

**The New School
School of Media Studies M.A. Program**

Fall 2012

***Media Studies: Ideas*
6:00 - 7:50 Thursday
65 W. 11th Street - 259**

Professor Carol Wilder
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Office Hours: 4-5 pm Tuesday and Thursday and by appointment

Please make appointments via email -- please do not use UReserve

TA: Mert Izcan : [REDACTED]

Course Description:

This course is designed for first-year Media Studies graduate students. **Media Studies: Ideas (formerly "Media Theory," a name I prefer)** is intended to provide an overview of the major schools of academic thought that have had an influence on the field of Media Studies as they pertain to three central themes: *Media and Power*, *Media and Technology*, and *Media and Aesthetics*. This course is offered in multiple sections. Students should be aware that readings and assignments among sections may vary substantially.

Course Requirements:

15% Attendance. On-time attendance is expected. More than 2 unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the class. Do not enroll in this section if you may have any conflict with other commitments such as work hours or holiday travel plans. Active participation in class is expected of all students, and participation may affect your grade especially in a borderline case.

15% Group presentation on assigned class readings.

20% One short (3pp.) reaction paper: "My Favorite and/or Least Favorite Medium"
DUE 13 September

20% One short (5pp.) critical analysis of media "text." DUE 8 November

30% Final Exam. In-class short-answer essay format. We will create study questions throughout the semester, which will form the basis for the exam.

Required Texts:

Aristotle. *Poetics*. 335 BCE <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html>

Henry Jenkins. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York University Press, 2006. (Paperback 2008)

Bill Moggridge. *Designing Interactions*. MIT Press, 2007.

Walter Murch. *In The Blink of an Eye*, 2nd ed. Silman-James Press, 2001.

Plato. *Phaedrus*. 360 BCE <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedrus.html>

Susan Sontag. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Picador, 2004.

Recommended Texts:

Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

Gregory Bateson. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Ballantine, 1972.

Jean Baudrillard. *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*. MIT Press, 1983.

Kenneth Boulding. *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society*. U of Michigan, 1956.

Colin Cherry. *On Human Communication*, 3rd ed. MIT Press, 1980.

Jacques Ellul. *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. Vintage, 1973.

James Gleick. *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood*. New York: Pantheon, 2011.

Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. Pantheon, 2002.

Xing Lu. *Rhetoric in Ancient China*. University of South Carolina Press, 1998.

Robert McChesney. *Communication Revolution: Critical Junctures and the Future of Media*. The New Press, 2008.

Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. MIT Press Edition, With an introduction by Lewis Lapham, 1994.

Richard Nisbett. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently . . . and Why*. New York: The Free Press, 2003.

Herbert Schiller. *Information Inequality: The Communications Industry and the Deepening Social Crisis in America*. Continuum, 1995.

Edward Tufte. *The Cognitive Style of Powerpoint*. Graphics Press, 2006.

Schedule

1. 30 August -- **The Information Environment: Introduction and Overview**

"I don't know who discovered water, but it wasn't a fish." -- McLuhan
-- Considering the idea of "media" as an object/subject/process/context of "study."

2. 6 September -- **Ancient Philosophy, New Media**

"I cannot help feeling, Phaedrus, that writing is unfortunately like painting; for the creations of the painter have the attitude of life, and yet if you ask them a question they preserve a solemn silence." -- Socrates

Read: Plato, *Phaedrus*, all.

3. 13 September -- Paper due on medium - 3 pp. - beginning of class

4. 20 September -- **Media Studies East and West**

"Being a moral/ethical person was considered the most essential trait for speakers and rulers alike". -- Xing Lu

Read: Xing Lu. "The Influence of Chinese Classical Rhetoric on Contemporary Chinese Political Communication and Social Relations."
Rita Mei-Ching Ng. "The Influence of Confucianism on Chinese Conceptions of Powers, Authority, and Rule of Law."

5. 27 September -- **Media and Technology I: Understanding Media [Studies]**

"We shape our tools and then our tools shape us" -- McLuhan

Read: Lewis Lapham. Introduction to *Understanding Media*.
Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media*, Chapters 1 "The Medium is the Message" and 2 "Media Hot and Cold."
Neil Postman. *Technopoly*. excerpt.

6. 4 October -- **Media and Technology II: Designing Interaction**

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it." - Alan Kay

Read: Henry Jenkins. *Convergence Culture*. "Introduction," pp. 1-24.
Bill Moggridge. "The Mouse and the Desktop." in *Designing Interaction*,
pp. 15-72. + choose one other chapter
Edward Tufte. "The Cognitive Style of Powerpoint." all.

7. 11 October -- **Media and Technology III: Convergence Culture**

"Information wants to be free." - Stewart Brand

Read: Henry Jenkins. *Convergence Culture*. Chapters as assigned.
Assignment: Group presentations on reading (Groups 1-3)

8. 18 October -- **Media and Power I: Persuasion and Propaganda**

"Secrecy is the freedom tyrants dream of." - Bill Moyers

Read: Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent*. pp. 1-87.
Assignment: Group presentations on reading (Groups 4-6)

9. 25 October -- **Media and Power II: Media Policy and Reform**

"We live in a world of more and more information and less and less meaning." - Jean Baudrillard

Read: Robert McChesney. *Communication Revolution*. Excerpts.
Assignment: Group presentations on reading (Groups 7-9)

10. 1 November -- **Media and Power III: "Critical Junctures & the Future of Media"**

"There is no more important struggle for American democracy than ensuring a diverse, independent and free media." - Bill Moyers

Read: Robert McChesney. *Communication Revolution*. Excerpts.

11. 8 November -- **Media and Aesthetics I: On the Image**

"To take a photograph is to participate in another's mortality."
- Susan Sontag

Read: Susan Sontag. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. all.
Due: Paper #2

12. 15 November -- **Media and Aesthetics II: The Art and Craft of Storytelling**

"For the purposes of poetry, a convincing impossibility is preferable to an unconvincing possibility." - Aristotle

Read: Aristotle. *Poetics*. all.

Guest Speaker: To be announced

22 November -- **No Class**

13. 29 November -- **Media and Aesthetics III: The Invisible Art of Editing**

"When you are editing, the final master is Aristotle and his Poetics." - Ken Burns

Read: Walter Murch. *In the Blink of an Eye*. all.

Carol Wilder. "Separated at Birth: Argument by Irony in Hearts and Minds and Fahrenheit 9/11."

14. 6 December -- Review Session

15. 13 December -- Final Exam. In-class short answer essay exam. No computers.

Questions will be selected from class list compiled during the term.