Comparative Media Systems: Special Focus on France

Spring 2015: DRAFT

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Office Hours: TBD
(drop by or schedule with me before or after class)

Course Description
How does the production of culture differ around the world? And to the extent that it does, why? Beyond the personal idiosyncrasies of individual media owners and creative workers, which factors play the greatest role in shaping cultural production: professional values and traditions, forms of ownership and funding, government regulations, organizational dynamics, and/or the social properties of media owners, workers, and audiences? Adequately sorting out the factors that shape cultural production can best be accomplished via comparative research – across geographical regions, time periods, and institutional fields, including news, television entertainment, digital media, art, and others. This course offers a theoretical and methodological roadmap to such a project, incorporating a range of U.S. and international case studies, but with a special focus on France, which represents a stark alternative in many ways to the U.S. market-driven model.

Teaching / Course Objectives
* to provide students with an understanding of similarities and differences in cultural production as they vary by genre, audience, and world region
* to provide students with knowledge of the major evaluative and explanatory theories for the production of culture (journalism, television talk shows, film, music, etc.)
* to equip students with the research methods needed for comparative media production research, including analysis of political and economic data, ethnography, in-depth interviewing, and content analysis
* to introduce students to contemporary developments in U.S., French, and other national and transnational media

Texts
Required Books (Available for purchase at NYU Bookstore and on reserve at NYU Library)
Niki Usher, Making News at the New York Times
Tamara Chaplin, Turning on the Mind
Others TBD
Pdf texts: Available on NYU Classes under “Resources” (indicated in schedule with asterisk).

Course Assignments and Evaluation

Evaluation of your performance in this course will center around four elements:
(1) **Active and Informed in-class participation (20 percent of grade):** Attendance is required, and any absences must be cleared in advance with me. You are expected to complete all readings before class and you will be evaluated on the quality of your in-class participation, including in-class presentation of your critical reading essay and, if there is time at the end of the course, a summary of your final paper. Short “reaction” essays may be required for some weeks.

(2) **Critical Reading Essays (20 percent; 10 percent each):** Each student will summarize/critique 2 weeks of assigned readings with two 4-page (1000 word) essays. Pick 1-2 (depending on length) closely related readings from a week’s readings (to be approved by me) and address the following issues: a) who is the author addressing, and for what purpose? b) what is the primary argument, c) what evidence is provided in support of the argument, e) what are the actual or potential arguments against it, and f) how does this work contribute to the field of comparative media systems / production of culture research, noting any significant connections to other authors. Do not consult or cite any outside sources. The paper should be emailed to your classmates and me by Monday 9 p.m., prior to class. Be prepared to quickly summarize and discuss the paper in class.

(3) **Final paper and presentation (20 percent for presentation; 40 percent for paper):** In this 16-20 page paper (4000 - 5000 words) paper, you can either: 1) Compare and contrast various methodological approaches, with detailed references to empirical case studies, including at least three from assigned readings or 2) Design a plan to research some aspect or type of news media (medium, genre, targeted audience, nation-state, etc.), drawing on the theories and methodologies presented in the course, and conduct preliminary research. Paper topic (as well as approach and use of any outside sources) must be approved in advance by me.

Grading Policies
It should go without saying that plagiarism is strictly prohibited. This policy will be strictly enforced. “Plagiarism, one of the gravest forms of academic dishonesty in university life, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. In a community of scholars, whose members are teaching, learning and discovering knowledge, plagiarism cannot be tolerated. Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score and/or other materials, which are not your original work. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: Copy verbatim from a book, an article or other media; Download documents from the Internet; Purchase documents; Report from other’s oral work; Paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis and/or conclusions; Copy directly from a classmate or
allow a classmate to copy from you.” (NYU Steinhardt School of Education Statement on Academic Integrity)

Assignments:
1) must be turned in on-time: unless excused, late assignments will be down-graded (one half grade if not turned in by the appointed hour; one full grade after one week, and one full grade per week thereafter); 2) must be stapled, if more than one page; 3) must have your name at the top of the page; 4) must have all pages numbered. You are responsible for keeping a digital copy of all assignments.

Grading Standards:
A = excellent. Outstanding work in all respects. Your papers and essays are thoroughly researched, appropriately documented, logically organized and rhetorically convincing. Your analysis is comprehensive and sound, as well as creative and original. In short, you not only get it, but also begin to see through it!

B = good. Your understanding of course materials is complete and thorough, and there is at least some evidence of your own critical intelligence at work. You demonstrate basic competence in research, writing and oral presentation.

C = adequate. Your writing is vague and incoherent or riddled with grammatical or spelling errors. You do not make proper use of source materials, and there is little depth or concreteness to your research or analysis. Your understanding of concepts and ideas is incomplete and often misguided, but there is at least some evidence that you learned something from this course.

D = unsatisfactory. Work exhibits virtually no understanding or even awareness of basic concepts and themes of course. Your participation has been inadequate or superficial. Either you have not been paying attention or you have not been making any effort.

F = failed. Work was not submitted or completed according to the basic parameters outlined in the course syllabus and any additional information provided about assignments (basic requirements for page length, topical focus, types and number of primary and secondary sources, deadlines).

Grades are calculated according to the following scale: 94-100 A; 90-93 A-; 87-89 B+; 83-86 B; 80-82 B-; 77-79 C+; 73-76 C; 70-72 C-; 67-69 D+; 63-66 D; 60-62 D-; 0-59 F
Schedule (subject to revision): *course readings available through NYU Classes “Resources”

1

**Overview / What’s at Stake**
*Ferree et al., “Normative Models of the Public Sphere…”

2

**Explanatory Theories in the Production of Culture**
*Benson, “Modes of Media Ownership Power…”

3

**Field Theory / Actor-Network Theory**
Bourdieu, *Rules of Art* (excerpts)
Bourdieu, “The Journalistic Field, Political Field, and Social Sciences Field,” in *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*
Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (excerpts)

4

**Sociology of News and Ethnographic Methods: Skype Dialogue with Nikki Usher, George Washington University**

5

**Cross-National Comparative Research: Justifications, Models, and Methods**
*Frank Esser and Thomas Hanitzsch, eds. 2012. The Handbook of Comparative Communication Research* (introduction and chapters by Hallin and Mancini; Russi; and Livingstone). London: Routledge.
6 Case Study: Immigration News in France and the United States
*Benson, *Shaping Immigration News* (chs. 1, 2, 6, 8, available as pdfs)

7 Methods Workshop: In-Depth Interviewing
*Bourdieu, “Understanding,” from *The Weight of the World*

March ____ NYU Spring Break

8 Methods Workshop: Content Analysis of Discourse and Images Readings TBA

9 Guest Speaker: Angele Christin, New School
*Christin, “Clicks or Pulitzers: Commensuration in online journalism in the United States and France”* (pdf)

10 Case Study: Philosophy on French Television
Chaplin, *Turning on the Mind*

11 Case Study: Economics in France and the U.S.
*Marion Fourcade, *Economists and Societies: Discipline and Profession in the United States, Britain, and France, 1890s to 1990s* (selections)

12 Case Study: French and U.S. film industries
Student Presentations

Student Presentations

*Final Paper due _______