

# **Communication Analysis & Criticism - Communication 445**

Old Dominion University  
Department of Communication and Theatre Arts  
Spring 2012

Instructor: Tim Anderson, Ph.D.

Office: BAL 3016

Class meetings: BAL MWF 11-11:50

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 12pm-1pm in BAL 3016 or by appointment (via e-mail)

e-mail: [tjanders@odu.edu](mailto:tjanders@odu.edu)

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

This course is designed to introduce students to different ways of criticizing and analyzing popular mass media, specifically audio visual forms. While we will briefly discuss the role of mainstream criticism, we will focus on more academic forms of analysis and critique. This includes formal and ideological forms of criticism, the way in which they work together to give us an analytical purchase upon which we can make many judgements and arguments. These techniques are those that are basic to both composing and understanding audiovisual media. Throughout we will look at some of the benefits and drawbacks of different ways of understanding and criticizing media. More importantly, you will be able to perform some of these formal analyses and prepare you to evaluate others' media criticisms.

## **READINGS**

There are two books for this class

Film Art, Vol. 9 Bordwell and Thompson (ISBN-13: 978-0073386164)

What Media Classes Really Want to Discuss: A Student Guide - Greg M. Smith  
(ISBN-13: 978-0415778121)

Both are available at the university bookstore.

All other readings will be distributed online through Blackboard via links, online PDF files or a combination of both.

**STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO DO THE ASSIGNED READINGS BEFORE COMING TO CLASS.**

The requirements for the class include:

- Two 4 to 6 page, typed "media criticism" papers: 12% X 2 = 24%
- First Midterm 15%
- Second Midterm 18%
- Final Exam: 28%
- Class participation and attendance: 15%

Taken altogether this equals 100%

Grade will be assigned in the following manner

Each of the above will be graded on a 100-point scale, including participation. The grading scale will be as follows: A 100-94; A- 93-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-84; B- 83-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-74; C- 73-70; D+ 69-67; D 66-64; D- 63-60; F 59 & lower.

### Writing Assignments:

The two media-approaches papers and the final exam will be based on the development of your understanding of media criticism by your exploration of one media text. The two papers will ask you to write an analysis of one of the texts screened in that week's class utilizing one of the analytical approaches that we have deal with during the same week. This is why taking a good set of notes, performing close readings of each chapter assigned and vigorous, in-class discussions will be so important to your success. Unless you have copies of these same episodes you will not be able to view them repeatedly outside of the classroom.

### Writing Basics

An "A" paper will have an argument to make on the approved topic, a logical structure in which to make it, reasons/evidence to support all claims, and no significant errors in spelling, grammar or general presentation.

The "B" paper will make an argument on the approved topic and have a structure and reasons/evidence to support claims. But it may have sections where the structure becomes confusing or ineffective, or the evidence to support claims is deficient, in addition to a few errors in spelling, grammar or general presentation.

"C" papers will have an argument to make on the approved topic, with some viable claims. But there may be serious deficiencies in the evidence provided and a notable absence of structure, as well as several errors in spelling, grammar and general presentation.

The "D" paper will have no real argument and deficiencies in every area.

The "F" paper has no argument and fails to do the minimum requirements or is a paper never turned in at all.

If you would like to discuss how to improve your grades, come see me during office hours or set up an appointment to see me in my office. I require a 24 hour pause or moratorium between the time you receive a grade and when I am willing to discuss it with you. I don't discuss graded work in the hallway, after class, on email or on the phone.

### Communication

All communication through email will go through Blackboard and your odu.edu email account.

### Class Participation

Class participation will be determined by attendance and verbal participation in class. You are allowed about three absences. Each additional absence will lower your participation grade by a third of a letter grade. Furthermore, simply attending class will not guarantee you a perfect participation grade; you must actually participate in class. Your participation grade will also be lowered if you repeatedly arrive late to or leave early from class.

Please Note:

**\*\*Important: Email me your assignments at [tjanders@odu.edu](mailto:tjanders@odu.edu) with a title that I will send you before the assignment is due. If you do not place the title I send you in the subject heading of the email or you place the assignment on Blackboard expect a zero. I will not print out these papers and I won't grade them.**

**\*\*Students are expected to follow the Code of Academic Integrity. Any form of scholastic dishonesty -- including plagiarism, cheating on exams or misrepresentations of your own work -- will result in a grade of F for the course. In addition, I will be compelled to write a letter to the chair of your department and the Dean's Office of whatever department and college you are in that details the offenses and recommends that your program, department, college or university impose whatever additional penalties that are detailed in your student's manual. Be honest. Also, students are expected to turn in original material for this class (not recycled material from other classes or material currently being written for other classes).**

### Exams

There are three exams, two of which are midterms that will be administered in class during the last hour of each class. The final exam will be administered during the final

exam period and will be cumulative. Exams will be discussed when get to that portion of the class.

### Late Work

All late work will be penalized one and one half letter grade per day it is late. If something is due at 8pm on a Friday and it shows up at 8:10pm it is considered late and will be penalized. I will accept late work for only three days after the deadline. After this three day period all late work will become a zero. The only exceptions to this is work that has been delayed due severe medical problems or severe family emergencies. If you have questions about whether or not you may turn in late work based on the above exceptions, please send me an email. Finally, you are expected to budget your time and start projects well ahead of when the due date. Getting sick on the night that you had decided to write your paper is not a good reason to miss the three-day limit. Budgeting time adequately is a skill, please practice it.

### SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

The schedule is subject to change.

#### **Week 1**

Jan 9 - Introduction

Jan 11 and Jan 13 - Understanding the Power of Form and The Beginning of a Story

**Readings - Seeger - "Three Act Structure" , Smith - Chapter 1**

#### **Week 2**

Jan 16 (No Class)

Jan 18 - screening 48 Hours episode

Jan 20 - Discussion regarding 48 Hours and Lecture on the power of form

Readings - McKee - "Story"

#### **Week 3**

Jan 23 The necessity of visual planning and The Significance of Narrative Form:

Beginning Expectations

Jan 25 and Jan 27 - Screening The Wizard of Oz -

**Readings - FA 54-73 and 94-109**

#### **Week 4**

Jan 30 - Discussion regarding The Wizard of Oz and Beginning Classical Narrative

Feb 1 and Feb 3 - Thinking through a Classical Narrative and Begin Mise En Scene analysis; Mise en Scene, Clips and Shorts

**Readings - FA 112-160, Smith - Chapter 2**

### **Week 5**

Feb 6 *First Exam*

Feb 8 and Feb 10 - Lectures on Mise en Scene and Cinematography (The Power of the Shot)

**Readings FA 162-183 - FA 184-216**

### **Week 6**

Feb 13 and Feb 15 Continued Lecture on Cinematography

Feb 17 - Screening Example - Portions of Visions of Light (92min)

Readings - TBA and Continue **FA 162-183 - FA 184-216**

### **Week 7**

Feb 20, Feb 22 and Feb 24 - Editing Beginning and Close Analysis -

Read [http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/19783/shot\\_analysis\\_in\\_cinema\\_and\\_film.html](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/19783/shot_analysis_in_cinema_and_film.html)

### **Week 8**

Feb 27 - Genre - What it is

Feb 29 - Producing for an Audience and Designing for Genre; Genre Conventions for Film Noir

Mar 2 - Film Noir Doc Screening

**Readings - FA 318-337 and Smith - Chapter 4**

***First 4-6 page formal analysis due by 5pm Friday, Mar 4 in my email [tjanders@odu.edu](mailto:tjanders@odu.edu)***

**Spring Break - March 3-11**

### **Week 9**

Mar 12 , Mar 14 and 16 - Screening: Blade Runner and discussion

**Readings - "Blade Runner" by Douglas Kellner, Flo Leibowitz, and Michael Ryan**

## **Week 10**

Mar 19 *Second Exam*

Mar 23 and Mar 25 No classes

**Readings - Mimi White - "Ideological Analysis and Television"; Dinez Humez - Cultural Studies Approach to Gender Race Class; E Ann Kaplan - Feminism and Television; Goldman - Constructing and Addressing the Audience as Commodity**

## **Week 11**

Mar 28 - Beginning Ideological Analysis and Understanding the Powers of the "Obvious"

Mar 30 Continuing Ideological Analysis and Understanding the Powers of the "Obvious"; Beginning Gender Analysis; Feminism and Media - Advertising Readings - Screening Discussion Tough Guys

Apr 1 -Gender and the Media Sexuality and Media Representation

**Readings - Smith - Chapter 3; "Bugs Bunny: Queer as a Three-Dollar Bill" - Hank Sartin**

## **Week 12**

Apr 2 - Queerness and Heteronormativity;

Apr 4 Begin The Celluloid Closet

Apr 6 - Finish The Celluloid Closet Discuss

**Readings - Begin Pieterse - "White Negroes"; Stuart Hall - The Whites of Their Eyes; Katula and Cassidy - The Black Experience in Advertising**

## **Week 13**

April 9 - Beginning Racial Analysis - Majority Positioning and Minority Placements;

April 11 - Continue Racial Analysis - Majority Positioning and Minority Placements

April 13 - Finish Racial Analysis

**Readings - Smith Chapter 6**

## **Week 14**

April 16 - Screen Color Adjustment

April 18 - Discussion

April 20 - TBA

**Readings - Catch Up and Finish What Hasn't Been Finished**

## **Week 15**

4/23 - Final Exam Review

***Second Paper Due by April 23 at 5pm in my email [tjanders@odu.edu](mailto:tjanders@odu.edu)***

**Cumulative Final Exam - Wednesday, May 2nd, 2012 8:30am-11:30am**