

Problems in popular cultural analysis related to mass media structures and functions and to theories of communication. Social implications of mass communications research.

The first half of the semester will explore the significance of and approaches to the systematic study of popular culture. The midterm examination will summarize our understanding of the role of communications in culture, theories of the communication act, theories of mass society and mass culture, and institutional (media) process and analysis. By this time each student will also present a proposal for a limited and specific study into some aspect of popular culture theory or analysis.

The second half of the semester will deal with specific studies. Individual student projects may deal with conceptual, methodological, historical, or institutional problems, media content (or programming) types, or mass media representations of social "reality." Student oral reports will be scheduled for class presentation, and written reports will be due at the time of the final examination.

The following is an initial list of the first two weeks' readings and topics. Additional materials for study will be indicated as the discussion progresses.

1. Jan. 17: Introduction. Read De Fleur's Theories of Mass Communication (TMC) and Wright's Mass Communication (MC); scan Dexter and White's People, Society, and Mass Communication (PSMC), Rosenberg and White's Mass Culture (MCULT), Schramm's Mass Communications (MCOMM), and Berelson and Janowitz's Reader in Public Opinion and Communication (RPOC) for organization and content. Prepare to discuss the approaches of the first two, and the relevance (or irrelevance) of the selections in the four anthologies to the organizing concepts presented in the introductory discussion.

2. Jan. 24: Survey and critical discussion of the relevance and significance of the above materials. Sketch of an approach. Read "Education and the Challenge of Mass Culture," "The Individual in a Mass Culture," and "Mass Communication and the Humanization of Homo Sapiens." Write a brief (1-2 page) essay on the essential elements of this approach.