Media, Democracy and Justice
04:567:459
Spring 2012

Professor: Dr. Todd Wolfsion
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Office Hours: Wednesday 3-5PM and by appointment
Class Room: Campbell Hall, Room A3
Class Time: Monday 6:10pm-9pm

Description

This course will explore the intersections of media, democracy and justice. The class will begin by looking at foundational conceptions of democracy and justice. Following this the class explores the themes of journalism, policy, and alternative perspectives on the notions of democracy and media. The aim of the course is to build a broad understanding of how political structures are enforced and transformed by the media.

Course Requirements:

- **Readings** – It is essential that seminar participants come to class having read all course materials thoroughly for each session. Grounding our critical exploration in the readings is vital to the analytical success of this course – both in class discussion and in written assignments.

- **Class participation** (15% of course grade) – This is a seminar that depends upon your active participation in class discussion. Emphasis will be placed on critical analysis of the readings, which will be generated primarily through the articulation of thoughts and ideas in a seminar format. Students must be prepared to contribute critical comments grounded in the course readings at each session.

- **Facilitating Discussion** (15% of course grade) – Each week, a group of students will be responsible for providing a short analytic overview of the reading. Of greatest importance, facilitators should raise several key questions about the philosophical and theoretical perspectives evident in the readings, as well as the implications of these in reference to critical media studies. WHEN YOU ARE FACILITATING DISCUSSION YOU DO NOT HAVE TO POST A READING RESPONSE.

- **Reading Responses** (15% of course grade) – All students will post written responses to the week’s readings by Sunday evening at 9PM, and come to class having read other students’ comments. Contributions should include reflections on the readings and questions for class discussion. Points of discussion include (but are not limited to) the following: What are the key arguments made by the author? What assumptions are made? What ideological positions are evident? What possible perspectives are left out? What did you react to most strongly in the readings and why? Are there any possible points of argument left out of the readings? What questions remain for you in reference to the reading, and how could your classmates help you explore these questions?
Please upload your written responses to the course site. We will be using Sakai for the class. Go to https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal and log in using your Rutgers ID and password. On the site I will post announcements, assignments, readings, and so on. Please check regularly.

- **Media Democracy Midterm** (20% of course grade)
- **Term Paper** (35% of course grade)

### Additional Rules and Information

- Cell phones must be turned off upon entering the classroom and may not be used in the classroom or during class time.
- Laptops may be used for note-taking only. No emailing or Web-surfing during class.
- Students must show up on time and stay for the duration of the class. During class, students should not engage in personal conversations, read newspapers, do crossword puzzles, or undertake other personal diversions unrelated to class activity.
- I will return all emails on a first-come, first-served basis. Do not assume that I have received your email. If I don’t reply, follow up with a phone call.

**Academic Integrity.** Plagiarism and cheating are, of course, forbidden, according to Rutgers University policy. You are responsible for reviewing and obeying these policies. A lengthy statement of the policy is at http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html.

- On plagiarism, this statement (from history.rutgers.edu/undergrad/plagiarism.htm) appears in Rutgers University’s rules. Like all such rules, it applies to this class.

Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be promptly cited in the text or in a footnote. Acknowledgment is required when material from another source is stored in print, electronic, or other medium and is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one’s words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: “to paraphrase Plato’s comment...” and conclude with a footnote identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information which is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc., need not be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, only materials that contribute to one’s general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some cases, be a subtle issue. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the faculty member.

**Online (O) at Sakai** (https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal)

**Required Books**
Reading Schedule

I. Foundations: Democracy and Justice (4 weeks)

1/23: Introduction

1/30: Enlightenment and Democracy
• John Jacques Rousseau: The Social Contract
• John Stuart Mill: On Liberty
• Pierre Joseph Proudhon: Property is Theft

2/6: American Enlightenment and Democracy
• Alex de Tocqueville: Democracy in America (Book 2: Influence of Democracy on the Feelings of Americans)
• Thomas Paine: Common Sense

2/13: NO CLASS

2/20: Alternative Theories of Democracy or Justice
• Karl Marx: The Communist Manifesto
• Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri: Multitude (Democracy Chapter)

II. Democracy and Journalism (4 Weeks)

2/27: 20th Century Democracy and the Muckrakers
• Walter Lipmann: Public Opinion (select chapters)
• Upton Sinclair: The Jungle (select chapters)
• Rachel Carson: Silent Spring (select chapters)

3/5: Journalism Democracy and Critics
• C Wright Mills: The Mass Society
• John Dewey: Our Unfree Press

MID TERM DUE AND CLASS PRESENTATIONS

3/12: SPRING BREAK

3/19: Civil Rights Movement and Journalism
• The Kerner Commission: The News Media and the Disorders
• Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff: The Race Beat: The Press The Civil Rights Struggle and the Awakening of a Nation (select chapters)
Screening: King and the Civil Rights Movement

3/26: Media Justice
• bell hooks: Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance
• Makani Themba Nixon and Nan Rubin: Speaking for Ourselves
• Malkia Cyril: Media and Marginalization

Visit from Steven Renderos of Center for Media Justice and Media Action Grassroots Network

III. Media Policy Democracy and the Digital Age (2 Weeks)

4/2: Media Ownership and Democracy
• Robert McChesney: Rich Media and Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times. (Introduction, Chapter 1, Conclusion)

Visit from Tim Karr of Free Press

4/9: Information the Internet and American Democracy
• Bruce Bimber: Information and American Democracy (chapters 1 and 6)
• Matthew Kerbel: Netroots (Chapters 1, 2)

IV. Alternative Perspectives (2 weeks)

4/16: Technology and Social Change
• Clay Shirkey: Excerpts from Here Comes Everybody
• Malcolm Gladwell: “Small Change: Why the Revolution Will not Be Tweeted” in The New Yorker
• Leo Mirani: “Sorry Malcolm Gladwell the Revolution May be Tweeted” in The Guardian
• Evgeny Morozov, The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom,

4/23: Social Movements and Media
• Todd Wolfson: Cyber Left: Indymedia and the Making of Twenty-first Century Struggle

5/30: Last Class
Students discuss their final papers

May 9: FINAL PAPER IS DUE
Media and Democracy Mid-Term Assignment

In this assignment you are to identify either a non-profit organization or an alternative news organization (partial list below) that works on issues of media and democracy, broadly understood. Once you have identified an organization you are to gather information about the following (this is a partial list please add):

- Mission and vision of organization
- Everyday work of organization
- Underlying Philosophy of Media and Democracy
- History of the organization
- Future direction of the organization

You will collect this information through the organizations website, public writing on the organization, an interview with a staff person or someone involved with the organization (this is mandatory) and other means. The end product of this assignment is a 5-7 page paper that details the history, mission and philosophy of the organization as well as the work and ways the organization understands the issue of Media, Democracy and Justice. You will also give a presentation on the organization to the rest of class. Below is a list of some organizations although please feel free to find another organization.

- Free Press
- Center for Media Justice
- New America Foundation-Open Technology Initiative
- Media Mobilizing Project
- Prometheus Radio Project
- Public Knowledge
- The Media and Democracy Coalition
- People’s Production House
- Philadelphia Community Access Media
- Media Literacy Project
- Reclaim the Media
- IndyMedia
- Democracy Now!
- Allied Media Project
- Main Street Project
- Media Alliance
- Voz Mob
- Appalshop
- Workers Independent News
- Pacifica Radio
- Native Public Media
- Smart Meme