

Comm 251: Understanding Media Industries

Dr. Amanda Lotz

Winter 2014

Meeting times:

Lectures: M&W 8:30-10 :00 MLB Lecture 1

Discussion Sections:

251.002, T 4-5:00, 3302 HM

251.003, T 5-6:00, B143 MLB

251.004, T 6-7:00, B143 MLB

Information about the Instructors

Amanda Lotz, Ph.D. (Amanda is fine)

E-mail: lotz@umich.edu

Office Hours: M: 4-5:00; W 1:30-2:30, and by appointment.

Office Location: NQ 5445

Office Phone: 615-4036

Graduate Student Instructor:

Sarah Erickson

Email: sareri@umich.edu

Office Hours: M 10:30-12:30, and by appointment

Office Location: NQ5356

Course Description

Understanding Media Industries guides students through an introductory exploration of the complex and rapidly evolving media industries in the U.S. The course examines the influence of media industry organization and practices on society at the same time that it offers students pursuing both scholarly and professional careers related to the media industries a comprehensive overview of how the industries work, why they work as they do, and the broader theoretical and practical implications of the media industries. Questions such as “why is media industry organization important?” “how do we make sense of media industry changes?” and “what are the key issues facing media industries?” animate our analysis. Here we understand the business of media as a component of its status as culture. Students should leave the course with expanded knowledge of the inner-workings of the media industries to which they will subscribe and consume from throughout their lives.

Course Goals

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

explain a framework for understanding the operation of the media industries

apply the framework to particular industrial contexts or industries

recognize contemporary events and tie them to and explain them through the framework

Required Reading Material

Timothy Havens and Amanda Lotz, *Understanding Media Industries* (New York: Oxford, 2011).

*Paul du Gay et al, *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman* (London: Sage, 1997). ISBN 0 7619 5402 3

(This book is somewhat optional; you’ll be working in groups for this unit and it is necessary for each group to have a copy).

Other readings will also be posted on Ctools, within the week they are due, in folders called Applied Reading. The Supplemental Material folders for each week will hold links to the media prompts used in class for your review, if needed.

Graded Course Activities

The following is subject to change, particularly if measures are needed to help boost participation and reading. A comprehensive final exam may be given if performance is lacking.

| | | <u>Percent of Grade</u> | <u>Due Date</u> |
|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Tests/Quizzes | (50%) | | |
| Exam 1 | | 15% | 2/5 |
| Exam 2 | | 15% | 3/17 |
| Exam 3 | | 20% | 4/30 8-10am |
| Papers | (25%) | | |
| Media Mandate assignment | | 5% | 1/22 |
| Forces of change paper | | 20% | 4/21 |
| Other Work | (25%) | | |
| Section Participation | | 5% | |
| Walkman Project | | 10% | 2/25 |
| Lecture Participation | | Extra credit up to 2.5% | |

Brief Paper Assignments:

Media Mandates Assignment

After reading the Mandates chapter, watch one episode of *PBS Newshour* (<http://video.pbs.org/program/979359630/>) and listen to one hour of the NPR evening news show *All Things Considered* (4-5:30 on 91.7, 4-7 on 89.1; or you can listen to the full show or individual stories at: <http://www.npr.org/templates/rundowns/rundown.php?prgId=2>).

Write a two-page response paper discussing how the news offered by these non-commercial outlets differed from that you are familiar with on commercial news outlets. Your paper should apply concepts from the Mandates chapter and specific content from the news shows you watched and listened to.

Exams

Exams will also include information about contemporary issues that you should be aware of as part of reading or media posted to CTools (see supplemental material folder). Exams may include a take home component.

Forces of Change Paper

This assignment has two-prompts and should total 8-10 pages, but as two distinct answers. Its purpose is to give you the opportunity to apply your understanding of the “forces of change” to your industry. These questions require you to assess how the issues of the rise of the symbolic economy, digitalization, and globalization are affecting your assigned industry from various perspectives. Top responses will incorporate both nuanced application of class materials as well as additional research and will address all 3 “forces of change.” Pay attention to the timeframe prompts and be sure to research the history of your industry. (If you are passionately interested in writing about an industry other than the one to which you are assigned, speak with your GSI).

Section 1): Imagine you are an artist (you can pretend you are someone else if that is utterly unimaginable). If you were launching an artistic career in your media field today, how would you do it? Explain how it is different today than in 1990 and 1970. How might these differences affect the nature of your art?

Section 2): Imagine you are an executive (in your industry). What are the biggest challenges that you’ve faced in the last decade? What will be the greatest challenges in the next 10 years?

Section Work

Industry Application Question Sets

Many weeks each group must respond to questions summarizing their discussion and assessment of any question prompts given to them exploring how the week's reading applies to their industry. At various points in the semester, groups may need to do and show evidence of additional research. These will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. All group members will receive the same grade and it is our expectation that all group members will contribute to the questionnaire writing during the semester. GSI's may modify this requirement if deep engagement and on-task working established.

Walkman Group Presentation

Your industry group will select a media-related technology or other media entity and you will compose an application of the circuit of culture model to your topic. You may use the cultural processes from du Gay et al's circuit of culture (production, consumption, regulation, representation, identity), or identify others (if choosing this option you should also present a rationale as to why this cultural process is relevant). A more detailed assignment is available on CTools.

Participation Grades

Section: Attendance is expected and will be taken regularly in discussion sections. All unexcused absences will result in grade penalties; more than 3 absences from discussion section will earn an F for the Discussion Section grade. Extensive excused absences may require additional assignments. Merely attending section will earn you a C for section participation, at best. Attendance and participation are not the same thing, nor is quantity of participation preferable to quality. In order to earn full attendance/participation credit, students must come to class with readings completed and contribute to discussion sections with insight and questions. Students who desire higher grades will need to participate in discussion and can indicate their understanding of the material by keeping abreast of current issues and bringing these in for discussion in sections and lecture. See below for ways to keep abreast of news.

Lecture: This class incorporates several components of a flipped classroom. Students should not expect to come to class and have reading material rehearsed; rather, I will answer questions and review concepts students identify as troublesome and apply the reading concepts to contemporary events and happenings. Students who regularly engage in discussions during lecture and provide insightful answers to Pizza questions may earn extra credit.

Also, if you miss any of the two lectures or the discussion section during the first week, the instructor will assume that you are planning to drop the course and will give your slot to a student on the waitlist. If you have legitimate reasons for absence during the first week you must give prior notice to the instructor (lecture) or GSI (discussion section).

Please inform me (or your GSI in the case of discussion sections) of absences due to religious observances or other excusable reasons, preferably both in-person and by e-mail. It is your responsibility to make sure your GSI knows you are present—repeated late arrivals or early departures will also affect your section grade.

General Policies

*Papers **WILL NOT** be accepted via CTools, and must be submitted in hard copy unless first cleared with instructor/GSI.

*All papers must be completed and submitted on time to receive credit for the course.

*Papers are due on the date posted; and will be penalized one letter grade each day the paper is late.

***There are NO make-up exams.**

*Acceptable paper form for this class is 1" margins, double-spacing, a font no larger than 12 and preferably Times or Times New Roman. Works cited need not be on a separate page (begin at the end of the paper), and gratuitous spacing at the beginning of a paper is not regarded fondly.

Grading Policy

Students are expected to come to lectures and discussion sections with readings completed and comprehended. Please note: there is a difference between completing readings and comprehending readings. I recommend taking notes, highlighting, and writing down questions as you move through the readings. Students who have performed well on my tests have also found it helpful to write a paragraph to a page summary after completing a reading to make sure they understand the main points, and then use this summary when studying for exams. You will be required to do more than regurgitate information, particularly later in the semester, but must synthesize materials from lectures and readings in developing your own analyses.

All papers and examinations must be completed and submitted on time to receive credit for the course.

Late papers will automatically receive a grade one degree lower for every day of lateness.

Following the standards of other professors in this department, your performance will be graded on the following scale:

A = Extraordinary. "A" work requires a full command of the material, a strong sense of purpose, clear and compelling thought, and skillful writing.

B = Good to very good. This is work that provides a very solid fulfillment of the assignment. Papers demonstrate clear argumentation and presentation.

C = Acceptable. This is work that fulfills the minimum required by the assignment. It might lack skillful argumentation, but shows an understanding of the material. It might also suggest interesting approaches to the material, but falter in carrying them out.

D = A major deficiency in writing and argumentation.

F = Unacceptable. The paper does not satisfy the minimum required by the assignment.

There is not a standard grade scale for the class. Each assignment is likely to have its own scale to allow for curving.

This is a challenging class covering a lot of material. In order to cover all necessary material, lectures will not always cover the reading assignments, so you'll need to synthesize the material on your own. You may be confused in early lectures; if you find this being the case, please come into office hours to sort through troublesome material. Taking notes in this class is a must, from both lectures and readings.

Other Information

Subscription to Industry Resources

I will post links to stories that are relevant to our current issue discussions on the CTools site. You may also want to subscribe to the following digest service to keep abreast of ongoing changes and issue in the media industries. I strongly recommend reviewing the What are You Missing? Blog post updated every 2 weeks at Antenna: <http://blog.commarts.wisc.edu/>

You can also get daily email of stories from Benton Foundation's Benton Communications-Related Headlines (BENTON-COMPOLICY), For subscription information, visit:

<http://www.benton.org/headlines>

Statement on Ability

Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately as soon as possible to discuss your specific needs.

I am happy to accommodate students with special needs whenever possible. Please feel free to discuss particular needs with me as soon as possible, preferably by the end of the first week of class in order to guarantee accommodation. If a crisis affecting your class performance arises, please notify me or your GSI promptly.

Intellectual Honesty

Plagiarism and cheating are very bad and can result in course failure and expulsion. Don't even try me. Plagiarism is turning in any work that is not your own, this extends beyond papers to include take-home exam assignments and issue briefs. Scholastic dishonesty will result in failure of the assignment and notification of the Dean's office. Dishonesty on the forces of change paper may result in failure in the class.

CTOOL Reading Bibliography

Elberse, Anita. "Betting on Blockbusters," in *Blockbusters: Hit-making, Risk-taking and the Big Business of Entertainment* pp. 15-55 (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2013). 0805094334

Anderson, Chris. *Free*, "Free 101: A Short Course on a Most Misunderstood Word" pp. 17-34; "New Media Models" pp 135-161. In *Free: The Future of a Radical Price* (New York: Hyperion, 2009). ISBN 978-1-2013-2290-8

Manjoo, Farhad, "The Great Tech War of 2012," *Fast Company*, 19 Oct. 2011;
<http://www.fastcompany.com/1784824/great-tech-war-2012>

Curtin, Michael. "Feminine Desire in the Age of Satellite Television." *Journal of Communication* 49(2): 55-70.

Bagdikian, Ben. "Common Media for an Uncommon Nation." *The New Media Monopoly* (Boston: Beacon Press 2004), pp. 1-26. ISBN# 0-8070-6187-5.

Turow, Joseph. Chapters 1 & 2. *Breaking Up America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1-36. ISBN 0226817490

Johansson, Ola, "Beyond ABBA: The Globalization of Swedish Popular Music," *Focus on Geography* 53, no. 4 (2010) 132-141.

Burgess, Jean and Joshua Green. Chapters 1 & 2. *You Tube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* Polity, 2009. 0745644791

Obst, Lynda. "Have Your Popcorn with Some Chopsticks," in *Sleepless in Hollywood: Tales from the New Abnormal in the Movie Business*, pp. 51-78 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013). 1476727740.

Course Schedule

1.1 Wednesday January 8

Course Introduction

(Connection: Gnome Business Models; DigiDist YouTube Monetization)

2.1 Monday January 13

Key Ideas

Reading: UMI Chapter One: Ideas and Vocabulary, Elberse, “Blockbusters”

DISCUSSION SECTION 1: Assign industry groups, discussion format and expectations

2.2 Wednesday January 15

Mandates

Reading: UMI Mandates; “Self-Censorship in China”
(Connection: Mand China Cracks down on Ent);

3.1 Monday January 20

No Class: MLK

DISCUSSION SECTION 2:

Key Ideas and Mandates

3.2 Wednesday January 22

Conditions: Regulation

Reading: UMI Regulation (Connection: Reg 2012 Indecency; Reg Formal Game);
***Media Mandate Assignment Due**

4.1 Monday January 27

Regulation--Details

Reading: FCC for Cable Price Regulation; AT&T/Verizon Net Neutrality (Connection: Reg Apple Ebook)

DISCUSSION SECTION 3:

Regulation

4.2 Wednesday January 29

Conditions: Economics

Reading: UMI Economics (pp. 95-114); Advertising’s Big Four; A-L: How Much for Movie to be Profitable?; M-Z: Toolkit Case Study/Winter’s Bone

5.1 Monday February 3

Emerging Media Industry Economics

Reading: UMI Economics (pp. 114-23); *Free*, Chapter 2 “Free 101: A Short Course on a Most Misunderstood Word” pp. 17-34; (Connection: Free Anderson; Facebook Like Monetization; Adwords MSNBC);
Supplementary Reading: *Free*, Ch. 9 “New Media Models” pp 135-1

DISCUSSION SECTION 4:

Economics

Reading: “Legal Ease/Defined Net Profits;” Epstein “Appendix 1;” “The Math of a Hit TV Show”

5.2 Wednesday February 5

Exam 1

6.1 Monday February 10

Conditions: Technology

Reading: UMI Technological Conditions (Connection: Tech/Dist/Ec CD; Tech MP3; NYT as TV News);

DISCUSSION SECTION 5:

Walkman Assignment Introduction

6.2 Wednesday February 12

Doing Industry Study: Case of the Walkman

Reading: Walkman, Introduction, pp. 1-6; Netflix/Near-Death Spiral; Netflix Press Release

7.1 Monday February 17 **Doing Industry Study: Reading Representation and Identity**
Reading: Farhard Manjoo, “The Great Tech War of 2012”
(<http://www.fastcompany.com/1784824/great-tech-war-2012>)

DISCUSSION SECTION 6: **Walkman Group Time**

7.2 Wednesday February 19 **Doing Industry Study: Production, Globalization, and Labor**
Reading: “Apple Manufacturing”

8.1 Monday February 24 **Creative Practices Application**
Reading: UMI Creative Practices; In class screening of *Brilliant but Cancelled*

DISCUSSION SECTION 7: **Walkman Group Presentations**

8.2 Wednesday February 26 **Practices: Creation**
Reading: Epstein, “Plus CA Change: Paramount’s Regime Change.”

March 3-7 **UM Spring Break**

9.1 Monday March 10 **Practices: Distribution and Exhibition**
Reading: UMI Distribution and Exhibition Practices; Unkind Rewind; The Making of a Blockbuster (Connection: Dist Film Rental; Dist Theatrical to DVD);

DISCUSSION SECTION 8: **Practices: Focus on Film: Dist. & Exhibition Activity**

9.2 Wednesday March 12 **Auxiliary Practices**
Reading: UMI Auxiliary; Epstein, “The Studios: Required Reading”

10.1 Monday March 17 **Exam 2**

DISCUSSION SECTION 9: **SCREENING: “The Reality of Reality”**

10.2 Wednesday March 19 **Issue 1: Rise of the Symbolic Economy**
Reading: UMI: The Rise of the Symbolic Economy; Jobs Crisis/LA; Labor Conditions in VFK Industry (Connection: SymEc iEconomy NYT Video)

11.1 Monday March 24 **The Rise of the Symbolic Economy and Media Ownership**
Reading: Michael Curtin “Feminine Desire in the Age of Satellite Television” (13 pgs); Ben Bagdikian, “Common Media for an Uncommon Nation” (25 pgs)

DISCUSSION SECTION 10: **Rise of the Symbolic Economy**
Reading: “Freelance Writing's Unfortunate New Model;”
(<http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jan/06/entertainment/la-et-onthedia6-2010jan06>)

11.2 Wednesday March 26 **Issue 2: Digitization**
Reading: UMI Digitization; Digital Magazines/eBook Publishers; Louis CK/Direct Distribution (Connections: Digi Prod Leverage Final Cut Pro; DigiCreation-DLSR Cameras)

12.1 Monday March 31 Digitization and Fragmentation (Kitior Guest Lecture)
Reading: Turow, *Breaking Up America* (Chapters 1&2) (Connection: Frag-Status of Cultural References; ATC Common Culture Story 1;)

DISCUSSION SECTION 11: Focus on Music: Digitization
Reading: iTunes Singles Killed Music Industry (Connection: Digi Econ Music Perry; Download Sales)

12.2 Wednesday April 2 Digitization and Distribution
Reading: Chris Anderson, "The Long Tail" pp. 171-77 (Anderson, Chris. *The Long Tail*. *Wired* October, 2004, 171-79) Access at: <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html>
Screen Anderson Talk (30m)

13.1 Monday April 7 Futures of Media Industries: Online Distribution (Kitior)
Reading: Green and Burgess *You Tube*: Ch. 1&2; Jenkins "Transmedia"
(http://henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html) (Connection: Trans YouTube \$100K)

DISCUSSION SECTION 12: Paper Workshop

13.2 Wednesday April 9 No Class

14.1 Monday April 14 Issue 3: Globalization
Reading: UMI Ch. 11 Globalization, Israeli TV/U.S. Audiences; Trolling Overseas for TV Concepts (Connection: Global Burmese Pop)

DISCUSSION SECTION 13: Globalization

14.2 Wednesday April 16 Globalization Strategies
Reading: "Beyond ABBA;" Obst, "Global Film"

15.1 Monday April 21 Globalization and Trade
In class screening: *Exporting Raymond*
***Complete forces of change paper due**

April 30: 8:00-10:00 am FINAL EXAM