COMM-4380_001 & 4381_101 Senior Seminar in Media Studies/Senior Seminar in Comm Studies

Fall 2013
T 11am-12:15pm
Bay Hall Rm. 126

Professor David Gurney
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Office Hours: T 3:30pm-5pm, W 10am-Noon, R 9am-10:30am & by appointment

Course Description:
The capstone course for Communication majors in the Media Studies track offers students opportunities to synthesize information learned in other Media Studies courses through in-depth study of a particular topic. Students will demonstrate their abilities to think and write critically, and to conduct independent research or produce media projects at an advanced level. Topics vary by instructor.

Course Topic:
This semester students will be surveying the media landscape as it exists today with content and brands regularly traversing and converging across multiple platforms. This will provide a deeper understanding of how both media industries and audiences are adapting to and using emerging media technologies.

Student Learning Outcomes:
Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:
● Demonstrate critical thinking and problem solving abilities;
● Create individual and collaborative projects that demonstrate effective use of communication strategies;
● Identify and analyze issues in media ethics
● Understand and apply critical theories, research methods, and/or production skills

Required Materials:

Course Policies:
» Attendance is required – both physically and mentally. Unexcused absences will have a direct effect on your final grade for this course, with each one equaling a five-point deduction (out of a possible total of 100 points). Attendance will be taken starting exactly at 11 a.m. Late arrivals and departures prior to the end of the class period will count as half-absences, meaning that two of either type will be counted as a full absence.
» You are allowed two fully excused absences throughout the semester. These are to be employed at your discretion but should be used to cover illness, religious holiday observance, or most any other event or circumstance that causes you to miss class. Only extreme hardship with back-up documentation (e.g., a doctor’s note) will allow for consideration of any additional absences being excused. Classes missed due to university-approved activities (athletic teams, student government, etc.) will also be considered excused. For those absences, please make me aware, and, in addition, I will need official TAMUCC documentation. If appropriate, you may arrange to make up quizzes or exams missed due to excused absences, but it will be your responsibility to get any information from a missed class lecture from one of your classmates.
» All absences not fitting into the excused categories described immediately above, will be considered unexcused. Any work missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up.
» Late work will be penalized by ten points (all assignments will be on 100-point scales) for each day it is late.
» While in class, please make sure your cell phone is off and stowed away, even during screenings.
» A note on competing media: Laptops are permitted for note taking purposes during lecture only, but please do not abuse this privilege. While you may personally feel capable of multitasking during class while still paying attention to lecture and discussion, your surrounding classmates will more likely find your in-class extracurricular activities distracting, so please, for the sake of your peers, respect this restriction. No laptop use will be permitted during screenings.
» Please remember to check your Islander email account regularly during the week and monitor the course Blackboard site for any course updates.
» If you would like to discuss any course readings, lectures, screenings, or assignments outside of class, you should feel free to contact me via email or by arranging to visit me during my office hours. If you need to schedule a time to meet outside of office hours, please let me know.
» All writing for this course must be composed using a standard, 12-point font size, and with standard 1” margins.

Academic Integrity:
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a failing grade (F) for the assignment, at the very least, or a report to the Chair of the Department of Communication and Media, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and the Office of Student Affairs.
» For the purposes of citation, please follow American Psychological Association (APA) Style Guide. For reference, see: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Dropping a Class:
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the class be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. November 15, 2013, is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Classroom/Professional Behavior:
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Academic Advising:
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 361.825.3466.
Notice to Students with Disabilities
Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible. Please have your accommodation letter from Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi Disability Services (DS) Office with you when you come see me. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Disability Services Office (located in 116 Corpus Christi Hall) at 361.825.5816.

Grade Appeal Process:
As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

Grade Scale:
A 90-100
B 80-89
C 70-79
D 60-69
F 59 and below

Grade Distribution:
» Attention & Participation (10%): Each student is expected to be attentive toward lecture and willing to participate in class discussion when appropriate. This grade will reflect how well you accomplish these goals.
Reminder: Attendance is required. It is assumed that you will be present for all class meetings and screenings unless you have a valid excuse. Unexcused absences will have a direct effect on your FINAL GRADE (not only the Attention & Participation component) for this course, with each one equaling a five-point deduction (out of a possible total of 100 points).
» Discussion Leading: (20%): Each student will take the lead on a reading, preparing relevant discussion material for class based on that reading. A schedule for these sessions will be determined early in the semester.
» Analytical Essays (15% each, 30% total): Two 3-5 page papers will be assigned over the course of the semester. One analyzing the circulation of media content will be due on Thursday, October 17, and one on strategies of storytelling will be due on Tuesday, November 14. The particulars of these assignments will be discussed well in advance of their due dates.
» Group Project (40%): Students will be assigned groups in which they will conceive, propose, and execute a project through which they will analyze a contemporary transmedia phenomenon (narrative, franchise, or brand). The following is a breakdown of the weighting of its parts:
   » Proposal (5%): A 1-2 page paper in which the project’s focus is described, allowing for its approval by the instructor. Proposals are due on Thursday, September 26.
   » Oral Presentation (5%): Each group will give a 15-minute presentation to the class through which they will share their project findings. Presentations will take place during Weeks 13, 14, and 15.
   » Final Report (30%): Each group will produce a 12-15 page paper presenting their project findings more formally. If group’s choose, they may create an alternative format for the report (e.g., a video essay), but they will need instructor approval to do so. Reports are due on Tuesday, December 10.
Course Schedule:
Required readings and homework screenings are to be completed prior to the first class meeting in the week under which they are listed. This schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

Week 1 (September 5) – Introduction, Course Outline
Introductions and Preliminary Discussion

Week 2 (September 10 & 12) – Surveying Contemporary Mediascapes
Required Reading: *Ephemeral Media* – Introduction and Chs. 1-3

Week 3 (September 17 & 19) – The Circulation of Media Content
Required Reading: *Spreadable Media* – Introduction and Chs. 1 & 2

Week 4 (September 24 & 26) – The Circulation of Media Content
Required Reading: *Spreadable Media* – Chs. 3-5
Proposal for Group Project topic must be submitted via Blackboard before the beginning of class on 9/26.

Week 5 (October 1 & 3) – The Circulation of Media Content
Required Reading: *Spreadable Media* – Chs. 6 & 7 and Conclusion

Week 6 (October 8 & 10) – Telling Stories across Platforms
Required Reading: *The Art of Immersion* – Introduction, Prologue, and Chs. 1-3

Week 7 (October 15 & 17) – Telling Stories across Platforms
Required Reading: *The Art of Immersion* – Chs. 4-9
Analytical Essay 1 must be submitted via Blackboard before the beginning of class on 10/17.

Week 8 (October 22 & 24) – Telling Stories across Platforms
Required Reading: *The Art of Immersion* – Chs. 10-13

Week 9 (October 29 & 31) – Expanding Texts and Paratexts
Required Reading: *Show Sold Separately* – Introduction and Chs. 1-3

Week 10 (November 5 & 7) – Expanding Texts and Paratexts
Required Reading: *Show Sold Separately* – Chs. 4-6 and Conclusion

Week 11 (November 12 & 14) – Media Branding
Required Reading: *Authentic™* - Introduction and Chs. 1 & 2
Analytical Essay 2 must be submitted via Blackboard before the beginning of class on 11/14.

Week 12 (November 19 & 21) – Media Branding
Required Reading: *Authentic™* - Introduction and Chs. 3-5 and Conclusion

Week 13 (November 26) – Oral Presentations of Group Projects
No class meeting on November 28 in observance of Thanksgiving

Week 14 (December 3 & 5) – Oral Presentations of Group Projects
Analytical Essay 2 must be submitted on Blackboard before the beginning of class on 12/5.

Week 15 (December 10) Oral Presentations of Group Projects
Final projects must be submitted via Blackboard before the beginning of class on 12/10.