

MEDIA CULTURE: Digital Art Making in the 21st Century

Fall 2017, 4 Credits, GRA-0119-01

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Class: Wednesday, 9:00 AM–12:00 PM, 2:00 PM–5:00 PM, **B211A**

Office Hours: Please email the faculty member to schedule an appointment.

Note: *This syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class.*



Course Description:

An understanding of how mass media functions is necessary in order to enact meaningful social change.

The media representation of a drowned Syrian boy and refugees; the Black Lives Matter activists; The US military recruiting from gaming industries for Iraq and Gulf Wars; the previous US presidential elections; reality TV, etc. These images shape both our public policy and private lives. Between TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, internet, mobile phones, billboards and LED displays, we see between 250 to 3000 ads per day. Additionally, text has expanded from the merely literary to all forms of cultural production. The mass media continues to be a powerful means of influencing culture -- it 'frames' our everyday life.

Through readings, presentations, group discussions and studio work we will look critically at the media culture. We will examine texts from Shanti Kumar, Erving Goffman, Jackson Katz, John Berger, Naomi Klein, Jean Kilbourne, Guy Debord, Adbusters, The Onion, fashion magazines, and activist art. These readings will create the structure for studio work as well as challenging commercial methods by producing work about our vernacular culture.

This course is designed as an introduction to digital art-making techniques and skills.

Course Goals, Objectives, and Learning Outcomes:

Through their work in the class, students will:

- Gain an understanding of the parallel and intertwined development of media technology, social theory and cultural studies in the 20th and 21st century;
- Investigate the history of how media technologies from print and photography through film, radio, television, video, the PC, video games and the Internet have been successively introduced, disseminated and commodified.
- Examine how contemporary thinkers reacted to the mediations these technologies introduced to their experiences of society and culture; and how their re-mediations have in turn affected our expectations and experiences of older media.
- Acquire the vocabulary and skills to engage more critically with the media they encounter, whether as producers, consumers or users;
- Look critically at these topics in media; gender roles, violence, politics, military, video games and objectification among other topics.
- encounter seminal models of possible artistic practices within media and new media networks.

Expectations from the students:

Class will start promptly. There will be no repeats. You must come prepared to the next class with your missed work. When in class please turn off your cell phones and do not text. If you need to take a phone call, please have your phone on vibrate and take the call in the hallway.

If you are a **graduate student**, you are responsible for preparing a one page proposal that details the ways in which you intend to tailor your graduate-level research to this semester's coursework. In addition to the more ambitious requirements of the final project, your proposal may include such customizations as:

- writing a more significant volume of text for your individual projects and proposals
- actualizing multiple studio-based projects
- actualizing one or several studio-based projects at a more ambitious scale
- making one or several of your proposals grant-ready

This document is due September 25th in class. I will approve or suggest edits to your proposal by October 2nd.

Required Materials and Supplies:

Headsets, external hard drive or flash memory.

Grading Policy and Criteria to Receive Credit:

Studio courses at SMFA at Tufts use a Credit/No Credit grading system. Grades are awarded by the instructor upon the conclusion of each course. Successful completion of a course will result in a grade of "CR" for Credit. Unsuccessful completion of a course will result in a grade of "NC" for No Credit.

In order to receive credit for this course, students are expected to complete all project assignments and their own self-initiated work by the end of the semester, participate in class discussions and critique, reading assignment journals, and show evidence of individual growth as an artist.

Attendance Policy:

SMFA has an institutional attendance standard that expects students to attend and fully participate in all class meetings. **More than two absences will result in course failure. If a student is late to class (> 20 mins late) more than three times or absent from class more than twice without a reasonable (preferably documented) excuse, the student will receive a grade of NO CREDIT for the course in question, and this grade will appear on the student's transcript.**

Students are responsible for knowing and adhering to the attendance policy and communicating with faculty if they must miss a class for any reason. In some cases of noncompliance, students will be urged to withdraw from the class. It is a student's responsibility to withdraw from a course, and this act of withdrawal cannot be performed by a faculty member on a student's behalf. In cases of course withdrawal, tuition refunds will not be considered. Students who wish to appeal the records or decision of a faculty member regarding absences should contact the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies or the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs.

Students who are out of class for legitimate medical and/or personal issues must contact the Dean of Students and the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies or the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs immediately. In cases of illness or personal tragedy, a short-term leave may be granted by the Dean of Students. All requests of this type require documentation verifying the circumstances for which the absence or short-term leave is requested.

Without formal pre-approval from the Dean of Students and the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies or the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs, all students are expected to arrive on campus and begin attending classes at the start of the semester. Any student who has not arrived by the end of the Add/Drop period will be subject to an Administrative Withdrawal from the school.

Academic Integrity:

Tufts holds its students strictly accountable for adherence to academic integrity. The consequences for violations can be severe. It is critical that you understand the requirements of ethical behavior and academic work as described in Tufts' Academic Integrity handbook. If you ever have a question about the expectations concerning a particular assignment or project in this course, be sure to ask me for clarification. The Faculty of the School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering are required to report suspected cases of academic integrity violations to the Dean of Student Affairs Office. If I suspect that you have cheated or plagiarized in this class, I must report the situation to the dean.

Tufts University values the diversity of our students, staff, and faculty; recognizing the important contribution each student makes to our unique community. Tufts is committed to providing equal access and support to all qualified students through the provision of reasonable accommodations so that each student may fully participate in the Tufts experience. If you have a disability that requires reasonable accommodations, please contact the Student Accessibility Services office at Accessibility@tufts.edu or 617-627-4539 to make an appointment with an SAS representative to determine appropriate accommodations. Please be aware that accommodations cannot be enacted retroactively, making timeliness a critical aspect for their provision.

Week 1: September 6th:

- **Introduction to class and discussion of syllabus**
- **Lecture: The Blurring of Fact and Fiction in Consumer Culture**
- **Screening:** [The Atomic Café](#)
- **Screening:** *Manufacturing Consent*
- **Screening:** *Shop Til You drop, The Crisis of Consumerism*
- **Demo:** Photoshop

Assignment #1 (Ambient TV):

- TV monitors are ubiquitous – the days of lounging at home on the sofa and channel surfing are only one aspect of today's TV viewing. From airport waiting areas to the local bar, from Laundromats to mini-vans, TV's are an aspect of the visual air we breathe.
- **Ambient TV:** WatchTV for 20-30 minutes with the sound off and create a project based on your observations. (8.5 x 11 inches)
- **Watch:** [Advertising and the End of the World](#)
- **Generate three questions from each reading and bring them to class next week (please type them out and bring a hard copy):**
 - [Regarding the Pain of Others, Susan Sontag \(Pages TBC\)](#)
 - ['Images disconnected from the source,' from 'Four Arguments for Elimination of Television,' by Jerry Mander \(pages 283-298\)](#)
 - No Logo by Naomi Klein (Chapter 1)
 - ["The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin, Chapter 1](#)

Week 2: September 13th:

- **Lecture: Representation of Women in Media**
- **Screening:** *Missrepresentation*
- Critique of assignment #1: the Ambient TV
- **Demo:** Photoshop

Assignment #2: Research and develop content about the representation of women in media. (8.5 by 11 inches)

- Watch: *Killing Us Softly: Advertising's Image of Women*
- **Generate three questions from each reading and bring them to class next week (please type them out and bring a hard copy):**
 - Gender Advertisement by Erwing Goffman (Pages: TBC)
 - [The White American Woman](#)

Week 3: September 20th:

- **Lecture: Patriarchy and Representation of Men in Media**
- **Screening:** *The Mask You live In*
- **Screening:** *Generation M*
- Critique of assignment #2
- **Demo:** Illustrator
- **Assignment #3:** Research and develop content about patriarchy/masculinity/ representation of men in media. (8.5 by 11 inches)
 - Watch: *Tough Guise: Violence, Media & the Crisis in Masculinity*
 - Watch: *The Bro Code*
 - **Generate three questions from each reading and bring them to class next week (please type them out and bring a hard copy):**
 - The Macho Paradox by Jackson Katz (Pages: TBC)
 - ['Talking Vaginas and Football Heroes: Gender, Race and Advertising,' Ryder](#)

Week 4: September 27th:

- **Lecture: Gender Norms and Heteronormative Relationships**
- **Screening:** Further Off the Straight and Narrow
- **Screening:** 'An American Family'
- Critique of assignment #3
- **Assignment #4:** Research and develop content about the representation of gender norms and heterosexual relationships in media. (8.5 by 11 inches)
 - Watch: The Price of Pleasure: Pornography, Sexuality & Relationships
 - **Generate three questions from each reading and bring them to class next week (please type them out and bring a hard copy):**
 - The Prime Time Closet: History of Gays and Lesbians on TV, Stephen Tropiano (Pages: TBC)

Week 5: October 4th:

- **Lecture: Cigarettes and Alcohol in Media**
- **Demo:** Illustrator
- Critique of assignment #5
- **Screening:** death in the West, The secret History of Tabaco Industry
- **Assignment #5:** Research and develop content about the deadly persuasion. (8.5 by 11 inches)
 - Watch: The Deadly Persuasion
 - **Generate three questions from each reading and bring them to class next week (please type them out and bring a hard copy):**
 - 'Protocols of Persuasion' from 'PRI: A Social History of Spin' by Stuart Ewen. 1996. (Pages: TBC)
 - 'Black Macho and the Myth of Superwoman,' Michelle Wallace (Pages: TBC)
 - [Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men - Deborah Bright](#)

Week 6: October 11th:

- **Lecture: Race and Identity in Media**
- Critique of Assignment #5
- Screening: Latinos Beyond Reel
- **Assignment #6:** Research and develop content about the representation of race and ethnic identity in media. (8.5 by 11 inches)
 - **Watch:** [bell hooks: Cultural Criticism & Transformation](#)
 - **Generate three questions from each reading and bring them to class next week (please type them out and bring a hard copy):**
 - ['The Matter of Whiteness' from 'White: Essays on Race and Culture' by Richard Dyer \(Chapter One\)](#)
 - [Benetton's "World without Borders": Buying Social Change by Henry A. Giroux](#)
 - ['The Quite Racism of the Instagram Filters,' Morgan Jerkins, 2015](#)
 - ['The Light of the World' from 'White: Essays on Race and Culture' by Richard Dyer](#)
 - ['Racism of Early Color photography explored in Art Exhibition,' David Smith, The Guardian, 2013](#)

Week 7: October 18th:

- **Lecture: Disney, Childhood and Corporate Power**
- **Screening:** Mickey Mouse Monopoly
- **Screening:** Consuming Kids
- Critique of assignment #6
- **Assignment #7:** Research and develop content about Disney, childhood and corporate power. (8.5 by 11 inches)

- **Generate three questions from each reading and bring them to class next week (please type them out and bring a hard copy):**
 - [‘Television, Furniture, and Sculpture: The Room With The American View,’ Vito Acconci, 1991](#)
 - [How to Read Donald Duck by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart \(pages TBC\)](#)

Week 8: October 25th:

- **Lecture: The Gaming Industry**
- **Screening:** Game Over
- **Screening:** Joystick Warriors; Video Games, Violence and the Culture of Militarism
- Critique of assignment #7
- **Assignment #8:** Research and develop content about Gaming industry (8.5 by 11 inches)
 - **Generate three questions from each reading and bring them to class next week (please type them out and bring a hard copy):**
 - [Children’s Psychological Discourse: Methods and Data Summary, Sherry Turkle, ‘The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit,’ MIT Press, 2005, \(Pg. 313\)](#)
 - [Video Games and Computers holding Power,’ Sherry Turkle, The New Media Reader, Noah Wardrip-fruin and Nick Montfort, MIT Press, 2003](#)

Week 9: November 1st:

- **Lecture: War and Militarism in Media**
- **Screening:** Race Propaganda and the Promised Land, US Media and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
- **Screening:** Militainment, Inc. Militarism and Pop Culture
- Critique of assignment #8
- **Assignment #9:** Research and develop content about war, militarism or the representation of the Middle East in western media. (8.5 by 11 inches)
 - **Generate three questions from each reading and bring them to class next week (please type them out and bring a hard copy):**
 - [Regarding the Torture of Others, Susan Sontag, New York Times, 2003](#)
 - Orientalism by Edward Said (Pages: TBC)
 - [‘Surveillance and Captures: Two Models of Privacy,’ Philip E. Agre, The New Media Reader, Noah Wardrip-fruin and Nick Montfort, MIT Press](#)
 - [Susan Sontag, "Looking at War: Photography’s view of devastation and death" \(published in the New Yorker, 2002\)](#)

Week 10: November 8th:

- **Lecture: Health in Consumer Culture**
- **Screening:** Feeding Frenzy, The food Industry, Obesity and the Creation of a Health Crisis
- **Screening:** BIG BUCKS, BIG PHARMA; Marketing Disease & Pushing Drugs
- Critique of assignment #9
- **Assignment #10:** Research and develop content about health in consumer culture. (8.5 by 11 inches)
 - **Generate three questions from each reading and bring them to class next week (please type them out and bring a hard copy):**
 - ‘Cute, Quaint, hungry and Romantic’ by Daniel Harris, 2000, Chapters: Deliciousness and The Natural (pages 153-208)

Week 11: November 15th:

- **Lecture: Politics and Power in Media**
- **Screening:** Constructing Public Opinion
- **Screening:** Rich Media, Poor Democracy Featuring Robert McChesney & Mark Crispin Miller
- Critique of assignment #10
- **Assignment #11:** Research and develop content about power and politics in media. (8.5 by 11 inches)

- **Generate three questions from each reading and bring them to class next week (please type them out and bring a hard copy):**
 - 'Cultural Studies and Political Spectacle: The Case of the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election,' Media
 - Culture as Weapon by Nato Thompson, Chapter 4: Fear Machines (Pages 75-97)
 - [Spectacle and Media Events: Some Critical Reflections by Douglas Kellner, pg. 6-18](#)
 - ['In Movies and on TV, Racism Made Plain' By Wesley Morris, New York Times, August 2017](#)

Week 12: November 22nd: NO CLASS

Week 13: November 29th:

- **Lecture: Media and New Technologies**
- **Screening:** Google and the World Brain
- **Screening:** Independent Media in the Time of War
- Critique of assignment #11
- **Assignment #12:** Complete and save all of your poster art as PDF and upload the file on blurb.com by the end of the day so that you can get your magazine for your review board!

Week 14: December 6th:

- FINAL PROJECTS DUE
- Review of all magazines

REVIEW BOARDS: December 13th-December 21st

SUGGESTED READINGS/MATERIALS

Many books and publications and articles have been useful in helping to develop this course known as "Media Culture" Here is a partial listing, sometimes with a brief commentary. These books would make welcome additions to your reading as well as your library:

If you come across any interesting books in your intellectual travels that you think can help us understand our spectacle driven culture, feel free to bring it to my attention. Thanks!

- Harris, Daniel. *Cute, Quaint, hungry and Romantic*, 2000
- McCarthy, Anna. *Ambient Television*, Duke University Press, 2001
- Foucault, Michele. *Discipline and Punish; The Birth of the Prison*, 1995
- Foucault, Michele. *Fearless Speech*, 2001
- Goldman, Robert. *Reading Ads Socially*, 1992
- Ewen, Stuart. *All Consuming Images*, 1999
- Ewen, Stuart. *Captains of Consciousness*, 1977
- Mander, Jerry. *Four Arguments on the Elimination of TV*
- Bennett, Mark. *TV Sets: Fantasy Blueprints of Classic TV Homes*
- Crimp, Douglas. *Pictures*, 1977
- Berger, Paul. *Seattle Subtext*
- Dent, Gina. *Black Popular Culture (Discussions in Contemporary Culture)*
- Tropiano, , Stephen. *The Prime Time Closet: History of Gays and Lesbians on TV*
- Schiller, Herbert. *Culture, Inc.: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression*
- Auslander, Philip. 1999. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- [The Imperial Imaginary,' Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, In *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, 100-136. London, England: Routledge, 1994](#)
- Boorstin, Daniel. 1987. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America*. New York: Athenaeum. First published in 1961.
- Carey, James. 1988. *Communication As Culture: Essays on Media and Society*.
- Couldry, Nick. 2003. "Rethinking Media Events," in *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach*. New York: Routledge.
- Curran, James. 1982. "Communications, Power and Social Order." In Gurevitch, M., Bennet, T., et al (eds.).
- Czitrom, Daniel. 1990. *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Dayan, Daniel and Katz, Elihu. 1992. *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Brantlinger, Patrick. 1983. *Bread and Circuses: Theories of Mass Culture as Social Decay*.
- Caldwell, John Thornton. 1995. *Televisuality: Style, Crisis and Authority in American Television*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Ewen, Stuart. 1988. *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture*.
- The New York Times Magazine. "Heroine Worship: Inventing an Identity in the Age of Female Icons. "A Special Issue." November 24, 1996. An interesting look at contemporary female imagery.
- Eagleton, Terry. *The Idea of Culture*. 2000. London: Blackwell Publishers.
- Faludi, Susan. "The Masculine Mystique." *Esquire*. 126:6, December, 1996.
- Fiske, John. 1996. *Media Matters: Politics: Everyday Culture and Political Change*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hall, Ann C. and Mardia J. Bishop, eds. 2007. *Pop-Porn: Pornography in American Culture*. Praeger, Westport CT.
- Hall, Stuart. 1998. Ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Cultural Practices*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications [In Association with The Open University].
- Kellner, Douglas. 1995. *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern*. London: Routledge.

- Levine, Lawrence W. 1984. "William Shakespeare and the American People: A Study in Cultural Transformation" in *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*. Eds. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991.
- Highbrow, Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1998
- Marc, David. 1997. *Comic Visions: Television Comedy and American Culture*. 2nd edition. Malden MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Marcus, Greil. 1997. *Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes*. A subterranean history of an important aspect of modern music. New York: Henry Holt.
- Miller, Mark Crispin. 1992. (Ed.). *Seeing Through Movies*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- McLuhan, M. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge MA : The MIT Press, 1964.
- Mukerji, Chandra and Michael Schudson, Eds.1991. *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Murray, Susan and Laurie Ouellette. 2004. *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. New York: New York University Press.
- Real, Michael R. 1996. "Historical/Ethical Interpretation: Reconstructing the Quiz Show Scandal," in *Exploring Media Culture: A Guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rothenberg, Randall. "The Age of Spin." *Esquire*. 126:6, December, 1996. This is a reworking of Ewen's ideas in PR, along with a "story interview" with Stuart Ewen.
- Schudson, Michael. *Discovering the News: A Social History of American News*. New York: Basic Books, 1978.
- Simon, Richard. 1999. *Trash Culture: Popular Culture and the Great Tradition*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Storey, John. 1998. *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. 3nd edition. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Snyder, Robert W. 1994. "The Vaudeville Circuit: A Prehistory of the Mass Audience." in James S. Ettema and D. Charles Whitney (Eds.) 1994. *Audience-making: How the Media Create the Audience*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Stephens, Mitchell. *A History of News: From the Drum to the Satellite*. New York: Penguin Books, 1988.
- Twitchell, James B. 1992. *Carnival Culture: The Trashing of Taste in America*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Journals on cultural theory and popular culture: the following journals provide current thinking on "mass mind" issues.