Course Description

PCM 495 Capstone is a course which examines the intersectional relationship between technology and theory in Communications. Communications is a field that investigates and illuminates a wide range of human interactions. Communications is drawn from a multitude of other disciplines such as anthropology, literature, business, political science and psychology. We will focus in large part on the theories surrounding communications and the technology used in our society for the purpose of communication. Gender and ethnicity will also be addressed within the confines of this class.

The course will begin with an examination of semiotics and the cultural studies approach to the study of semiotics (the subtle interplay of signs and signifiers existent in all human communications). Because signs and signifiers change over time we will explore the cultural institutions of Disneyland and punk rock. For example, Disneyland is a complex communication device which is designed overtly to entertain, but covertly reifies dominant paradigms within American Culture.

Throughout this course there will be an investigation of communications technology. Technological devices such as cell phones and online social networks will be contrasted with antiquated forms of communications technology such as the telegraph. This discussion will be juxtaposed with an examination of surveillance, which is both ubiquitous and self-imposed in our hyper mediated society. Lastly, we will also look into the role communication devices play in our everyday lives.

Learning Disabilities

If you have a learning disability that requires special accommodations, please contact me at the beginning of the semester so the proper arrangements can be made.
Required Texts


Electronic reading assignments are available online.

Grading

In Class Essays (2 @ 100 each) (200 Points)
Pre-class assignment ( 50 Points)
Class Participation ( 50 Points)
Final Project/Presentations (100 Points)

400 Points

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<th>Points</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<td>400-360</td>
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<td>359-319</td>
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<td>318-278</td>
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I a. Attendance

You are expected to be in class for all four sessions of PCM 495. Exceptions will be considered for significant (and documented) emergencies and illnesses. Being tardy in excess of 20 minutes will result in the student being counted as absent.

I b. Participation

Students are expected to come to every class prepared, having completed the reading and ready to share their thoughts and questions about the topic at hand. Our time together will be devoted clarifying material you have read with examples, etc. Your participation grade will be based on your contribution to class discussions and your readiness to exhibit knowledge of the material.
II. In Class Essays

2 In-Class Essay assignments will be given over the course of the semester. The essays will cover the readings as well as material covered in class and cannot be made up under any circumstances. All essays will be handed back in order to allow students an opportunity to review their answers and ask questions in class. The essays will then be collected a second time and retained by the instructor. Failure to return an essay will result in a zero for that essay.

Each essay may have a multiple choice/fill in the blank portion, however the bulk of the essay value is centered on the student’s ability to write in a lucid and informed manner based on the readings and lectures from class.

III. Pre-class Assignment

TBA

IV. Final Project/Presentations

TBA

V. Screenings

Over the course of the semester we will view several film clips. Many of them are not readily available on DVD so it’s important you be in class to view them.

A Note on Cheating and Plagiarism

Using materials such as cheat sheets or notes and sharing answers on quizzes is considered cheating and is therefore strictly forbidden. Plagiarism is the act of presenting other people’s work or ideas as your own. If you are suspected of cheating or plagiarism then you will be likely be forwarded to the University’s Academic Judiciary. Both cheating and plagiarism go against the spirit of the university and therefore can result in suspension or expulsion. If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, please see me.
Schedule

Session I

- Introduction to the course and an explanation of its trajectory and bias.
- An overview of the major theories of Professional Communications.

Session II

- In-class essay I
- Divergence from mainstream theories surrounding Communications.
- Case study: Disneyland

Session III

- In-class essay II
- Surveillance, Foucault and Panopticon.
- Case study: Punk rock: Legitimate rebellion or canned dissent?

Session IV

- Presentations
- Conclusion

This syllabus and its contents are subject to change.

Note: The instructor may at times use shocking language or potentially offensive materials in order to illustrate various stereotypes and correlating ideologies.