

Educ 102: Education, the Media, and Society
University of California, Santa Cruz
Summer, 2015

Time: Mon/Wed 9:00-12:30

Location: Soc Sci I, 161

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“Seemingly minor yet persistent things penetrate the mind over time making it difficult to ever realize the impact; hence, though quite unfortunate, the most dangerous forms of corruption are those that are subtle and below the radar.” - *Criss Jami*

“A democratic civilization will save itself only if it makes the language of the image into a stimulus for critical reflection — not an invitation for hypnosis.” - *Umberto Eco*

Course description:

This course offers an opportunity to analyze the way that education (schools, teachers, students) are represented in the media, investigate how those representations shape society’s perspectives on and, therefore, interactions with schools, teachers, young people, and education more generally. Particular attention will be paid to representations of historically marginalized students and communities. This course investigates (a) how the public receives its information about education; (b) how—and why—public education is perceived the way it is in society; and (c) how market interests, social histories, and political ideologies influence ways schooling is represented. These inter-related investigations intend to scaffold an analysis, which reveals ways in which schools are both subjects and objects of multiple social, cultural, economic and political struggles and histories, which play out in particular ways within media and society. Current examples of education in media (published text and video clips) will be used throughout to illustrate the themes of the course. The goal is to encourage students to become both critical consumers and producers of media.

Texts:

1. Readings posted on ecommons.
2. Postman, N. *Amusing ourselves to death: Public discourse in the age of show business.*

Course Requirements:

1. Regular attendance, diligent reading, and thoughtful participation
2. Two reflective memos
3. Group project presentation
4. Final paper connected to group project

Evaluation:

You will receive a final grade at the end of the quarter. The three primary domains on which you will be assessed are your thoughtfulness, your commitment to the coursework, and your willingness to engage deeply with new ideas. The following is the weighted breakdown of coursework:

- Class participation (25%)
- Two reflective memos (20% each)
- Group Project (presentation and report) (35%)

Participation

Your participation grade includes regular attendance, active discussion and participation in activities, acting with others as the discussion lead for a portion of one class, and completing regular written responses in a dedicated notebook. Since this is a compressed class, your attendance and participation are absolutely necessary. If you are absent, please provide me with an excuse. Each absence will result in a 5% deduction of your grade. This is a discussion-based course, which means that you're expected to contribute ideas, questions and observations in class regularly. If you're typically uncomfortable being active in class discussions, please come talk to me and we'll work it out.

The course is designed to be a collaborative space where everyone takes part in learning and teaching. As part of your participation grade, students will be divided into groups and lead a related activity for 20 minutes of each class session. Groups will come and meet with me ahead of time to discuss how they might spend their time.

Come to class with your class materials, notes, a dedicated notebook (or file on your computer) to use as a journal, and a writing utensil.

I've found that students sometimes ask me to write them letters of recommendation. I am typically happy to do that as long as I feel that I have come to know you positively as an academic student, a person, and a developing educator. If you anticipate this scenario, I think it's your responsibility to distinguish yourself in class and make the effort to allow me to get to know you. Otherwise, please do not ask me for a letter of recommendation later.

Reflective memos

There are two reflective memos that you will write during the course (notice due dates on meeting schedule below). These are semi-formal essays. The goal is not for you to have to be the expert and offer perfect ideas in these memos, but instead to try out some new ideas, some new ways for you to think about things—*to stretch your mind a little and make your own intellectual connections to the readings*. The memos will be evaluated primarily on how deeply and clearly you weave the course readings into a discussion of your own ideas around the prompts.

Please follow these guidelines: typed, double-spaced, five to seven pages each. Hard copies (no email attachments). Explicitly connect your understandings of the course material to your own personal analyses of the readings, how they correspond to your own

ideas about education, how your own experiences connect you (or not) to the readings. Memo topics are below; however, please don't write them too far in advance since I would like you to reference or discuss the recent readings in your reflective memos.

Memo #1:

Offer your own intellectual reactions to, evaluation of, and ideas about *Amusing ourselves to death*. Describe what you learned. Explain what parts of the author's argument that you agree or disagree with and why. Finally, write an update for the book, since media has changed significantly in the last 15 years.

Memo #2:

Choose one example of a *model of teacher* from course readings or TV/movie snippets we watched, and write about this one teacher stereotype. Why (and from where?) do you think this model emerged? Why it is perpetuated? What hidden ideologies, perspectives, or special interests sit below—and shape—such a model? Does it match any of your own experiences in education? How do you suppose this model influences people (including you, including future educators)? Use the course readings to deepen your discussion.

Expectations for Assignments

In general, expect to be graded on:

- Extent to which you adhere to the assignment specification, including responding to the given question(s) and length requirement.
- Quality and depth of thought, which is best achieved through reflection and revision. Re-read, think, re-think, edit, and re-write.
- Quality of writing itself including attention to grammar, syntax, organization, and idea development.
- Any late work will have its grade devalued.
- Plagiarism, unfairly sharing work or any other academic dishonesty will not be tolerated; for information, consult the handbook:
www2.ucsc.edu/judicial/handbook02-03/g_academic.htm

Media Analysis Group Project

On the first day of class, we will generate a list of potential education-related topics to investigate. There is a potential list included below. We will form groups of students interested in investigating the same topics. As a group you will collect 20-30 media representations of your topic. These can include newspaper pieces, web pages, blog reports, television snippets, film images, magazine articles, etc. We will spend time in class each week analyzing the media representations you collect. You will also need to meet with your group outside of class. On the last class meeting, each group will present their full analysis to the class. In addition to the presentation, your group will also submit an analytical report, this could be traditional in nature (written), or you could submit an

alternative project (a film, a series of blog posts, or curricular unit utilizing critical media literacy etc.) Your grade for the media analysis group project will include the presentation, analytical report, and peer evaluations.

Possible topics

- The *No Child Left Behind* Act; student testing; accountability
- Standards in education; curriculum (including scripted curricula like *Open Court* or the new Common Core State Standards)
- How teachers are prepared: teacher quality/teacher education/alternate entry (including *Teach For America*)
- School funding and issues of finance in education
- The corporate side of media, and its effects on education
- Immigration and education; English language learning; bilingualism; “English only” programs
- School-community cultures, and how they are represented/reported
- Gender and education
- School choice (incl. vouchers, charter schools, magnet schools)
- Race and education
- Religion and education (e.g., Intelligent design versus evolution in schools)
- Advertising’s influence on education
- Children’s television programming
- Censorship, free speech, the media and education
- Technology in Education (Blended Learning, Flipped Classrooms, etc.)

Class Meeting Schedule

Week 1:

July 27

Topic: Introductions. What is Media?

Readings:

- Matheson, D. (2005). Introduction and Chapter 1, *Media Discourses*.
- Defleur, M. and Dennis, E. (1998). Defining Mass communication and mass media.
- Sarder, Z. and Van Loon, B. (2000). Introducing Media Studies.

July 29

Topic: Mediated Identities

Readings:

- Kubey, R. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). Television and the structuring of experience.
- Talbot, M. (2006). Little Hotties: Barbie’s New Rival. *The New Yorker*.
- Roberts, S. & Howard, S. (2005). Watching *Teletubbies*: Television and its very young audience.
- Feinberg, C. (2011). The Mediatrix. *Harvard Magazine*.
- Matheson, D. (2005). Chapter 4. *Media Discourses*

Bring in your media identity (the assignment will be described on Day 1 of class).

Week 2:**August 3**

Topic: Television, Education, and Culture

- Readings: Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*

August 5

Topic: New Media

Readings:

- Carr, N. (2009). Is Google Making Us Stupid? *The Atlantic*
- Keen, A. (2015). Selection from *The Internet is not the answer.*
- Jarvis, J. (2011). Selection from *Public Parts.*

Reflective Memo #1 Due

Week 3:**August 10**

Topic: Critical Media Literacy

Readings:

- Share, J. *Media Literacy is Elementary.* Chapter 2
- Leistyna, P. & Alper, L. (2007). Critical media literacy for the 21st Century.
- Media Literacy Project. Introduction to media literacy
- Lakoff, R. (2000). *The Language War* Chapters 2 and 7

Optional:

- McLaren, P. & Hammer, R. (2007). Media knowledges, warrior citizenry, and postmodern literacies.
- Lakoff Chapter 5
- Cotter, C. (2001). Discourse and Media. *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*

August 12

Topic: Media Effects

Readings:

- Lakoff & Turner, An excerpt from *Metaphors we live by*
- The American School/The Role of Media in Education
- Andrejevic, M. (2004). Chapter one from *Reality TV: The work of being watched.*
- Eron, "Effects of television violence on children."
- Mockler, N. (2004). Architects, Travel Agents, Bus Drivers: Images of Teacher Professional Identity in Public Discourse

Week 4:**August 17**

Topic: Student, Teacher, and School Representations in the Media

Readings:

- Lowe, R. (2001). "Teachers as saviors, teachers who care,"

- Bulman, R. (2002). "Teachers in the 'hood: Hollywood's middle-class fantasy."
- Ayers, B. (2001). "A teacher ain't nothing but a hero: Teachers and teaching in film"
- Swetnam, L. (1992). Media distortion of the teacher image.
- Farhi, "Hollywood goes to school: Recognizing the superteacher myth in film."

August 19

Topic: Student, Teacher, and School Representations in the Media

Readings:

- Wallowitz, L. (2007). Just Like Lizzie: Consumerism, Essentialism, and the Domestication of rebellion in Disney's Lizzie McGuire.
- Santa Ana, "Chapter 5: Student as means, not end: Contemporary discourse on education."
- Groening, "School is hell."
- Denby, D. (2010). School spirit. *The New Yorker*. October 11, 2010.
- Hellemann, J. (2010). Schools: The disaster movie. *New York Magazine*.

Reflective Memo #2 Due

Week 5:

August 24

Topic: Critical Media Literacy in Schools

Readings:

- Share, J. *Media Literacy is Elementary*. Chapters 3 and 4
- Torres, M. & Mercado, M. (2007). The need for critical media literacy in Teacher Education Core Curricula.
- Mashburn, L. & Weaver, J. (2007). Literacy and Learning through Digital Media
- Hobbs, R. and Jensen, A. (2009). The Past, Present, and Future of Media Literacy Education. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*.

August 26

Topic: Creating Solutions, Group Project Presentations

Readings:

- Dee, "All the news that's fit to print out."
- Abrol, A. (2011). "Social media & political change."
- Postman and Powers, "Chapter 12: What can you do?"
- Newsom, J. (2011). Miss representation curriculum.

Monday, August 31: Turn in Final Projects in Person