

**Understanding Media
FILM 80M**

Dr. Jamie Lyons

M/W 2:40pm-4:10pm

Teaching Assistant :

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Course Description

Understanding Media is designed for students who have grown up in a rapidly changing global multimedia environment and want to become more literate in different media forms, as well as critical consumers and producers of culture. Through an interdisciplinary, comparative and historical lens, the course defines "media" broadly as including oral, print, theatrical, photographic, broadcast, cinematic, and digital cultural forms and practices. The course looks at the nature of mediated communication, the functions of media, the history of transformations in media, and the institutions that have defined media's place in society.

Over the course of the quarter we will explore different theoretical perspectives on the role and power of media in society in influencing social values, political beliefs, identities and behaviors. Students have the opportunity to analyze specific genres of media (such as films and television shows) and explore the meaning of changes that occur when a particular narrative is adapted into different forms. We will look at the ways in which the politics of class, gender, and race influence both the production and reception of media. Through readings, lectures, and discussions as well as your own writing and final, creative project, students have multiple opportunities to engage with critical debates in the field as well as explore the role of media in their own lives.

Requirements

Attendance and Participation:

This class requires your regular attendance and invested participation in class activities and scholarly investigations into social theories and topics covered in this class. Please arrive at each class having completed the scheduled readings and prepared to participate in class activities and discussions—noting questions or reactions to the material, and making connections between concepts in readings, videos, and your own life. Late arrival will disrupt the flow of class and compromise the collaborative nature of the work.

To reiterate: You are expected to prepare thoroughly for each class. Preparation includes any outside readings or viewings, completing assignments prior to class and being ready to discuss them.

We take attendance each day. You can miss one class, no questions asked. After that, points are deducted from your class attendance grade. The grading scale is as follows:

17-18 classes: A

16 classes: A-

15 classes: B

14 classes: C

13 classes: D

12 classes and below: F

Zoom Etiquette: wear clothes, don't walk and watch, always use mute unless you have question, be aware this is a public space.

Assignments

Class Attendance and Participation (20%)

Responses (50%)

Final Essay (30%)

Grade Scale:

A+: 98-100

A: 93-97.9

A-: 90-93.9

B+: 87-89.9

B: 83-86.9

B-: 80-82.9

C+: 77-79.9

C: 73-76.9

C-: 70-72.0

D: 60-69.9

F: <60

Your final grade will be arrived at by evaluating the following: 1) how you performed in your section; 2) the overall quality of your work; and 3) whether you missed any responses; 4) whether your work was turned in on time; and, 5) whether you were respectful of others in class and contributed to a productive environment generally.

The assignment for the Final Project will be handed out a couple of weeks after the quarter begins and discussed in section at least two weeks prior to the deadline.

Late Work

This is a large class. Because of the size, we must require all work be completed on deadline. This means that: Responses cannot be made up for reasons other than a demonstrated medical emergency. No exceptions will be made. Any response or assignment as well as the final essay must be turned in on time. Late work will have points deducted.

Final Media Project

You are tasked with creating a Personal Media Project: a video (no longer than 5min), a podcast (no longer than 5 min), or a series of images (no less than 10 and no more than 20). The choice of topic with final project is yours, however **I encourage you to check in with us** to ensure that it is manageable in scope and reflects your interests. I will give an introduction to this assignment and describe this project in more detail during the lecture. However, I do want to note:

- **For extra credit (boost of 5% of course grade)** you can turn your Personal Media Project in a few days early (Specific date TBD), and present your project on the final Wednesday of class. NOTE: we will view the project to review whether it is appropriate. Please see me if you would like to take advantage of this opportunity.

Accompanying the project, I ask that you write a 500-750 word artist statement, connecting your project to the themes, ideas, and questions that have been raised in class.

Accommodations

All students need accommodations, and those accommodations vary from student to student. If have an accommodation letter, please send it to me as soon as possible. I would also like to meet in person, to ensure that the class meets your needs. For more information: contact the Disability Resource Center 831-459-2089.

My Office Hours

If you would like to talk about the readings, films, the class in general I am more than happy to engage. Just email me (jacl Lyons@ucsc.edu) and we can set up a zoom call or phone call. In addition, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to email me or our TA Yasheng (Yashe@ucsc.edu).

Canvas

This course makes extensive use of the Canvas Learning Management System in class and out. Please familiarize yourself with Canvas and check the course page regularly throughout the quarter.

All assigned reading can be found on Canvas

Academic Integrity

We take plagiarism very seriously. Please also become acquainted with UCSC policies on plagiarism, beginning with the UCSC Library's website, "What is plagiarism?" UCSC maintains an Academic Misconduct Policy for Undergraduates. If a student has plagiarized in their work, We are required to report them to their College Provost, according to this procedure:
https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct

Class Schedule

Week #1 Old Media as New Media Ideas about an Original

10.5 Monday

Intro to the course and review of syllabus and assignments

10.7 Wednesday

Definitions of *Media, Medium and Disruption*

Reading: "What's so new about New Media", *New Media, 1740–1915*. Edited by Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003.

Watch: Film Screening: Werner Herzog, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2011)
<https://digitalcampus-swankmp-net.oca.ucsc.edu/uc371004/play/C27AC2C59A186FCC>

Week #2 Origins of Media and Media Theory

10.12 Monday

Theory Fundamentals

Reading: Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 1969. Pp. 217-251.

10.14 Wednesday

The Social Document: Photography and Social Reform

Film Screening: Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966)
<https://digitalcampus-swankmp-net.oca.ucsc.edu/uc371004/play/21A0ECEBAC717F6E>

Reading: Susan Sontag, *On Photography*

Week #3
The Revolution Will Not Be Televised

10.19 Monday

The whole is the false

READING: Horkheimer, Max, and Theodore Adorno. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." In *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Continuum, 1995. Pp. 120-167

10.21 Wednesday

The medium is the message

READING: McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Introduction by Lewis Lapham. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999 and pp. 3-47.

Week #4
Questions of Ownership and Control of Media

10.26 Monday

Banksy's Dismaland

READING: Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. TBD

10.28 Wednesday

Film Screening: *Exit through the Gift Shop*

<https://digitalcampus-swankmp-net.oca.ucsc.edu/uc371004/play/0A5E95B04EA240C7>

Week # 5
Representation

11.02 Monday

READING (1) bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze / Black Female Spectators"; (2) Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding"

11.04 Wednesday

Film Screening: *Daughters of the Dust* (1991)

“Beyoncé’s visual album, “Lemonade,” sparked the latest revival of interest in this masterpiece, a ravishingly beautiful work of historical reconstruction and feminist imagination. Set on the Sea Islands off the southeastern United States in the early 20th century, the film is a multigenerational matriarchal epic about the preservation of memory and the necessity of change. Comparisons to the novels of Toni Morrison are warranted — “Daughters” blends fact and folklore with poetic authority and arresting moral grace — but mostly because, like Ms. Morrison, Ms. Dash is a true American original who dared to fill an empty space in the American imagination. “ A.O. Scott (New York Times)

Week #6

The Press: Technology, Power and Influence

11.09 Monday

Television as Media Form

Film shown in class: Louis Valdez *I Am Joaquin* (1969)

READING: Gray, Herman. "The Politics of Representation in Network Television." In *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for 'Blackness'*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. Pp. 70-92.

11.11 Wednesday

Film Screening: *Network*

Week #7

Models of The Digital Revolution

11.16 Monday

GUEST: Graduating from UCSC in 2005, Michael Dillon returned to LA to begin working in feature film post production. He began his career at EFilm in January 2006. In October 2012, Michael joined Technicolor Creative Services as a Senior DI Producer.

11.18 Wednesday

Film shown in class: *La Jetée*

Chris Marker, filmmaker, poet, novelist, photographer, editor, and now videographer and digital multimedia artist, has been challenging moviegoers, philosophers, and himself for years with his complex queries about time, memory, and the rapid advancement of life on this planet.

Marker's *La Jetée* is one of the most influential, radical science-fiction films ever made, a tale of time travel told in still images. This work is the inspiration for Terry Gilliam's *12 Monkey's*.

READING: Michel Foucault. "Panopticism." In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1977. pp. 195-228.

Week #8

Audiences as Producers and Receivers

11.23 Monday

READING: Daniel Solove, *Why Privacy Matter Even if You Have Nothing to Hide*

11.25 Wednesday

Film Screening: Battle of Algiers

One of the most influential political films in history, *The Battle of Algiers*, by Gillo Pontecorvo, vividly re-creates a key year in the tumultuous Algerian struggle for independence from the occupying French in the 1950s. As violence escalates on both sides, children shoot soldiers at point-blank range, women plant bombs in cafés, and French soldiers resort to torture to break the will of the insurgents. Shot on the streets of Algiers in documentary style, the film is a case study in modern warfare, with its terrorist attacks and the brutal techniques used to combat them.

Pontecorvo's tour de force has astonishing relevance today. (Criterion Description)

Week #9
Media Convergence and Power in the Digital Age

11.30 Monday

READING: Haraway, Donna Jeanne (1991). "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century". *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*.

12.02 Wednesday

Film Screening: *Electric Dreams* (1984)

Week #10
Postmortem

12.07 Monday

GUEST: Rick Porras, producer and assistant director, known for *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), *Contact* (1997) and *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003).

12.09 Wednesday

Review of Final Projects

Final Project Due by MIDNIGHT 12.15 (Tuesday)

