

**COMMRC 3326: Seminar in Media Studies**  
**Foundations of American Media Theory**  
**Thursday, 5:30-8:30**  
**1128 CL**  
**Fall 2012**

**Dr. Brent Malin**  
**1109L Cathedral of Learning**  
**412-624-6798**  
**bmalin@pitt.edu**

**Office Hours:**  
**Tu 10:00-12:00**  
**Th 12:00-2:00**  
**and by appointment**

Having established his “Office of Radio Research” at Columbia University, in 1941 Paul Lazarsfeld described the differences between “administrative research”—which focused on the more practical and empirical approaches supported by business and government entities—and “critical research”—which aimed towards social critique. This division was palpable for Lazarsfeld. Sharing the Columbia campus with fellow German émigré and Frankfurt School thinker Theodor Adorno, Lazarsfeld’s administrative radio research ran up against the other’s powerful criticisms of the popular music industry. This course studies these and other moments in the intellectual history of media theory and research in the US, exploring its foundational approaches, tensions, paradigms, and programs of study. In investigating this history, we aim to understand a range of ways in which scholars in the US have dealt with questions about the public sphere, technology, democracy, propaganda, identity, and a host of other issues, as well as how this earlier research set the groundwork for future media studies—for both good and ill.

**Texts and Materials:**

Dewey, John. *The Public and Its Problems*. New York: H. Holt and Company, 1927.  
Katz, Elihu, John Durham Peters, Tamar Liebes, and Avril Orloff. *Canonic Texts in Media Research: Are There Any? Should There Be? How About These?* Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2003.  
Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1922.  
Lynd, Robert Staughton, and Helen Merrell Lynd. *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture*. New York: Harcourt, 1929.  
Park, David W., and Jefferson Pooley. *The History of Media and Communication Research: Contested Memories*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.

**Reading Responses:**

To help facilitate discussion of our various readings, you will each complete regular reading responses that address some issue raised within our readings and discussions. Your responses need not cover every point raised in the readings, but should engage them (and your classmates) in some interesting conversation. Be creative!

You will each complete 6 reading responses.

Half of the class will write and present their reading responses each week. *You will bring copies of your response for each class participant, and be prepared to present and discuss your response in class (don't forget a copy for yourself and for Professor Malin).*

*Your reading responses should be in the vicinity of one single-spaced, typed page.*

### **Participation and Attendance:**

Participation in class discussions is an essential component of this course. Thus, you should make every effort to attend each class period and be prepared to contribute in insightful ways. If you must miss a class, be sure to notify me well in advance whenever possible. Additionally, daily participation factors heavily into your final grade, so your regular contributions will greatly influence your overall course evaluation. *Both the quantity and quality of your contributions are important. The best students will attend every class session and make regular, daily contributions that are insightful, interesting, and that encourage discussion from fellow students—making efforts to engage, respond to, and converse with classmates in intelligent ways without monopolizing discussion or discouraging others from participating.*

### **Course Project:**

You will each complete a major course project over the course of the semester that helps to demonstrate your engagement with our class readings and concepts. This will include a brief proposal and a substantial seminar paper of approximately 20 pages.

Given the focus of our class, *your paper will offer an intellectual history of some reading, concept, or moment within mass communication theory and research.* You might offer some historical context for one or more of the readings we explore, show how other essays written by one of these authors fit with or diverge from each other, trace some particular theme across multiple authors or essays, show how other authors fit with or respond to the readings we have done here, or even demonstrate how US scholars responded to or took up theories developed outside the US (how did US media scholars begin to take up Gramsci's ideas, for instance?). The readings in the Park and Pooley and Katz et al. readers should offer hints about the sort of essay you might want to write.

### *Proposals*

The proposals for your final papers are due on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. Your proposals should help to open up a formal dialog about your project. In order to ensure that you get as much feedback as possible, you will each post your proposal to the discussion board on our Blackboard site. Your proposals should be posted by the beginning of our class on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. We will use the following week to offer suggestions and comments for each others' projects.

In general, your proposal should do the following:

- 1) **Offer a general summary of your project.** What will you be discussing and why? What do you hope your discussion will demonstrate? What will your project contribute to our understanding of the intellectual history of media theory and research?
- 2) **Identify relevant *primary sources* for your project.** What will provide the data for your historical analysis? Specify both major sources (e.g. essays by the author whose work you are exploring, several essays exploring a common theme, etc.) as well as more minor sources that might provide additional historical context (e.g. personal correspondence by an author, advertisements or newspaper articles that show the popular importance of a given idea at a particular moment in time, etc.). Describe how these sources are important. Identify additional sources that you hope to find in the course of your research.

3) **Identify relevant *secondary sources* for your project.** What other scholars have written on this topic or on closely related topics that might help you make your argument? Discuss the relevance of these other authors' work to your project as well as how your project will extend their arguments. What unique perspective will your essay offer?

4) **Offer a list of additional secondary sources on which you hope to draw.** These should be listed in bibliographic form, in the appropriate APA, MLA, or Chicago citation style.

Your proposal should be long enough to lay out your project in a clear, interesting way. I assume that 5 double spaced pages will be more than sufficient.

#### *Papers*

Your final papers are due by email no later than Monday, December 15. Your paper should be well-researched, carefully argued, and clearly written, and should satisfy and enhance the ideas you lay out in your proposal.

#### **Grading:**

Reading Responses:	30%
Final Project:	40%
Participation:	30%

#### **Problems and Concerns:**

Please see me about any problems or concerns that might arise throughout the semester. I will always be available during my office hours, and at other times by appointment.

**I would like to hear from anyone who has a disability which may require some modification of seating, testing or other class requirements so that appropriate arrangements may be made. I also encourage you to contact Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890 or 412-383-7355 (TTY) as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and suggest reasonable accommodations for this course.**

#### **Plagiarism:**

Using someone else's work as your own, or without proper citation, constitutes plagiarism, and as such is grounds for failure of this course and disciplinary action on the part of the college. If you have questions about properly citing an article, or what can be considered plagiarism, please feel free to speak me. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work is original and contains the appropriate citations and references.

## Weekly Syllabus

### August 30: Introductions

#### September 6: Introducing the Chicago School

George H. Mead. "The Social Self." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 10, no. 14 (1913): 374-80. [courseweb]

Robert Ezra Park, and Ernest Watson Burgess. *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*. Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1921 (pick and choose sections related to communication, community, and other topics that interest you). [courseweb]

Robert Ezra Park. "The Natural History of the Newspaper." *The American Journal of Sociology* 29, no. 3 (1923): 273-89. [courseweb]

William Buxton. "From Park to Cressey: Chicago Sociology's Engagement with Media and Mass Culture." In *The History of Media and Communication Research: Contested Memories*, edited by David Park and Jefferson Pooley, 345-62. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.

### Group A Reading Responses Due in Class

#### September 13: Lippmann and the Disenchanted Public

Walter Lippmann. *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1922.

Sue Curry Jansen. "Walter Lippman, Straw Man of Communication Research." In *The History of Media and Communication Research: Contested Memories*, edited by David Park and Jefferson Pooley, 71-112. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.

### Group B Reading Responses Due in Class

#### September 20: John Dewey and the Power of Communication

John Dewey. *The Public and Its Problems*. New York: H. Holt and Company, 1927.

James W. Carey. "Mass Media and Critical Theory: An American View." *Communication Yearbook* 6 (1982): 18-33. [courseweb]

### Group A Reading Responses Due in Class

#### September 27: Communication and Community in Middle-America

Robert Staughton Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd. *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture*. New York: Harcourt, 1929 (focus on the Introduction, Part IV: Using Leisure, Part VI: Engaging in Community Activities, and any other sections you find interesting).

Staughton Lynd. "Making Middletown." *Indiana Magazine of History* 101, no. 3 (2005): 226-38. [courseweb]

### Group B Reading Responses Due in Class

#### October 4: Propaganda and Emotion between the Wars

- Harold D. Lasswell. "The Theory of Political Propaganda." *The American Political Science Review* 21, no. 3 (1927): 627-31. [courseweb]
- Edward L. Bernays. "Manipulating Public Opinion: The Why and the How." *The American Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 6 (1928): 958-71. [courseweb]
- Christian Ruckmick. "How Do Motion Pictures Affect the Attitudes and Emotions of Children?: The Galvanic Technique Applied to the Motion Picture Situation." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 6, no. 4 (1932): 210-19. [courseweb]
- John Durham Peters. "The Uncanniness of Mass Communication in Interwar Social Thought." *Journal of Communication* 46, no. 3 (1996): 108-24. [courseweb]
- John Durham Peters. "Institutional Opportunities for Intellectual History in Communication Studies." In *The History of Media and Communication Research: Contested Memories*, edited by David Park and Jefferson Pooley, 143-64. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.
- Brenton J. Malin. "Mediating Emotion: Technology, Social Science, and Emotion in the Payne Fund Motion Picture Studies." *Technology & Culture* 50, no. 2 (2009): 366-390. [courseweb]
- Brenton J. Malin. "Not Just Your Average Beauty: Carl Seashore and the History of Communication Research in the United States." *Communication Theory* 21, no. 3 (2011): 299-316.

### **Group A Reading Responses Due in Class**

#### **October 11: Critical and Administrative Traditions at Columbia and Beyond**

- Paul Lazarsfeld. "Remarks on Administrative and Critical Research." *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 9, no. 1 (1941): 2-16. [courseweb]
- Theodor W. Adorno. "On Popular Music." *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 9, no. 1 (1941): 17-48. [courseweb]
- Herta Herzog. "On Borrowed Experience: An Analysis of Listening to Daytime Sketches." *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 9, no. 1 (1941): 65-95. [courseweb]
- Gilbert Seldes. "The Nature of Television Programs." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 213 (1941): 138-44. [courseweb]
- Dwight Macdonald. "A Theory of Popular Culture." *Politics* 1 (1944): 20-23. [courseweb]
- Tamar Liebes. "Herzog's 'on Borrowed Experience': Its Place in the Debate over the Active Audience." In *Canonic Texts in Media Research: Are There Any? Should There Be? How About These?*, edited by Elihu Katz, John Durham Peters, Tamar Liebes and Avril Orloff, 39-54. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2003.

### **Group B Reading Responses Due in Class**

#### **October 18: Structures of Communication and Taste**

- Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton. "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action." In *The Communication of Ideas*, edited by Lyman Bryson. New York: Institute for Religious and Social Studies, 1948. [courseweb]
- Harold D. Lasswell. "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society." In *The Communication of Ideas: A Series of Addresses*, edited by Lyman Bryson. New York: Institute for Religious and Social Studies, 1948. [courseweb]
- Peter Simonson and Gabriel Weimann. "Critical Research at Columbia: Lazarsfeld and Merton's 'Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action'." In *Canonic Texts in*

*Media Research: Are There Any? Should There Be? How About These?*, edited by Elihu Katz, John Durham Peters, Tamar Liebes and Avril Orloff, 12-38. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2003.

## **Group A Reading Responses Due in Class**

### **Paper Proposals Due by 5:00 pm (to be posted on Blackboard)**

#### **October 25: Perspectives on Communication, Technology, and Public Opinion**

Norbert Wiener. "Cybernetics." *Scientific American*, no. 129 (1948): 14-18. [courseweb]

Warren Weaver. "The Mathematics of Communication." *Scientific American* 181, no. 1 (1949): 11-15. [courseweb]

David White. "The Gatekeeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News." *Journalism Quarterly* 27 (1950): 383-96. [courseweb]

Carl I. Hovland, and Walter Weiss. "The Influence of Source Credibility on Communication Effectiveness." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1951): 635-50. [courseweb]

Rudolf Seising. "Cybernetics, System(S) Theory, Information Theory and Fuzzy Sets and Systems in the 1950s and 1960s." *Information Sciences* 180, no. 23 (2010): 4459-76. [courseweb]

N. Katherine Hayles. "Designs on the Body: Norbert Wiener, Cybernetics, and the Play of Metaphor." *History of the Human Sciences* 3, no. 2 (1990): 211-28. [courseweb]

## **Group B Reading Responses Due in Class**

### **Peer Responses to Paper Proposals Due by 5:00 pm**

#### **November 1: Technology, the Public, and Interpersonal Connection**

Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang. "The Unique Perspective of Television and Its Effect: A Pilot Study." *American Sociological Review* 18, no. 1 (1953): 3-12. [courseweb]

Donald Horton and Richard Wohl. "Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance." *Psychiatry* 19 (1956): 215-29. [courseweb]

Elihu Katz. "The Two-Step Flow of Communication: An up-to-Date Report on an Hypothesis." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1957): 61-78. [courseweb]

Elihu Katz and Daniel Dayan. "The Audience Is a Crowd, the Crowd Is a Public: Latter-Day Thoughts on Lang and Lang's 'Macarthur Day in Chicago'." In *Canon Texts in Media Research: Are There Any? Should There Be? How About These?*, edited by Elihu Katz, John Durham Peters, Tamar Liebes and Avril Orloff, 121-36. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2003.

Don Handelman. "Towards the Virtual Encounter: Horton and Wohl's 'Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction'." In *Canon Texts in Media Research: Are There Any? Should There Be? How About These?*, edited by Elihu Katz, John Durham Peters, Tamar Liebes and Avril Orloff, 137-52. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2003.

## **Group A Reading Responses Due in Class**

### **November 8: Perspectives on Media and Popular Culture**

- Leo Lowenthal. "Historical Perspectives of Popular Culture." *American Journal of Sociology* 55, no. 4 (1950): 323-32. [courseweb]
- Dallas Walker Smythe. "The Consumer's Stake in Radio and Television." *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television* 6, no. 2 (1951): 109-28. [courseweb]
- Dwight Macdonald. "A Theory of Mass Culture." *Diogenes* 1, no. 3 (1953): 1-17. [courseweb]
- Gilbert Seldes. "Public Entertainment and the Subversion of Ethical Standards." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 363 (Ethics in America: Norms and Deviations) (1966): 87-94. [courseweb]
- Marshall McLuhan. "The Invisible Environment: The Future of an Erosion." *Perspecta* 11 (1967): 163-67. [courseweb]
- Russel B. Nye. "Notes for an Introduction to a Discussion of Popular Culture." *The Journal of Popular Culture* IV, no. 4 (1971): 1031-38. [courseweb]

### **Group B Reading Responses Due in Class**

#### **November 15: No Class—National Communication Association Annual Meeting**

#### **November 22: THANKSGIVING**

#### **November 29: Cultivating Media Uses, Values, and Agendas**

- Elihu Katz and David Foulkes. "On the Use of the Mass Media as 'Escape': Clarification of a Concept." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1962): 377-88. [courseweb]
- George Gerbner. "Cultural Indicators: The Case of Violence in Television Drama." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 388 (1970): 69-81. [courseweb]
- Maxwell E. McCombs, and Donald L. Shaw. "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972): 176-87. [courseweb]
- Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch. "Uses and Gratifications Research." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (1974): 509-23. [courseweb]
- Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. "The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion." *The Journal of Communication* 24, no. 2 (1974): 43-51. [courseweb]

### **Group A Reading Responses Due in Class**

#### **December 6: A Cultural Turn**

- James W. Carey. "A Cultural Approach to Communication." *Communication* 2 (1975): 1-22. [courseweb]
- Todd Gitlin. "Media Sociology: The Dominant Paradigm." *Theory and Society* 6, no. 2 (1978): 205-53. [courseweb]
- Gaye Tuchman. "Women's Depiction by the Mass Media." *Signs* 4, no. 3 (1979): 528-42. [courseweb]
- James W. Carey. "The Origins of the Radical Discourse on Cultural Studies in the United States." *The Journal of Communication* 33, no. 3 (1983): 311-13. [courseweb]
- Horace M. Newcomb. "On the Dialogic Aspects of Mass Communication." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 1, no. 1 (1984): 34. [courseweb]
- Samuel L. Becker. "Marxist Approaches to Media Studies: The British Experience." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 1, no. 1 (1984): 66. [courseweb]

**Group B Reading Responses Due in Class**

**December 13**

Final Essays Due via email by 9:00 pm