

## ARTSSCI 4CP3 – Media Inquiry (2019-20, Term 2)

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### Course Description

In this course, we will explore a range of perspectives on the socio-political functioning of the media, with a particular focus on film and television. Drawing from key approaches within the interdisciplinary field of media studies (e.g., political economy, audience studies), we will consider the extent to which media texts and institutions shape public spheres and speak to structures of power, as well as the ways in which audiences navigate, respond to, and ‘work with’ the media. Throughout, these topics will be taken up and assessed with the assistance of historical and contemporary examples drawn from both the entertainment and news media sectors.

The course will be structured as a seminar. Some Tuesday classes will be led by groups of students, who will be responsible for facilitating discussion of one of the week’s readings. During the Monday meetings, I will introduce topics and objects of analysis, but students will also be expected to contribute questions and participate in discussions, to work in small groups, and to help shape the direction of our work.

### Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Describe, discuss, compare and evaluate a wide range of arguments about the socio-political functioning of film and television
2. Apply methods used by media scholars to conduct productive analyses of the relationship(s) between media and society
3. Develop, investigate, and respond effectively to compelling and researchable questions connected to the course focus.

### Required Texts:

There are no texts to purchase for this course; all readings will be accessible through online channels such as public websites and McMaster’s eBook collections and journal databases. Links to these materials will be available on the course Avenue site. See the schedule below for initial reading assignments. Please note that reading assignments may change and further readings may be added as we move through the term.

### Assignments and Evaluation:

Representation & Reception Assignment	Due February 24, 2020	= 30%*
Capstone Project	Due April 6, 2020	= 35%*

### Class Times

M 12:30-2:20, KTH 109

Tu 1:30-2:20, KTH 109

### Instructor

Dr. Beth Marquis  
Mills Library 524 (MacPherson  
Institute)  
905.525.9140 x27667  
[beth.marquis@mcmaster.ca](mailto:beth.marquis@mcmaster.ca)

### Office Hours:

M 2:30-3:30 or by  
appointment

Reading Discussion OR 2 Short Analyses	Various (Throughout term)	= 25%
Participation / Reflections	Throughout term	= 10%
<i>Optional Critical Responses</i>	<i>Due Feb. 2, March 22, 2020</i>	<i>= 10%*</i>

**\*\*NOTE:** Students may elect to complete one OR two (or zero) optional critical response submissions, each of which will count toward 5% of their final mark if completed. The first optional submission will be due February 3, and will reduce the weighting of the Representation & Reception assignment to 25% of the final grade for those who choose to complete it. The second optional submission will be due March 17, and will reduce the weighting of the Capstone project to 30% for those who submit it.

## Assignment Descriptions & Evaluation Criteria:

### **Representation & Reception Assignment (30%\*)**

For this assignment, you will be asked to engage in two common forms of media scholarship: textual analysis and interview-based audience research. You will be required to select a film/television text (either news or entertainment) and to apply ideas discussed in class to conduct a close reading of its representational strategies and politics. In addition, you will also need to apply audience research methodologies to conduct and analyse at least one interview (1-3 recommended) with a viewer of that text, considering the ways in which audience response relates to your textual analysis and to existing theoretical approaches. Because the 'reception' portion of this assignment involves human participants research, we will spend time discussing research ethics together, and you will be required to follow closely a set of practices, protocols, and interview questions that has been approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board. The representation and reception components of the assignment will be written up together, and submitted in a brief essay of ~2000-2750 words.

### **Capstone Project (35%\*)**

This assignment asks you to develop, investigate, and respond to a researchable question about the socio-political functioning of film and/or television. You will be required to construct a research question of interest to you, to identify and obtain information relevant to answering the question, to evaluate the validity and appropriateness of the evidence, to draw reasoned conclusions, and to communicate a coherent and persuasive response in an appropriate format. The final submission could be an essay of 3500-4500 words in length, or it could be an alternative type of text (e.g., a brief video, a narrative, a podcast), accompanied by a 1200-1600 word written supplement that grounds the piece in your research and explains its relevance. While a formal proposal is not required, all students are expected to clear their research question and approach with me by **March 8, 2020**.

### **Reading Discussion OR 2 Short Analyses (25%)**

Early in the term, you will be asked to decide whether you would prefer to complete a group assignment in which you lead discussion of one of the course readings, or to write and submit two short analyses. Each of these options is described further below

### ***Facilitated Discussion of Course Reading***

Working in groups of 2-4 (dependent on final enrollment numbers), students will be required to introduce one of the readings for a particular week and to facilitate class discussion around this material. The session should be based on a close and critical reading of the text, and should demonstrate a grasp of its key arguments/ideas and their relevance/applications. It should also engage the class productively in discussing, analyzing and applying the scholarly ideas under consideration. The facilitation should be structured such that all group members participate actively in some way, and should involve no more than 20 minutes of presentation, and 25 minutes for group discussion and activities.

### ***Brief Analyses***

This assignment asks you demonstrate your ability to engage critically with both filmic/televisual texts and scholarly works taking up the social and political functioning of the media. You will be required to complete TWO brief analyses (~1000-1500 words each). One of these analyses should focus on examining, and constructing an argument about, a course reading, while the other should offer a careful consideration of a film or television text of your choosing. In both cases, you will be expected to engage in detailed analysis which demonstrates critical thinking about the focal text, and draws on course materials and ideas to consider the implications of that work. You will be invited to select the deadlines for these submissions, noting that both must be submitted before the last day of classes, and you cannot submit more than one in any given week.

### **Participation or Reflections (10%)**

You will also have the opportunity to decide whether you'd prefer to have your participation graded, or to complete ongoing written reflections about the ideas and arguments discussed in the course. Again, these options are described further below.

#### ***Participation***

Participation in the class process is one of the key indicators of your understanding of the course material. The expectations include: regular attendance, reading the assigned materials, contributing to class discussion, completing in class activities, listening respectfully, and engaging with others' comments to further our understandings of the materials and ideas. If you wish, you may also demonstrate your engagement by submitting brief written reflections on course readings or class discussions. An Avenue Dropbox will be set up for this purpose. A grading rubric, which lists the criteria by which participation will be assessed, will be posted on Avenue to Learn early in the term.

#### ***Reflections***

This option asks you to keep an ongoing log of your reflections on and responses to course readings and discussions. Each week (except the first and last weeks of the term), you'll need to prepare a brief (~250-300 word) entry that takes up some aspect of the week's discussion (e.g., questions or thoughts promoted by the readings, ideas about a question or example raised in class, consideration of a media example that resonates with our discussion). These entries can

be informal (though they should be clear, and written in complete sentences) and do not need to offer complete arguments, but should demonstrate careful thinking about course thematics and related ideas. You will submit your reflections in two sets – one including your weeks 2-6 reflections (by February 16, 2020), and one including your weeks 8-12 reflections (by April 8, 2020).

### **Optional Critical Responses (5% each, maximum of 2\*)**

These optional assignments aim to provide you with opportunities to engage with the course materials and objectives in different ways. For the first optional response, you will be asked to draw on course ideas and readings to design/propose a media representation that responds to or counters some of the representational patterns discussed in class. For the second, you will be required to monitor your own use of media for a week, and to draw on course readings to reflect critically on this usage. You may also develop an alternative topic for a response in collaboration with me. All critical response submissions should be approximately 500-800 words in length. You may choose to complete one or both of the optional responses, which would shift the weighting of your course assignments as described in the evaluation breakdown above.

## Policy Statements

### **Assignment Deadlines & Missed/Late Work:**

Students are expected to hand in all assignments on the specified due dates. Late submissions will be subject to a penalty of 3% per day (including weekend days). Assignments submitted after the specified submission time on the due date will be counted as one day late. No assignments will be accepted after April 14, 2020. Given that course assignments require electronic submission, you should familiarize yourself with the Avenue to Learn dropbox in advance of the deadlines, and ask for assistance as necessary. Problems with electronic submission WILL NOT be accepted as an excuse for lateness.

### **McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF):**

In the event of an absence, students should review and follow the Academic Regulations in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work.” Please consult the MSAF statement on our website (<https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/forms-requests/>) and direct any questions or concerns to Shelley Anderson or Madeline Van Impe in the Arts & Science Program Office as appropriate.

### **McMaster Policy on Academic Integrity:**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences—e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension

or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>. The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: 1) Plagiarism—e.g., the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained. 2) Improper collaboration in group work. 3) Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities:**

Students who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. SAS can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or email [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca). For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

### **Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous, or Spiritual Observances (RISO):**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous, or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office (i.e. to Shelley Anderson or Madeline Van Impe in the Arts & Science Program Office) normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

### **Sustainable Written Work Submission Guidelines**

The written work submission guidelines have been chosen to support the more sustainable use of paper, energy, and toner, and meet the Platinum standard of the Office of Sustainability; <http://www.mcmaster.ca/sustainability/>. All written work should be submitted in the following format: double-sided pages, reduced line spacing (1.5 lines), exclusion of title page, sans-serif font. Most work will also be submitted and returned online.

### **Email Contact and Student Responsibility Statement**

*Please Note:* The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L, and/or McMaster email. It is the responsibility of students to check **their McMaster email** and course websites regularly during the term and to note any changes. Announcements will be made in class and by using the course email distribution list.

## Course Schedule

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### A. Reading & Responding to Film & TV Texts

### **Week 1 (January 6, 7): Introduction: Analysing Media**

- **No required readings**
- **Recommended Reading:**
  - Bordwell, K. & Thompson, D. *Film Art: An Introduction* (any edition).

### **Week 2 (January 13, 14): Text & Spectator – Representation & Reception**

- **Required Readings:**
  - Comolli, J. & Narboni, J. (1969/1999). Cinema, ideology, criticism. In L. Braudy & M. Cohen (Eds), *Film Theory & Criticism* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.), (pp. 752-759), New York: Oxford University Press.
  - Diawara, M. (1988/1999). Black spectatorship: Problems of identification and resistance. In L. Braudy & M. Cohen (Eds), *Film Theory & Criticism* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.), (pp. 845-853), New York: Oxford University Press.
- **Recommended Reading:**
  - Hall, S. (1973/1996). Encoding/decoding. In P. Marris & S. Thornham (Eds.), *Media Studies – A Reader* (pp. 41-49), Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

### **Week 3 (January 20, 21): Navigating Gender in/through ‘Quality Television’**

- **Required Readings:**
  - Bruun Vaage, M. (2014). Blinded by familiarity: Partiality, morality, and engagement with television series. In T. Nannicelli & P. Taberham (eds.), *Cognitive Media Theory* (pp. 268-284). New York: Routledge.
  - Click, M.A., Willson Holladay, H., Lee, H., & Kristiansen, L.J. (2015). ‘Let’s hug it out, bitch’: HBO’s *Entourage*, masculinity in crisis, and the value of audience studies. *Television & New Media*, 16(5), 403-421.
- **Recommended Reading:**
  - Orgad, S. (2017). The cruel optimism of *The Good Wife*: The fantastic working mother on the fantastical treadmill. *Television & New Media*, 18(2), 165-183.

### **Week 4 (January 27, 28): Affect & Politics: Representing Terror**

- **Required Readings:**
  - Plantinga, C. (2009). The rhetoric of emotion. Disgust and beyond. In *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator’s Experience* (pp. 198-220). Berkeley: University of California Press.
  - Brereton, P. & Culloty, E. (2012). Post-9/11 counterterrorism in popular culture: The spectacle and reception of *The Bourne Ultimatum* and *24*. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 5(3), 483-497.
- **Recommended Reading:**
  - Cavalcante, A. (2018). Affect, emotion, and media audiences: The case of resilient reception. *Media, Culture, & Society*, 40(8), 1186-1201.

**Optional Critical Response due by 11:59pm on Sunday, February 2**

### **Week 5 (February 3, 4): Media Witnessing**

- **Required Readings:**
  - Chouliaraki, L. & Stolic, T. (2017). Rethinking media responsibility in the refugee 'crisis': A visual typology of European news. *Media, Culture, & Society*, 39(8), 1162-1177.
  - Scott, M. (2014). The mediation of distant suffering: An empirical contribution beyond television news texts. *Media, Culture & Society*, 36(1), 3-19.
- **Recommended Reading:**
  - Huiberts, E. & Joye, S. (2017). Close, but not close enough? Audiences' reactions to domesticated distant suffering in international news coverage. *Media, Culture, & Society*, 40(3), 333-347.

### **Week 6 (February 10, 11): Media and Memory**

- **Required Readings:**
  - Peck, R. (2017). Usurping the usable past: How Fox News remembered the Great Depression during the Great Recession. *Journalism*, 18(6), 680-699.
  - Butler, R. (2017). "Welcome to the upside down": Nostalgia and cultural fears in *Stranger Things*. In K. Jackson & L. Belau (Eds.), *Horror Television in the Age of Consumption* (pp. 187-201), New York: Routledge.
- **Recommended Reading:**
  - Shenker, N. (2015). Telling and retelling holocaust testimonies. *Reframing holocaust testimony* (pp. 151-191). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

### **Week 7 (February 17, 18): Reading Week – No classes**

### **Week 8 (February 24, 25): Ritual & Ideological Approaches to Genre**

- **Required Readings:**
  - Grant, B.K. (2007). Genre and society. *Film Genre from Iconography to Ideology* (pp. 29-55). London: Wallflower Press.
  - Kaplan, E. A. (2016). Trauma studies moving forward: Genre and pretrauma cinema. *Climate Trauma: Foreseeing the future in dystopian film and fiction* (pp. 35-58). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- **Recommended Reading:**
  - Kornfield, S. (2016). Re-solving crimes: A cycle of TV detective partnerships. In A.A. Klein & R. Barton (Eds.), *Cycles, Sequels, Spin-offs, Remakes, and Reboots: Multiplicities in Film and Television*, (pp. 202-221). Austin: University of Texas Press.

***Representation & Reception Assignment due by 11:59pm on Monday, February 24***

### B. Looking Beyond Text & Response

### **Week 9 (March 2, 3): Political Economy & Considerations of Industry**

- **Required Readings:**

- Horkheimer, M. & Adorno, T.W. (1944). The culture industry: Enlightenment as mass deception. Excerpt available at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm>
- Creech, B. (2017). Bearing the cost to witness: The political economy of risk in contemporary conflict and war reporting. *Media, Culture, & Society*, 40(4), 563-583.
- **Recommended Reading:**
  - Biltereyst, D. & Meers, P. (2011). The political economy of audiences. In J. Wasko, G. Murdock, & H. Sousa (eds.), *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications* (pp. 415-435), Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.

### **Week 10 (March 9, 10): Media and/as Social Practice**

- **Required Readings:**
  - Kuhn, A. (2011). What to do with cinema memory? In R. Maltby, D. Biltereyst, & P. Meers (eds.), *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches & Case Studies* (pp. 85-97). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
  - Kortti, J. (2011). Multidimensional social history of television: Social uses of Finnish television from the 1950s to the 2000s. *Television & New Media*, 12(4), 293-313.
- **Recommended Reading:**
  - Feiereisen, S., Rasolofoarison, D., De Valck, K., & Schmitt, J. (2019). Understanding emerging adults' consumption of TV series in the digital age: A practice-theory-based approach. *Journal of Business Research*, 95, 253-265.

### **Week 11 (March 16, 17): Spectatorship in/and the New Media Ecology**

- **Required Readings:**
  - Samuel, M. (2017). Time wasting and the contemporary television-viewing experience. *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 86(4), 78-89.
  - van Es, K. (2016). Social TV and the participation dilemma in NBC's *The Voice*. *Television & New Media*, 17(2), 108-123.
- **Recommended Reading:**
  - Silverman, R.E. & Ryalls, E.D. (2016). "Everything is different the second time around": The stigma of temporality on *Orange is the New Black*. *Television & New Media*, 17(6), 520-533.

***Optional Critical Response #2 due by 11:59pm on Sunday, March 22***

### **Week 12 (March 23, 24): Fandom**

- **Required Readings:**
  - Jenkins, H. (1988/2006). *Star Trek* rerun, reread, rewritten: Fan writing as textual poaching. *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers* (pp. 37-60), New York: NYU Press.
  - Pande, R. (2016). Squee from the margins: Racial/cultural/ethnic identity in global media fandom. In L. Bennett & P. Booth (eds.), *Seeing Fans: Representations of Fandom in Media and Popular Culture* (pp. 209-220), New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- **Recommended Reading:**



- Scott, S. (2015). The moral economy of crowdfunding and the transformative capacity of fan-ancing. *New Media & Society*, 17(2), 167-182.

### **Week 13 (March 30, 31): Stardom, Participatory Culture, & Politics**

#### ○ **Required Readings:**

- McDonald, P. (1998). Stars and audiences. In R. Dyer. *Stars* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), (pp. 187-193). London: BFI.
- Dubrofsky, R.E. (2016). Authentic Trump: Yearning for civility. *Television & New Media*, 17(7), 663-666.
- Khaldarova, I. & Pantti, M. (2016). Fake news: The narrative battle over the Ukrainian conflict. *Journalism Practice*, 10(7), 891-901.

#### ○ **Recommended Reading:**

- Mihailidis, P. & Viotty, S. (2017). Spreadable spectacle in digital culture: Civic expression, fake news, and the role of media literacies in 'post-fact' society. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 61(4), 441-454.

### **Week 13 (April 6, 7): Wrap Up & Future Directions**

#### ○ **Recommended Readings:**

- Livingstone, S. (2018). Audiences in an age of datafication: Critical questions for media research. *Television & New Media*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476418811118>

***Capstone project due by 11:59pm on Monday, April 6***