

ATCM 6376

Th. 4-6:45

Dr. Olivia Banner

Office hours: T 1-2:30; email for other appointment times

Media and Cultural Studies Methods

3/24/2020: Please see our shared Box folder for updated syllabus.

This course covers key methods in critical media studies and cultural studies, including archival research, textual analysis, industrial analysis, and ethnographic, decolonial, and feminist methods. Course readings have been selected to show you how these have evolved from and are applied across a range of fields, including cinema studies, television studies, literary studies, cultural studies, women's studies, and others. Over the course of the semester, you will build an understanding of methods through short applied assignments. By the end of the class, you will have a sharpened research question and know which method or methods will best suit your MA (or, if it applies, your Ph.D.) project.

Objectives:

- Understand methods used in media and cultural studies;
- Critique and apply media and cultural studies methods;
- Propose a future research project (thesis or dissertation) using appropriate methods.

Required Texts:

- Michael Kackman and Mary Kearney, *The Craft of Criticism*
- Vicki Mayer, *Almost Hollywood, Nearly New Orleans*
(<https://www.luminosoa.org/site/books/10.1525/luminos.25/>)

All other readings are available on eLearning. I highly encourage you to print the readings out and read and notate them on paper.

Grading Breakdown:

Assignments 1, 2, 3, 6, 8: 10% each

Assignments 4, 5, 7: 10% (must be turned in)

Research Question and Annotated Bibliography: 15%

Research Proposal: 15%

Participation: 10%

Assignment 1: Using the research question you identified during our first class meeting, explain how it might change after doing the readings for this week. **Due: In class, 1/23**

Assignment 2: Propose a case study built on the SMU database you have selected to visit. What kinds of questions seem to “make sense” to you—that is, does the archive seem to lend itself to specific kinds of research questions? Is this a curated digital archive? Are all the archive’s materials digitized? If they aren’t all digitized, what does the finding aid suggest to you could also be of interest within the material archives? **Due 2/6**

Assignment 3: Using the materials gathered during our visit to the SMU archives, propose and undertake a textual analysis of them. **Due: 2/21**

Assignment 4: Identify a work you’ve already covered in another class that used discourse analysis. Please photocopy the sections in which the author identifies their method and bring them to class to share with the group. **Due: 2/28**

Assignment 5: Identify a work you’ve already covered in another class that used ideology critique. Please photocopy the sections in which the author identifies their method and bring them to class to share with the group. **Due: 3/5**

Assignment 6: Select a popular publication article that talks about “audiences” in relation to computational culture. What is the method it uses? Taking into account the methods outlined in the materials from the past 3 weeks, critique its method. What are its weaknesses? What are its strengths? **Due: 3/12**

Assignment 7: Bring to class an article you’ve previously read that used an ethnographic method. Where does the article discuss the ethics of ethnography? What framework or principles for ethnography does it mobilize? **Due: 3/26**

Assignment 8: Attend a media industry event held at ATEC or elsewhere at the school – even SXSW. Analyze the event, including its promotion, Q&A session, and any other para-event materials using one of the methods outlined in the reading. **Due: 4/9; flexible depending on event date**

Research Question and Annotated Bibliography: Identify the research question(s) that will guide your final project. In addition, provide an annotated bibliography of at least 10 scholarly sources. These sources should be selected because they will help you approach your research question, and they will be part of the literature review for your research proposal. You should explain how the sources connect to your research project, and identify their methodologies. **Due: 4/25**

Research proposal: This is a *practice* proposal for a research project (thesis for MA students, dissertation for PhD students). The proposal will include a firmly articulated topic, research question(s), a literature review, explanation of methodology, and chapter breakdown (approximately 15 pages in total). The proposal will build on the annotated bibliography developed earlier in the semester. **Due: Last class meeting**

Note: If you have already submitted an official proposal or are an MFA student, we will craft a separate assignment for you.

Policies:

- You must turn in all assignments to pass the class.
- Late submission is discouraged, but if you must submit late, please keep me apprised. Each day a submission is late will be penalized 1/3 of a grade.
- More than one absence may detract from your final grade.
- Plagiarism will be turned over to the Dean of Students.
- All submissions must be unique to this class.

SCHEDULE

****Please note: This is subject to revision at my discretion.**

1/16: Introductions and diagnostic activities

In class assignment: Propose a research question that you might pursue during the course of this class. How do you think you are going to answer this question?

1/23: What is “method”? What are CMS methods?

Read:

- Mary Kearney, “Introduction,” *CofC*
- Klaus Jensen, “The Humanities in Media and Communication Research,” *A Handbook of Media and Communication Research* (2013)
- Sandra Harding, “Is There a Feminist Method?,” *Feminism and Methodology* (1989)
- Daniel Allington, Sarah Brouillette, and David Golumbia, “Neoliberal Tools (and Archives): A Political History of the Digital Humanities,” <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/neoliberal-tools-archives-political-history-digital-humanities/>

Assignment 1: Using the research question you identified during our first class meeting, explain how it might change after doing the readings for this week – in other words, what questions about it did the readings provoke? **Due: In class, 1/23**

1/30: Historiography

Read:

- Michael Kackman, “History and Historiography,” *CofC*
- Thomas Schatz, “The Whole Equation of Pictures,” *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (1996)
- Steven J. Ross, “Sources and Methods for Writing Film History,” *Working-class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (1999)
- Olivia Banner, “Black Media and Community Control of Mental Health during the Civil Rights Compromise”
- **Recommended: Allyson Nadia Field and Marsha Gordon, “Introduction,” *Screening Race in American Nontheatrical Film*

Visit:

- SMU online film archive databases

In class: Everyone will email an SMU archivist to arrange to visit their collection and view the material in person the week of 2/10.

2/6: History continued: The Archive**Read:**

- George Lipsitz, Ch 1. (“Popular Culture: This Ain’t No Sideshow”) and Ch. 3 (“The Meaning of Memory: Family, Class, and Ethnicity in Early Network Television”), *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (1990)
- Adrienne Shaw, “What’s Next? The LGBTQ Video Game Archive,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 34, no. 1 (2017)
- Lisa Nakamura, “Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronics Manufacture,” *American Quarterly* 66.4 (2014)
- Allyson Nadia Field and Marsha Gordon, “Introduction,” *Screening Race in American Nontheatrical Film* (2019)

Assignment 2: Propose a case study built on the SMU database you have selected to visit. What kinds of questions seem to “make sense” to you—that is, does the archive seem to lend itself to specific kinds of research questions? Is this a curated digital archive? Are all the archive’s materials digitized? If they aren’t all digitized, what does the finding aid suggest to you could also be of interest within the material archives? **Due 2/6**

2/13: No class – please visit SMU Film Archives

2/20: Close Reading; Textual Analysis

Read:

- Mary Beltran, "Representation," *CofC*
- Jason Mittell, "Narrative," *CofC*
- Ellen Seiter, "Semiotics, Structuralism, and Television," *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled*, ed. Robert Allen (1987).
- Julie Elman, "After School Special Education: Rehabilitative Television, Teen Citizenship, and Compulsory Able-Bodiedness," *Television & New Media* 11, no. 4 (2010)
- Juan Llamas-Rodriguez, "The Narco-stories of Kate del Castillo: Stardom, Gender, and Entrepreneurship in Transnational Context," *Television and New Media* (2019)

Assignment 3: Undertake a textual analysis of the materials you viewed during your visit to the SMU archives. **Due 2/20**

2/27: Discourse Analysis**Read:**

- Rosalind Gill, "Discourse Analysis," *CofC*
- Gillian Rose, "Discourse Analysis II: Institutions and Ways of Seeing"
- Anne Balsamo, "On the Cutting Edge," *Technologies of the Gendered Body* (1996)
- Josef Nguyen, "Minecraft and the Building Blocks of Creative Individuality," *Configurations* (2016)

Recommended:

- Foucault, "History of Systems of Thought," *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*

Assignment 4: Identify a work you've already covered in another class that used discourse analysis. Please photocopy the sections in which the author identifies their method and bring them to class to share with the group. **Due in class 2/27**

3/5: Ideology Critique**Read:**

- Douglass Kellner, "Film, Politics, Ideology: Reflections on Hollywood Film in the Age of Reagan"
- Frederic Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text* (1979)
- Wendy Chun, "Introduction," *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (2008)
- Olivia Banner, "The Postracial Imagination: *Gattaca's* Imperfect Science," *Discourse* (2011)

Assignment 5: Identify a work you've already covered in another class that used ideology critique. Please photocopy the sections in which the author identifies their method and bring them to class to share with the group. **Due in class 3/5**

3/12: Reception Studies

- Matt Hills, "Audiences," *CofC*
- Ien Ang, selections from *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination* (1989)
- John Fiske, "Active Audiences," *Television Culture* (1987)
- Cavalcante, Press, and Sender, "Feminist Reception Studies in a Post-Audience Age," *Feminist Media Studies* 17, no. 1 (2017)
- Steiner and Bronstein, "Leave a Comment: Mommyblogs and the Everyday Struggle to Reclaim Parenthood," *Feminist Media Studies* 17, no. 1 (2017)

Recommended:

- Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding"

Assignment 6: Select a popular publication article that talks about "audiences" in relation to computational culture. What is the method it uses? Taking into account the methods outlined in the materials from the past 3 weeks, critique its method. What are its weaknesses? What are its strengths? **Due: 3/12**

3/19: NO CLASS (spring break)

3/26: Ethnography

Read:

- Jessa Lingel and Mary L. Gray, "Ethnography," *CofC*
- Catherine Driscoll and Melissa Gregg, "My Profile: The Ethics of Virtual Ethnography," *Emotion, Space and Society* 3, no. 1 (2010)
- Oona Morrow, Roberta Hawkins, and Leslie Kern, "Feminist Research in Online Spaces," *Gender, Place, and Culture* 22, no. 4 (2015)
- T. L. Cowan and Jasmine Rault, "The Labour of Being Studied in a Free Love Economy," *ephemera: theory and politics in organization* 14, no. 3 (2014)
- Paul Atienza, "Censoring the Sexual Self: Reflections from an Ethnographic Study of Gay Filipinos on Mobile Dating Apps in Manila," *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 19, no. 3 (2018)

Recommended:

- Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” https://monoskop.org/images/5/54/Geertz_Clifford_The_Interpretation_of_Cultures_Selected_Essays.pdf
- James Clifford, “Partial Truths,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, <https://lcst3789.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/clifford-writing-culture.pdf>
- Laura Nader, “Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from Studying Up,” <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED065375.pdf>

Assignment 7: Bring to class an article you’ve previously read that used an ethnographic method. Where does the article discuss the ethics of ethnography? What framework or principles for ethnography does it mobilize? **Due: 3/26**

4/2: No class – Dr. Banner at conference

Read:

- Patrick Burkhardt, “Political Economy,” *CofC*
- Timothy Havens, “Production,” *CofC*
- Vicki Mayer, *Almost Hollywood, Nearly New Orleans*

Assignment 8: Attend a media industry event held at ATEC or elsewhere at the school – even SXSW. Analyze the event, including its promotion, Q&A session, and any other para-event materials using one of the methods outlined in the reading. **Due: 4/9; flexible depending on event date**

4/9: Political Economy and Industry Analysis

We will discuss the assignments from the previous week.

4/16: Decolonizing Methods

Read:

- Linda Tuhawai Smith, “Research through Imperial Eyes,” *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (the whole book is available online, and I encourage you to browse all of it)
- Marisa Duarte, selections from *Network Sovereignty*
- Roopika Risam, “Decolonizing Digital Humanities in Theory and Practice”

Recommended:

- Kim Tallbear, “Standing with and Speaking as Faith: A Feminist-Indigenous Approach to Inquiry,” <http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/405/371>

Research Question and Annotated Bibliography: With this assignment, you will identify the research question(s) that will guide your final project. In addition, you will provide an annotated bibliography that includes at least 10 scholarly sources. The sources you choose should help address your research question and serve as the starting point for the literature review section of your research proposal. In constructing this annotated bibliography, you should indicate how each source connects to your research project. You should also highlight the methodologies employed in each source. **Due: 4/23**

4/23: Comparative Media Methods and Critical Data Cultures Studies

Read:

- Madhavi Mallapragada, “New Media,” *CofC*
- Lisa Gitelman, “Introduction,” *Always Already New*
- Jacqueline Wernimont, TBD, *Numbered Lives*
- Safiya Noble, “Introduction,” *Algorithms of Oppression*

4/30: Putting It All Together

Research proposal: This will serve as a *practice* proposal for a larger research project (thesis for MA students, dissertation for PhD students). The proposal must consist of a concrete topic, research question(s), literature review, methodology, and chapter breakdown (approximately 15 pages in total). The proposal will build on the annotated bibliography developed earlier in the semester. **Due: Last class meeting**

Note: If you have already submitted an official proposal or are an MFA student, we will craft a separate assignment for you.