Media Studies: Keywords for the Present (7.5 ECTS/hp)

CHARGED!
Media Controversies and Critical Clashes

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Course description:
This course, co-taught by Cinema Studies and Journalism, Media, and Communication, provides analytical tools to critically unravel contemporary media culture and theory, centering on controversies and highly charged topics. Western media of today – in the age of terrorism, “pornified” popular culture, aestheticized media violence, multicultural tolerance combined with neoliberal values – seems filled with controversy: cultural borders of the acceptable and condemnable are continuously dissolving and desperately redrawn. Charged figures and issues emerge raising public uproar for a while, but what happens after the heat runs out? Under what conditions does something become controversial? It has also been argued that critical media and cultural scholarship increasingly builds clashes between theories and approaches, making the arena of theorizing a virtual battlefield. The course offers fresh perspectives to both media culture and media theorizing as charged, controversial fields in which the apparent clashes may in part be necessary and fruitful, but also in dire need of critical unraveling. Various guest lecturers will address these questions from the viewpoint of their own research.

Study goals
After the course, students are expected to be able to:
- critically analyze various introduced controversial topics and themes in the media
- evaluate and reflect on introduced problems and controversies in media theory
- locate introduced controversies in larger cultural and theoretical contexts

Assessment and examination:

The course will be examined through a course journal. You are expected to attend at least 7 out of 9 lectures which means you should be familiar with the lecturer’s main arguments, their possible PowerPoints or other material, and the reading materials. You are expected to have read obligatory literature for each lecture BEFORE the lecture and be prepared to discuss it in class.

Course journal: You should write your course journal throughout the course and not leave it to the last minute. The journal should emphasize your own reflections and views, but also make clear that you have heard, read and understood the content of the lectures and the according literature. The journal will be assessed according to the level of sophistication of your engagement with the course material (lectures and reading material) and your ability to reflect on and justify arguments.

You can write in either English or Swedish. Use proper references: when you refer to reading material, use Writing Criteria as stated on the Cinema Studies website (http://www.film.su.se/pub/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=11184&a=56416). When you refer to a lecture, state the lecturer’s name and the title and date of lecture.
The course journal should include 7 entries on 7 different lectures:

* 5 short journal entries on 5 lectures, approximately ½ A4 page each. In each entry, you should:
  1) State in your own words what was the main controversy or clash, media and/or theoretical, addressed in the lecture – and/or what you see as its main underlying controversy or tension, even if not stated directly.
  2) Give one question that the obligatory literature raised in you: e.g. what interests, bothers or provokes you in it and why, what you think could be a further line of inquiry, or what was not addressed sufficiently in your view.
  3) Refer to the lecture and at least one text in the reading list for the lecture.

* 2 longer journal entries on 2 lectures (not introduction): 2 (max. 3) A4 pages each. In both entries, you should demonstrate your ability to use what you have learned in independent analysis:
  1) Choose a controversial topic in the media or media theory, or a media example that has raised controversy.
      If you choose to discuss a concrete media example, use something that was not directly discussed in the lecture but relates to its theme. Justify why you chose this topic/example.
      If you choose to discuss a dilemma in media theory, use something that was addressed in a lecture but make sure you present your own view, not just repeat someone else’s argument.
  2) Reflect on the significance of this topic/example by relating it to a central concept (e.g. public sphere, affect, globalization, time, spectacle, moral panic, embodiment etc.) used in the lecture and/or course literature.
  3) Refer to the course book (Cottle: Mediatized Conflicts) AND to all obligatory readings for the lecture.

All written assignments should be word-processed and students should be able to present them electronically. Genuine Text may be used to protect against plagiarism. Cases of suspected cheating, such as plagiarism, will be reported to the University’s Disciplinary Committee by the departmental chair or director of studies.

**Grading:** The grading follows a seven-point assessment scale: A = Excellent, B = Very good, C = Good, D = Satisfactory, E = Sufficient, Fx = Insufficient, F = Entirely insufficient.

The final grade for the whole course must be at least E to pass. Students who fail a course with grade Fx or F have the right to undertake four additional assessments, so long as courses continue to run, to achieve a pass grade. Students who receive grade E cannot repeat an assessment in order to attain a higher grade. Students who receive grade Fx or F for a course on two occasions by one and the same examiner have the right to request that another examiner be appointed to consider the grade, if there is no particular reason that excludes such action. A formal request concerning change of examiner shall be submitted to the departmental board.
Course schedule

All lectures are in F-salen, Filmhuset, on Wednesdays between 14–17

31/8, kl. 14–17
Dr. Katriina Kyrölä: War Zones in Media/Theory

Obligatory reading, to be read during the course:

7/9, kl. 14–17
Dr. Ester Pollack: Nordic Political Scandals and the News Media

Obligatory reading:

14/9, kl. 14–17
Dr. Annamari Vänskä: Children, sex, panic. On art and fashion in the contemporary media discourse on “child abuse”

Obligatory reading:

22–23/9
22/9: 10–16, 23/9: 10–17
Film Censorship conference at Filmhuset, organized by Trond Lundemo

Obligatory reading:
Dr. Eva Kingsepp: Nazi Germany in Films and Computer Games: Playing Down by Dramatizing

Obligatory reading:

Dr. Anu Koivunen: Emotions, Feelings, Sensations: Affective Turns in Media Studies

Obligatory reading:

Additional reading:

Ingrid Ryberg: Dirty Diaries and the public sphere of queer, feminist and lesbian pornography

Obligatory reading:
Obligatory reading: