Introduction to Media Studies
CMS.100 (L02) Spring 2022
Prof. Paul Roquet (he/him)

Course Description
An introduction to the big questions and methods of comparative media studies. How do media technologies shape our perception of reality? What role does mediation play in the way people communicate and form communities, and how has this changed over time? How do media practices intersect with the social dynamics of gender, race, class, and national identity? In what ways are media rooted in particular objects and physical locations even as they attempt to transcend them? Putting media studies scholarship in dialogue with current media debates, the course takes a comparative approach to tracing media transformations across historical periods, social contexts, and technological regimes. As a CI-H communications intensive course, we will pay special attention to rhetorical approaches in media studies research, and practice media analysis in a range of written, spoken, and audiovisual formats. Enrollment limited to 25.

Objectives
- Gain a broad introduction to the key questions, sub-fields, and methodologies of media studies.
- Apply these approaches to a range of global media contexts both past and present.
- Practice and sharpen media analysis and communication skills through class discussion, presentations, research, and writing.

Class Structure
Before most class meetings I will ask you to read/watch/listen to something, and then respond on a Canvas board to a related Media Explorations activity prompt. Our class time will generally be structured like this: I’ll first present an introductory lecture situating the materials in terms of media history and theory. We’ll then look closely at the assigned materials for the day both in small groups and collectively. For the readings, be sure to bring a copy with you to class in some form accessible to you. During the final third of most classes a pair of students will lead an Expanding the Frame class activity connecting the day’s materials to a recent media development of their choice. The three major assignments (one for each unit) ask you to exercise a range of media analysis methods, including a formal analysis, a video essay adaptation of an existing media studies text, and a small research project on a subject of your choice.

Required Materials
None: all materials will be provided via Canvas.

Student Responsibilities
1. Attendance and engaged participation (20%)
2. Media Explorations (most days). Post reading/activity responses before class (by noon, 20%)
3. Expanding the Frame. In pairs, curate in-class discussion/activity about a recent media development related to the day’s inquiry (1x/semester, 10%)

Projects
1. A Thousand Words (1,000 words, 10%)
2. Video Remediation of a media studies essay (Including script/storyboard, peer review, short written reflection, 20%)
3. Research project on a Media Phenomenon of your choice (~2,000 words, medium of your choice, including proposal, peer review/writeup/presentation, 20%)

**Writing and Communication Requirement**
HASS Communication-Intensive Subjects require a minimum of 5000 words of writing divided among a number of assignments, at least one of which is to be revised and resubmitted. (5000 words = 20 pages of 12-point Times New Roman text that is double-spaced and has one-inch margins.) HASS-CI subjects also include oral communication assignments.

**Schedule**

**1 Defining Media**
- Feb 1/T  Introduction to Media Studies

**2 Audiences**
- Feb 8/T  A Separation (Asghar Farhadi, 2011, 123’)
- Feb 10/Th  Stuart Hall, “Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse”
  bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze”
  *In class: Workshop on giving presentations/leading discussions*

**3 Animation**
- Feb 15/T  The Castle of Cagliostro (Hayao Miyazaki, 1979, 100’)
  Due: A Thousand Words
- Feb 17/Th  Teri Silvio, “Animation: The New Performance?”
  Vivian Sobchack, “The Line and the Animorph”
  *In class: video making workshop*

**4 Technologies**
- Feb 22/T  (Monday schedule - no class)
- Feb 24/Th  Raymond Williams, “The Technology and the Society”
  Lynn Spigel, “TV and the Spaces of Everyday Life”

**5 Sound**
- Mar 1/T  Due: Video Remediation draft script/storyboard (peer review in class)
- Mar 3/Th  Mack Hagood, “Bose QuietComfort and the Mobile Production of Personal Space”
  Kyong Yoon, “Global Imagination of K-Pop”

**6 Games**
- Mar 8/T  Play 2 games from the persuasive game list
- Mar 10/Th  Brendan Keogh, “Across Worlds and Bodies”
  Kishonna L. Gray, “#TechFail”
7 Video Remediations
Mar 15/T Due: Video Remediation. Screen/discuss in class 1/2
Mar 17/Th Screen/discuss in class 2/2

<spring break – no class>

8 Platforms
Crystal Abidin, “Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok”
Mar 31/Th In class: Research methods workshop

9 Algorithms
Apr 5/T Coded Bias (Shalini Kantayya, 2020, 86’)
Do Not Track (Brett Gaylor, 2015, episode 1)
Due: Media Phenomenon proposal
Apr 7/Th Taina Bucher, “Life at the Top”
Nick Seaver, “Captivating Algorithms”

10 Infrastructure
Apr 12/T The Cleaners (Moritz Riesewieck and Hans Block, 2018, 90’)
Alessandro Jedlowski, “Studying Media ‘From’ the South”

11 Immersion
Apr 19/T Ariel Rogers, “Taking the Plunge”
Ben Egliston and Marcus Carter, “Oculus Imaginaries”
Apr 21/Th Due: draft of Media Phenomenon (peer review in class)

12 Environment
Apr 26/T Jacob Smith, Lightning Birds episodes 1-3
Apr 28/Th Alenda Y. Chang, “Nonhuman”
Juan Francisco Salazar and Amalia Córdova, “Indigenous Media Cultures in Abya Yala”

13 Media Phenomena Symposium
May 3/T Due: Media Phenomenon. Present in class 1/2
May 5/Th Present in class 2/2

14 Final Thoughts
May 10/T Nostalgia for the Light (Patricio Guzmán, 90’)
Other Materials TBD based on class interests

Course Protocols
• Attendance: This is a discussion-centered course, and attendance and participation during our scheduled meeting times is important. Please come to class having engaged with the materials carefully and ready to contribute. If you cannot make it to a meeting or two due to unforeseen events
you will not be penalized, but please let me know ahead of time. If you find you are missing classes regularly, please contact me as early as possible to consider the best course of action.

- **Office Hours:** I will have appointments available on Wednesday afternoon/eve and Friday mornings, which can be scheduled with Calendly here. If Friday is impossible, feel free to e-mail me to find an alternate time during the week. This can be anything from a quick question about an assignment, a particular topic you want to know more about or get some recommendations for, something from class you want to discuss further, or really anything else you want to talk about related to the course.

- **Late work:** Getting things in on time will enable you to get the most out of class, contribute the most to the group, and make life easier for me, but I won’t be marking down for lateness this semester given the unusual circumstances. Please contact me as early as possible if you need an extension or are having any trouble with the assignments.

- **Academic Honesty:** Consequences for plagiarism can include zero points for the assignment, failure of the course, and suspension. If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism in the context of a particular assignment, or whether a source is reliable, contact me. See https://integrity.mit.edu/ for official policy.

- **Students with Disabilities:** Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me as early in the semester as possible so that we may arrange reasonable accommodations. As part of this process, please be in touch with MIT Student Disabilities Services.

- **Mental Health:** As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may impact your ability to attend class, concentrate, complete work, take an exam, or participate in daily activities. For undergraduates, the best initial resource for help is Student Support Services (S3) in 5-104 or at (617) 253-4861.

- **Classroom Climate:** I aim to foster a sense of community in this classroom where everyone is treated with respect. The course is intended to be welcoming to individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, genders, sexualities, religious and political affiliations – and other perceptible and imperceptible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment. If you find this standard is not being upheld, please contact me.