

Anthropology of Media and Culture
70:368 • Rutgers • Fall 2016 • T-Th 5:35-6:55 • HCK 119

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COURSE OBJECTIVES: Mediums and Messages

What do you think of when you hear the word “media”? What do you think should be included in the category? How do you think media works or should work? How might mediation work in places beyond your experience? Some argue that media are contested and significant factors in the exercise of power and identity. Others suggest that media impacts are more diffuse and uncertain. This seminar will explore the development of an anthropological approach to mass media studies by focusing on a few themes: media and socio-economic development; the socio-political lives of news; relationship ideologies and social media.

We will explore historical and contemporary mediascapes and how anthropologists have theorized their significance and impact. Numerous pundits on all sides have much to say about media: they decry the bias or praise the objectivity of media sources; propound the positive potential effects of media influence for conflict resolution and public relations or lament the negative stereotyping and violence resulting from media impacts; condemn media as another form of authoritarian control, an extension of imperialism, or laud its contributions to globalization and economic development in the Global South. This course will lay the anthropological groundwork for theories approaching these perspectives, and discuss the relationships between media, culture, politics, and religion.

Media anthropology emerged from critical engagements with ethnographic film, visual anthropology, the 1980s crisis of representation, and globalization theory. In this course, we will focus on social mediation of electronic media, as it potentially structures large parts of our interaction with each other, laterally and radially.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

The key goals of this class are:

1. to help students approach local and global mediascapes with new perspectives
2. to acquaint students with media anthropology methods and theories
3. to help students learn how to critically engage theories about media
4. to expand students research, analysis, oral presentation, and multimedia skills

ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT GOALS:

This course fills the following department learning goals:

1. Students gain knowledge that will allow them to identify, explain, and historically contextualize the primary objectives, fundamental concepts, modes of analysis, and central questions in their major field and demonstrate proficiency in their use of this knowledge.
2. Students are able to demonstrate proficiency in the use critical thinking skills
5. Students are able to express themselves knowledgably and proficiently in speaking about central issues in their major field.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Reading Reviews (30 pts)
- Ethnography Review (20 pts)
- Two Video Essays (30 pts each)
- Class presentations (30 pts)

Grades will be calculated based on assignment rubrics circulated in advance and by dividing the points earned by the total points possible.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Bishara, Amahl. 2013 *Back Stories: US News Production and Palestinian Politics*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press
- Gershon, Ilona. 2010 *The Breakup 2.0: Disconnecting Over New Media*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press.
- Readings on Sakai