

University of Dhaka
Department of Film & Television Studies
Course Title: Political Economy and Cultural Production

Course Outline

Instructor: Shah Nister Kabir

Email:

Course Description

The primary aim of the course is to develop a critical, conceptual, and awareness of the complex factors influencing communication/media production, representations, and reception through politics and economy and political economy. For example, how mediated power is produced, perceived and received in society. This course introduces students to the field of Political Economy, Cultural Studies, helping them develop an understanding of the approach as an analytical tool. Given that communication processes are ingrained in culture, and culture itself being a social process, this course shall enable students to use a Cultural Studies lens to examine and engage critically with the meaningful yet often neglected relationship between culture and communication and other signifying practices. As a result, students in general will emerge as more informed and critical observer of the social world they live in.

Interactive and interdisciplinary in nature, the course will have a dual focus: KNOWING and DOING culture— how political economy influence culture production; how ideological leaning promotes social perception through political economy and culture. The former aims to familiarize students with some key concepts/issues. The latter is more geared towards doing culture— making the concepts functional and relevant in the context of everyday life. This two-fold engagement will enable students to examine the link between society, communication, politics and culture first hand.

Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students are expected to:

1. Demonstrate the ability to analyze everyday life from cultural studies perspectives.
2. Be familiar with key concepts like ideology, power, representation, gender as analytical tools to critically examine communication patterns, processes and other signifying practices.
3. Identify underlying social structures in existing or new cultural formations.

Teaching methods:

In accordance with the two fold aims, the teaching method will be a combination of lectures and discussions designed to sharpen students' analytical ability. While lectures introduce

the key concepts/issues (knowing culture), class activities are designed to practice the concepts learnt (doing culture). Activities include student-oriented discussion of the readings and examples brought up from daily life. In addition to that, students exercise their critical understanding of the topics through oral presentations and assignments on specified topic to demonstrate their command of the course contents studied.

Required Readings:

A course pack containing all required reading material will be compiled and made available for students' collection.

Assessment Criteria:

Attendance and Participation: 10%,
Assignments: 10%,
Class Test: 10%,
/Mid-Term: 20%
Final Paper: 50%

Delivery Plan

Session 1a. Concept: Political economy; Culture Industry

Session 1: Does culture matter? Why?

Culture and Communication: shaping, mirroring and representing

This session will discuss the above question (i.e. why) in the light of Hodkinson's perception of communication, media, and how our culture is shaped through the representation of mediated message and how the 'reality' become the part of our daily communication/life.

Main Reference: P. Hodkinson (2011). *Media, Culture and Society: An introduction*

Session 2

Culture: Mass society and popular culture

This session will engage in discussion the concept of mass culture and mass society. It will also place the major debate of mass culture among academia as well as will engage in defining the relationship between mass culture and mass society.

Reference:

Strinati, Dominic (2006 [Chapter 1]). *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*. London: Routledge. [Main Reference]

Bob Batchelor (2009). *American Pop*. CT: Greenwood Press.

Session 1:

Production and consumption of culture:

Frankfurt School and Culture Industry

In this session the thought of Frankfurt School towards culture industry will be shared. Consequently, the notion of cultural industry, theory of cultural fetishism, and the criticism of the thought of Frankfurt School will be discussed.

References:

- Strinati, Dominic (2006 [Chapter 2]). *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*. London: Routledge. [Main Reference]
Hodkinson, Paul (2011). *Media Culture and Society* (Chapter 6). London: Rutledge.

Session 2:

Political Economy and Ideology

In this session the relations between culture, society and ideology will be shared. How ideology constructs a complex relationship between various social institutions and its impacts on politics will also be discussed. The discussion, however, will lie on the basis of Marxist point of view.

Reference:

- Strinati, Dominic (2006 [Chapter 4]). *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*. London: Routledge. [Main Reference]
Hodkinson, Paul (2011). *Media Culture and Society* (Chapter 6). London: Rutledge.
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Week 3: Doing culture I

Session 1: Messages and Meanings in the Cultural Text/Practice/Product

In the culture industry the individual is an illusion not merely because of the standardization of the means of production. The mass communication process merely converted the receiver from being one to being many individuals. In this context what messages an individual receive and construct and what images s/he perceived through the mediated messages and how the social consumption takes place— all these issues will be shared and discussed in this session.

References:

- Gurevitch, Michael, Tony Bennett, James Curran and Janet Woollacott (1982/2007). *Culture, Society and the Media*. London: Routledge. Chapter 1.

Session 2: Feminism and popular culture

Feminism and feminist theory has been apparent in the growing interest shown by cultural studies and the sociology of culture in popular cultural representations of women. Feminism as an intellectual activity and a political strategy has a long history. Thus, in this session, the discussion will focus upon the relationship between media, popular culture, and the reception of 'women' in media for their 'production' of image. This session will critically focus upon feminist analysis and criticism.

Strinati, Dominic (2006 [Chapter 5]). *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*. London: Routledge.

Week 4: Knowing Culture II

Session 1: Politics of Representation: Making sense of society and ourselves

This session will discuss the argument of S. Hall to conceptualize how Hall constructs the concept of 'representation'. However, in doing so, some other critiques appear to counter or accept his view. Consequently, it is very likely that the notion of M. Foucault—'politics of knowledge' will also be invited.

Reference:

Stuart Hall (1997). 'The Work of Representation', In S. Hall (Eds.) *Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London: Sage, pp. 13-73.

Gurevitch, Michael, Tony Bennett, James Curran and Janet Woollacott (1982/2007). *Culture, Society and the Media*. London: Routledge. [Last Chapter].

Week 5:

Session 1: Class Test

Session 2:

Knowing Culture III

Communication, power and social image

This session will engage in discussing the construction of social power and how 'authority' is given to a group or individual and how media outlets as social institutions appear to construct the 'image' to approve the social power.

Reference:

Gurevitch, Michael, Tony Bennett, James Curran and Janet Woollacott (1982/2007). *Culture, Society and the Media*. London: Routledge. [Chapter 8: James Curran].

Hodkinson, Paul (2011). *Media Culture and Society* (Chapter 6). London: Rutledge.

Week 6: Doing Culture III

Session I

- Examination of contemporary culture: Advertisements.
- Women magazine as an example of print media
- Viewing and Discussion of ads (reading different layers of meaning in advertisement using analytical frameworks learnt so far)

Session 2

Guest speaker from an ad firm: Demystifying ads and the making of meaning
[**Need suggestion**].

Week 7:

Session 1

Mid-term

Session2:

Knowing Culture IV: The theory of pseudo-culture

This session will focus upon the concept of Theodore Adorno— Pseudo-culture, and the debate around the topic.

Reference:

Witkin, Robert W. (2004). *Adorno on Popular Culture*. London: Rutledge. [Chapter 2].
Hodkinson, Paul (2011). *Media Culture and Society* (Chapter 6). London: Rutledge.

Week 8: Knowing culture

Session 1: Making the familiar unfamiliar: Analyzing film by observing sign, symbols, sounds and lexical choice

[Reference/s will be provided later.]

Session 2

Assignment: Student's assignment on understanding film.

Week 9: Knowing Culture V

Session 1

Media, Gender and sexuality

Reference:

Hodkinson, Paul (2011). *Media Culture and Society* (Chapter 6). London: Rutledge.

Anne Fausto Sterling, *Sexing the Body*, Chapter 1, Dueling Dualism, P 1-29.

Session 2

Doing culture: V

Construction of news/media texts

Reading newspaper content from a critical point of view—for example, how media content favor elite segment and construct elite authority. **Alternately**, this session may encourage student to watch *Kabuliwala*—a movie of Satyajit Roy based on the short story of R. Tagore. Students need to focus upon how the popular culture preserves the elite ideology through their texts that the cultural industry produces for social consumption.

Partial reference:

Hodkinson, Paul (2011). *Media Culture and Society* (Chapter 7). London: Rutledge.

Week 10: Knowing Culture VI

Session I

The political effects of mass communication

This session will mainly focus upon the perception of *Jay G. Blumler and Michael Gurevitch* in terms of politics and mass culture. It will encourage students to elaborate their critical emphasis on the critical environment of politics and its relations to mass culture. However, the discussion will not necessarily restrict its boundary only on Gurevitch and Blumler rather the boundary will be widen enough to some other scholars such as D. Kellner.

Reference:

Gurevitch, Michael, Tony Bennett, James Curran and Janet Woollacott (1982/2007). *Culture, Society and the Media*. London: Routledge. [Chapter 9].

James Curran (2005). *Power Without Responsibility*. London: Routledge.

Session 2:

Class Test 2

Term Paper topics to be set.

Week 11:

Session 1

Rise of new media: the globalized world

In this session the rise of new media will be discussed in the context of politics with new technology, the impact of new technology-based capitalist politics and its application in

new media— Internet-based media. It will also focused upon the sociology of Internet and various perspectives of new media.

Reference:

James Curran (2005). *Power Without Responsibility*. London: Routledge.

Session 2

Madonna as an icon of culture industry

Week 12:

The politics of selling war through culture industry

Week 13:

Presentation of term paper outline.

Week 14:

Submission of final term paper.

Guideline for Final paper:

Students are expected to demonstrate and relate their knowledge of cultural theories and concepts learnt during the course to contemporary popular music, film and media, including television and the print media in the final paper they will produce for the course. The term paper needs to be thoroughly researched, and to have a strong theoretical basis.

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This woman was a paid wet nurse, after the time when slavery was abolished. As many black women suffered loss of their infants, lactation would give them