HIS 350R: US Media, Commerce and Culture

Spring 2011

Dr. Karl Hagstrom Miller
Unique #39755
Room: CAL 21
Time: W 3:00-6:00

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Office Hours: Thurs 2-4
or by appointment
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This upper-division undergraduate seminar is a writing and reading intensive course centered around the question "How do people shape themselves through popular media?" It is almost a truism that we live in a highly mediated world. We are inundated everyday by mass produced messages, music, and images. How do the images and messages circulated through the US media shape people's senses of themselves, their options and opportunities, and their relationships with others? We will examine the history of the US media as both a successful corporate product and as an important tool for the formation of personal and community identity. People use the media—be it television, newspapers, film, or music—to create identities for themselves, build social and political coalitions, and sometimes challenge the very institutions that deliver the media to their doorsteps. We will examine the media through a number of theoretical or methodological lenses, including cultural theory, business history, and political history.

Required Books: Available at the Co-op
Wilson, *Let's Talk about Love*
Susan Douglass, *Where the Girls Are*
Thomas Frank, *Conquest of Cool*
Fred Turner, *From Counter Culture to Cyberculture*
James Paul Gee, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*
Watkins, *The Young and the Digital*

Assignments:

Class participation: 20%

Attendance is mandatory. Class time will be devoted to deep discussions of the assigned readings. **Complete the readings before class.** If you do not, you will fail to adequately participate in discussion.

TWO 1-2 page reaction papers to weekly readings: 10%

Critical essay I (5 pages): 15%

DUE FEBRUARY 9

Peer Review assignment: 5%

DUE FEBRUARY 16

Critical Essay I Revision

DUE FEBRUARY 23

Critical essay II (5-7 pages): 20%

DUE MARCH 30

Final essay (10-12 pages): 30%

DUE MAY 6

This course is graded on the +/- scale. Please familiarize yourself with UT policies about academic integrity and plagiarism. Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259.

Weekly Schedule:

January 19: Introduction

PART I: ITS PERSONAL: MEDIA AND THE SELF

January 26: On Taste and Distinction
Wilson, *Let's Talk About Love*

February 2: On Everyday Life
Susan Douglass, *Where the Girls Are*

February 9: On Media and Control
Watch: Adam Curtis, "The Century of the Self, Part I, Happiness Machines" and "The Century of the Self, Part II, Engineering of Consent" (BBC 2002). http://www.archive.org/details/the.century.of.the.self

DUE: CRITICAL ESSAY I

PART II: A HISTORY OF MEDIA AND MONEY

February 16: On Dreams and the Counterculture
Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*
Due: Peer Review

February 23: On Selling Anti-Consumerism
Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*
Due: Essay Revision

PART III: RETHINKING THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION

March 2: This is Your Brain on Media
Gee, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us*

March 9: Its Not Me, Its You
Watkins, *The Young and the Digital*

March 16: SPRING BREAK: <u>NO CLASS</u>

PART III: WRITING WORKSHOP

March 23:
Writing Workshop: Designing Your Final Essay

March 30: NO CLASS

DUE: CRITICAL ESSAY II

April 6:
Writing Workshop: Crafting Your Essay

April 13: No class

April 20: Individual Meetings about Final Essay

April 27: Peer Directed Writing Workshop

May 6: FINAL PRESENTATIONS
*****DUE: FINAL ESSAY**