Travels in the 21st Century Art World*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Sue Robinson. 2017. *Networked News, Racial Divides: How Power and Privilege Shape Public Discourse in Progressive Communities*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

John Seabrook. 2015. *The Song Machine: Inside the Hit Factory*. New York: W.W. Norton.

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

Course Assignments and Evaluation

Evaluation of your performance in this course will center around four elements:

(1) Active and Informed in-class participation (20 percent of grade): Attendance is required. You are expected to complete all readings *before* class and to be able to engage in the discussion in an informed manner. You will be evaluated on the quality as well as the quantity of your in-class participation.

(2) Critical Response Paper (20 percent): Each person will write one in-depth critical response paper (4 pages: 1000 words) to the cluster of readings assigned for one class and present a 5-10 minute critical summary of the paper during 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 no later than 6 pm Sunday night before the class meets. Your essay should address the following issues: a) what are the primary arguments/claims, b) what evidence is provided in support of the argument(s), and c) how does this work contribute to the study of the production of culture, noting any significant connections to other authors. Do not consult or cite any outside sources. The paper should be emailed to your classmates and me by Sunday, 6 p.m., prior to class.

(3) Final paper (60 percent of final grade: 10 percent for research design assignment, 10 percent for in-class presentation, and 40 percent for final paper): In this 5,000 word paper (about 20 pp.), you will research and write a production of culture case study. Ideally, you could compare two organizations or sites of cultural production similar in many ways but which vary in at least one important variable (ownership, funding, organizational culture, audience, etc.), thus allowing you to test this variable's effects on what gets produced. However, other types of investigations are of course possible. This paper should a) make clear what's at stake civically or aesthetically, b) situate the research question in a live scholarly debate, c) develop and justify a research design and methodology, d) conduct preliminary research (in-depth interviews, ethnographic observations, analysis of industry/professional documents or records, network and/or content analysis, etc.), e) offer preliminary explanations for your findings, and f) reflect on the limits of your findings and directions for future research. The paper should cite at least 5 assigned texts, plus 5 additional secondary sources and 10 primary sources: these are minimums. You will need to secure my approval in advance for your paper topic (including cases, research design, methods, and use of outside sources). You must turn in with your final paper copies of all primary research materials, including your notes for interviews or observations.

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: unless excused, 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. You are responsible for keeping a digital copy of all assignments.

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 = barely 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. A C grade for a graduate student is a sign of substantial underperformance and is cause for concern.

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 “Resources”

1 Jan. 22

Introductions / What’s at Stake

Read After Class:

*David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker. 2010. *Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries* (London: Routledge), chs. 8, 9.

*Myra Marx Ferree, William Anthony Gamson, Jürgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht. 2002. *Shaping Abortion Discourse: Democracy and the Public Sphere in Germany and the United States* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), ch. 10.

2 Jan. 29

Logics of Ownership, Funding, and Audiences

*Rodney Benson. 2018. “Rethinking the Sociology of Media Ownership.” *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, 2nd edition, in press.

*Julia Cagé. 2017. *Saving the Media: Capitalism, Crowdfunding, and Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, selections. NYU library online access: <https://www-degruyter-com.proxy.library.nyu.edu/viewbooktoc/product/473068>

*Pew Research Center. 2014. “Political Polarization and Media Habits.” <http://www.journalism.org/2014/10/21/political-polarization-media-habits/>

*Pew Research Center. 2012. “Demographics and Political Views of News Audiences.” <http://www.people-press.org/2012/09/27/section-4-demographics-and-political-views-of-news-audiences/>

See also:

*Michael W. Wagner and Timothy P. Collins. 2014. “Does Ownership Matter? The Case of Rupert Murdoch’s Purchase of the Wall Street Journal.” *Journalism Practice* (published online, 11 February), 1-14.

*Magda Konieczna. 2018. *Journalism without Profit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Advance copies of chs. 3 and 4.

<http://www.niemanlab.org/2012/05/the-newsonomics-of-majority-reader-revenue/>

<https://www.recode.net/2017/5/4/15550052/new-york-times-subscription-advertising-revenue-chart>

3 Feb. 5

National Media Systems and Case Studies: Media and Politics in China and Russia

Guest Speaker: Maria Repnikova

*Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini. 2004. *Comparing Media Systems*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 2, and portions of ch. 3 and 4.

*Rodney Benson, Mark Blach-Orsten, Matthew Powers, Ida Willig, and Sandra Vera Zambrano. 2012. "Media Systems Online and Off: Comparing the Form of News in the U.S., Denmark, and France." *Journal of Communication* 62: 21-38.

*David Ryfe. 2016. *Journalism and the Public*. Cambridge, UK: Polity. Ch. 3 (on China).

* Maria Repnikova. 2017. *Media Politics in China: Improving Power under Authoritarianism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chs. 1, 4, 7.

4 Feb. 12

Fields and Networked Fields of Cultural Production

*Pierre Bourdieu. 1993. *The Field of Cultural Production*. Columbia University Press. Ch. 1, pp. 29-73.

*David Hesmondhalgh. 2006. "Bourdieu, the Media, and Cultural Production." *Media, Culture & Society* 28(2): 211-231.

*Sue Robinson. 2017. *Networked News, Racial Divides: How Power and Privilege Shape Public Discourse in Progressive Communities*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chs. 2-3.

Feb. 19: HOLIDAY - NO CLASS

5 Feb. 26

Book Publishing: Creation, Production, Reception

Childress, *Under the Cover*

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Turn in 250 word paper proposal

6 March 5

Worlds

Roger White. 2015. *The Contemporaries: Travels in the 21st Century Art World*. New York: Bloomsbury. Chs. 2, 4, 6.

Howard S. Becker. 1974. "Art as Collective Action." *American Sociological Review* 39(6): 767-776.

Howard S. Becker. 1976. "Art Worlds and Social Types." *American Behavioral Scientist* 19 (6): 703-718.

Howard S. Becker and Allain Pessin. 2006. "A Dialogue on the Ideas of 'World' and 'Field.'" *Sociological Forum* 21(2): 275-286.

*Vicki Mayer. 2011. *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy*. Duke University Press. Introduction and Ch. 3.

March 12-18 NYU Spring Break

7 March 19

Amateur and Social Media

Brooke Duffy, *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love*

8 March 26

Networks and Distribution/Circulation

Joshua Braun, *This Network was Brought to You By ...*

*John Law. 1992. "Notes on the theory of the actor-network: Ordering, strategy, and heterogeneity." *Systems Practice* 5(4): 379-393.

See also:

Bottero, W., and N. Crossley. 2011. "Worlds, Fields and Networks." *Cultural Sociology* 5 (1): 99–119.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1,000 word Research Design (Preliminary Research Questions, Cases, Samples, Methods, Lit Review)

9 April 2

Music

*John Seabrook. 2015. *The Song Machine*, selected chapters.

*Georgina Born. 2010. "The Social and the Aesthetic: For a Post-Bourdieuian Theory of Cultural Production." *Cultural Sociology* 4(2): 1-38.

*Nick Prior. 2009. "Critique and Renewal in the Sociology of Music: Bourdieu and Beyond." *Cultural Sociology* 4(3): 276-295.

*Timothy Dowd. 2004. "Production Perspectives in the Sociology of Music." *Poetics* 32: 235-246

*Richard A. Peterson and David G. Berger. 1975. "Cycles in Symbol Production: The Case of Popular Music." *American Sociological Review* 40: 158-173.

See also:

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

10 April 9

Television

*Amanda Lotz. 2017. *Portals: A Treatise on Internet-Distributed Television*. Michigan Publishing Services, ch. 2 (The Subscriber Model)

*Aymar Jean Christian. Date. "Indie TV: Innovation in Series Development." In J. Bennett and N. Strange, eds., *Media Independence: Working with freedom or working for free?* London: Routledge.

*Jason Mittell. 2015. *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Story Telling*. New York: NYU Press. Ch. 1.

See also:

<http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/content/wire-context-american-television>

11 April 16

Film

*Sherry Ortner. 2013. *Not Hollywood: Independent Film at the Twilight of the American Dream* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), ch. 3: Making the Scene (91-120) and ch. 5: Making Value (147-172).

*Martha M. Lauzen. 2012. "Where are the film directors (who happen to be women)?" *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 29(4): 310-319.

*Denise and William Bielby. 2002. "Hollywood Dreams, Harsh Realities: Writing for Film and Television." *Contexts* 1(4): 21-27.

*Denise Bielby. 2009. "Gender inequality in culture industries: Women and men writers in film and television." *Sociologie du travail* 51: 237-252.

Tejaswini Ganti. 2012. *Producing Bollywood*. Duke University Press. Chs. 4-5.

12 April 23

Public Media

Guest Speaker: Gun Enli on the Nordic Media Model

*Trine Syvertsen, Ole Mjos, Hallvard Moe, and Gunn Enli, *The Media Welfare State: Nordic Media in the Digital Era*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press (excerpts)

*Damien Stankiewicz, *Europe Un-Imagined: Nation and Culture at a French-German Television Channel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), Introduction, chs 1-2, 6, and Conclusion.

13 April 30

Student Presentations

14 May 7

Student Presentations

***Final Paper due Monday, May 14, 6 p.m.**